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What the Industry Reads First

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Independent Focus: RLTV Launching 300 Hours of Acquisitions

Some quiet changes are happening over at **RLTV**, including a flurry of programming acquisitions in the past few months. Just last week, it added “The Quon Dynasty,” about an entertaining family of restaurateurs (airs Thursday at 8pm). It joins several other new pick-ups, including “Urban American Outdoors,” “Garden Style” and “Outlaw In-Laws,” all added since December. More subtle has been the introduction of a new logo that’s a bit more contemporary and makes the letter “TV” much smaller. At the end of 2016, RLTV launched its acquisition campaign, which will deliver more than 300 hours of programming, according to RLTV gm *Roy Ennis*. In looking for content, Ennis and his team are focused on categories such as travel, improvement and nostalgia. “A couple that we’ve picked up are family-oriented and relationship based, so we’re also going with more intergenerational programming,” he said. The network, dedicated to those 50+, is hoping to add some originals to the mix, with Ennis saying they will most likely be short-form and interstitial in nature. RLTV feels like it has broken free of its old moniker “Retirement Living TV” with viewers and advertisers, and now wants to be seen as the place that helps with the changes that come from this demo—empty nesting, second careers, caregiving. “It’s a little bit difficult to define, so we’re going to be experimenting with a few things,” Ennis said. All of this continues in an environment that’s been especially tough for independent networks. Fellow indies **Pivot** and **Al Jazeera America** went dark last year, and **One World Sports** has been searching for a buyer. “It’s a tough market out there. One of the benefits that we have is an individual owner, so we’re not sitting there with investors creating earnings requirements,” Ennis said, referring to *John Erickson*, founder of **Erickson Living**, one of the largest senior housing operators in the US. But it’s still been tough to find growth capital. “To face those challenges, over the last five years, we’ve really changed the infrastructure around to make a profitable infrastructure. It’s hard to do at the level we are as an independent, but we did achieve it,” Ennis said. “A lot of it I think comes from the fact that over half our employees and key consultants have been with RLTV for over 10 years.”

i24 News Launching on Altice USA: **i24 News**, a Middle East 24/7 international news and current affairs channel, will launch a US news channel with **Altice USA** on board as the first distributor. The net already has established its US headquarters in NYC, with a separate bureau in DC. The network was founded in 2013 by founder and controlling shareholder of *Altice Patrick Drahi*. **i24** has built its US news team with around 50 positions. It will broadcast in English. At its initial launch,



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the channel will be available on Altice USA's **Optimum** and **Suddenlink** systems.

Charter Could Lose Univision: Things seem to have taken a bad turn with **Univision-Charter**, with the Spanish-language programmer informing viewers that the MSO may lose its channels. Recall that Univision sued Charter in July because it is trying to impose **Time Warner Cable's** rate card. Charter acquired TWC in May. "Despite Univision's many attempts to resolve the dispute by offering good-faith settlement solutions, Charter has rejected all of Univision's efforts. Given this unfortunate impasse, Univision has no choice but to inform Charter's customers that they may lose access to Univision's networks and stations," Univision said. Charter continues to say that it has a contract with Univision and it expects the company to honor it. According to a Univision spokesperson, the programmer maintains that Charter was required to negotiate a new deal by Dec 31, and it provided an extension for continued carriage through January as they negotiated. That extension is almost up, with Charter rejecting efforts to find a mutually agreeable deal, the rep said. The two have also been arguing in NY Supreme Court over what should be part of discovery in their breach of contract case. The possible channel drop comes as *President Trump* pledges to build a wall on the Mexican border and has signed an executive order tightening the vetting of potential immigrants. Univision's statement ended by saying it's committed to "continuing to fight for the dignity and value of our community in the marketplace and the important role we play in providing a voice for Hispanic America during these uncertain times."

Small Business Waiver: FCC chair *Ajit Pai* circulated an order to exempt small ISPs from the agency's enhanced transparency net neutrality rules. Pai also proposed to up the eligibility threshold from 100K to 250K subs. The previous waiver, which exempts ISPs with fewer than 100K subs from the rules, expired in December and the Commission, under then-chmn *Tom Wheeler*, failed to extend it. The order is expected to be passed in the 3-member GOP majority Commission.

Independent NPRM: Comcast and NBCU are among those hoping the FCC will drop an NPRM that's aimed at helping indie nets gain distribution. The proposed rules would prohibit unconditional MFNs and "unreasonable" alternative distribution method provisions in deals between MVPDs and indie programmers. In comments filed with the FCC late Thursday, Comcast-NBCU argued that the video marketplace is thriving and doesn't need government intervention. MFNs and ADMs reduce transaction risks, and MFNs "may make it more likely than an MVPD will be willing to take the risk of carrying an independent or diverse network (or the risk of carrying a network more broadly or at a higher price than might ultimately be warranted)," the companies said. In its own filing, **NCTA – The Internet & Television Association** agreed with Comcast that the FCC lacks authority to impose the proposed restrictions on the terms and conditions of programming contracts. And like Comcast, NCTA argues that there is a vast amount of diverse, unaffiliated programming available today. **ACA** joined with indie programmers **MAVTV**, **One America News Network**, **AWE** and **RideTV** to say they generally support the FCC's proposed rules. However, they'd prefer the agency make bundling the highest priority. The FCC has not proposed any limitations on tying networks to others.

T. Howard Elects New Officers: The board of **T. Howard Foundation** recently elected several of its board members to exec committee positions for a term of 2 years. The members are: *Rob Doodian* (chmn), evp of HR at **AMC Networks**; *Bernadette Aulestia* (first vice chair), evp of global distribution operations at **HBO**; *Jacqueline Hernández* (vice chair), chief marketing officer, Hispanic enterprises and content, **NBCUniversal Telemundo**; *Andy Topping* (vice chair), svp of HR at **Comcast Cable**; *Christina Spade* (treasurer), evp and CFO of **Showtime Networks**; *Sandy Ashendorf* (secretary), evp of content distribution at **EPIX**; and *Scott Weiss* (founder & chmn emeritus), CEO/owner of **Speakeasy**.

Programming: **beIN Sports's** new 5-year deal with the **Women's Tennis Association** (WTA) starts as of the 2017 season with live coverage of more than 40 tournaments through beIN Sports Connect, its authenticated streaming service, on a dedicated WTA channel. Some tournaments will also air on beIN Sports and **beIN Sports en Español**.

People: *Garrett English* was upped to evp of event programming, specials and news for **MTV**, **VH1** and **Logo**. He had been svp of programming, events and live production for MTV. Since 2004, English has served as the lead development and production exec for all of MTV's tentpole programs, initiatives and special events.

Editor's Note: Join **AT&T**, **Harmonic** and **IHS** execs on Feb 7 for a Cablefax webinar to learn 4K/HDR revenue generating strategies, lessons learned and best practices. Speakers will also offer their predictions on what 2017 means for 4K and HDR. More details at cablefax.com/webinars.

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