

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## You've Gotta a Friend: Viacom Still Trying to Mend Distribution Fences

**Viacom** is getting good at dropping news bytes into its earnings call. Last go-round, it laid out its new strategy to focus on five flagship networks. For 2Q, it revealed that **Charter** has moved some of those same five nets (including **MTV**, **Comedy** and **VH1**) to its most expensive tier for new customers. "It's not a broad retiering," CEO *Bob Bakish* said, adding that it's an ongoing integration. "There is a difference of opinion on what's appropriate. We have a very strong point of view, and are in conversations about it. I believe this will get resolved." So... maybe no lawsuit a la **Univision**, **Fox News** and **Showtime**. Bakish reiterated that the programmer is working to evolve MVPD relationships. "There is distribution to be regrown," he said. The company has pilots underway with two "major" MVPDs to insert advanced advertising into their local commercial availabilities. Viacom's also speaking with MVPDs about skinny entertainment packs, with the CEO saying he's optimistic one could launch by the end of this year. He seemed to suggest it may take advantage of using digital antennas for broadcast signals. Viacom's Distribution Peace Tour includes having conversations outside of carriage renewals and talking about ways to bring added value. This latter point is something programmers are increasingly turning to (see **AMC Networks'** deal to provide exclusive content to **Charter**). On the plus side, affiliate distribution was up 2% to \$1.16bln in the quarter. Bakish painted a rosy picture on programming turnarounds, highlighting the changes taking place at **MTV**. While **MTV**, **VH1**, **Logo** pres *Chris McCarthy* is changing up leadership behind-the-scenes, viewers will begin seeing more unscripted fare and the return of daily, live programming. "This will provide a critical on-ramp to MTV's primetime block," Bakish said of the revamped "TRL." A day after **HBO** said it likely wouldn't renew its deal with **Amazon**, Viacom reminded analysts that it decided earlier in the year not to renew a **Hulu** deal with some key properties. "We as an industry have to make sure we're not creating inexpensive alternatives for consumers to access our best product," Bakish said, saying there is an opportunity for some product in SVOD, but not in a high volume way. That said, **Nickelodeon** pres/**Viacom Kids & Family** chief *Cyma Zarghami* added that when a show is a hit, it works everywhere and linear isn't impacted by a SVOD presence. Revenue of \$3.26bln (+8.5%) beat analyst expectations, with revenue from the media nets up 1% to \$2.39bln.

**Upfront State of Mind:** **AMC Networks** and **Scripps Nets Interactive's** 1Q earnings commentary Thursday of-



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ferred a bit of insight into the upfront season. Like **Turner** and **Viacom**, they expressed optimism. They're also in the here and now with a strong scatter market still present. "Usually by this time and maybe as you're going into the upfront, you see a lot less activity going on. But... they're still knocking on the door [for scatter]," SNI CFO *Lori Hickok* said. AMCN COO *Ed Carroll* described scatter demand as "steady" with pricing strong, though he said certain categories are starting to see some moderation. That restraint could be tied to the upcoming upfront. "We like our position as providing so many passionate and engaged viewers. It sort of gives us momentum into the upfront," Carroll said. Still, there are signs of advertising softness. **Bernstein Research** noted that AMCN's domestic advertising was down 6% to \$242mln, below the consensus' -4% projection. And it was a quarter with new "Walking Dead" eps. Scripps ad rev of \$512mln (+5%) was in line with expectation, but Bernstein analysts warned it'll have to accelerate to hit FY17 guidance.

**Oh, Snap: Scripps Networks** on Thursday announced a new deal that will bring new programming, including shows, to **Snapchat's** discover platform. Scripps' **Food Network** and **HGTV** will begin develop and producing shows specifically for Snapchat that sponsors will be able to leverage. Food Network, which was one of the original publishers for Snapchat's launch of Discover in 2015, will also continue to curate its short-form Publisher Stories on the platform.

**One-Possession Game: Verizon** will pay the **NFL** \$21mln for the rights to stream one regular-season game between the **Ravens** and **Jaguars** over the Internet, according to a *WSJ* report. Verizon will distribute the Sept 24 game from London on **AOL**, its **go90** video service and **Complex**, a website with content targeting young men that Verizon co-owns with **Hearst**. Verizon has exclusivity except in the teams' home markets of Baltimore and Jacksonville, where the game will be on local TV. The Verizon deal continues the NFL's wide experimentation with digital outlets. The NFL in 2015 signed a similar deal with **Yahoo**, which paid \$15mln to exclusively stream **Jaguars-Bills** from London. Last season, the league dealt digital streaming rights for its "Thursday Night Football" package to **Twitter**. This season, the NFL is taking those games, which also air on broadcast TV and **NFL Network**, to **Amazon**.

**Mediacom Earnings: Mediacom** recorded a 4% YOY increase in revenue during 1Q 2017, reaching \$462.7M. The NY-based operator added 17K high-speed data customers and 15K phone customers in 1Q and saw strong YOY growth in both categories. Adding to 1Q industry-wide pay-TV losses, the company shed 3K video subscribers during the quarter, contributing to 19K sub losses since the end of 1Q 2016.

**IoT Takeover: Universal Electronics** acquired **RCS Technology**, a move that will expand its lineup of IoT, energy monitoring and control products. Portfolio additions include programmable communicating thermostats, advanced HVAC controls, energy monitoring and control devices, gateways, in-home displays and user interfaces.

**Nothing But Mesh: Atlantic Broadband** announced the launch of its new home and small business WiFi services, both of which are enabled by wireless mesh access points from Turkish tech company **Airties**. The Enhanced Home Wifi service offers capabilities like WiFi noise cancelling and connection steering, as well as an app for customers to monitor and manage their network. The Enhanced Business WiFi allows for multiple access points to provide coverage throughout an entire business, as well the ability to easily create a guest network.

**Programming: ESPN** made several talent moves Thursday after last week's massive round of layoffs. **SEC Network** re-signed *Dari Nowkah* to a multiyear deal to host studio programming, including "SEC Now." ESPN also extended soccer commentator and analyst *Julie Foudy*, whose will also serve as a lead voice on the net's female-focused espnW coverage. Finally the net hired reporter *Stefano Fusaro* from NBC affiliate **WTVJ** in Ft. Lauderdale. -- "Emogenius," the new emoji-solving game-show, premieres June 7 on **GSN**. The half-hour series hosted by *Hunter March* gives contestants a chance to win \$10K. -- **E!** is expanding its "WAGS" franchise to include the new series "WAGS Atlanta." The *Wives and Girlfriends of Sports Stars* franchise's latest edition will launch this Fall. -- **Turner's truTV** ordered 16 half-hour episodes of "The Chris Gethard Show," which will be broadcast live. The show, produced by **Funny Or Die**, has not yet announced a premiere date. Executive producers include *Zach Galifianakis* and *Will Ferrell*.

**People: Marvin Renaud** has joined the **Weather Group**, parent company of **The Weather Channel**, as vp, product where he will oversee digital and next-generation product strategies for the network. Renaud previously served as senior director, product management for **CNN**.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Down South

A two-hour drive south will take you from Charleston, S.C., to the oak-lined streets of Savannah, Georgia. The two historic Southern cities have always had a bit of a rivalry, so it seems fitting that **Bravo's** first spinoff of Charleston-based "Southern Charm" would venture to its sister charm city—or what original Southern Charm star *Shep Rose* playfully refers to as Charleston's "ugly stepchild." As with the towns, there are similarities and differences between the two casts that will quickly become apparent when "Southern Charm Savannah" debuts Monday at 10pm. Both the Savannah and Charleston shows feature a group of white, affluent socialites who know not to wear white after Labor Day, own at least one seersucker suit and have roots with prominent Southern families. The Savannah cast reflects some of the eccentricities of the same town that brought us "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil." Cast member *Ashley Borders* bucks the Southern belle stereotype by sporting several tattoos. Series regular *Nelson Lewis* was arrested several years ago for impersonating former Georgia congressman Jack Kingston. Savannah's fascination with the supernatural hangs overhead like its famous Spanish moss. "There is a lot of spiritual, ghostly culture there or history, which also gave it a different feeling" than Charleston, vp, current production *Leslie Farrell* said. "That was really intriguing to us—how it plays into the normal person's life." Spoiler alert: Filming coincided with the death of *Lady Chablis* and will be covered. While Farrell is obviously taken with Savannah, she said it was the cast that cemented the locale of the spinoff. It features real-life friends, with all but one born and raised in Savannah and having attended Savannah Country Day School together. "Many of them are seven, eight generations into their family and you feel that," Farrell said. For those disappointed the franchise hasn't ventured into more Southern cities, tomorrow is another day. Bravo just gave the greenlight to Southern Charm New Orleans. — *Amy Maclean*

**Reviews:** "Mary Kills People," 10pm, Sunday, **Lifetime**. This quirky series with a great title is filmed in Ontario, although the story's location is unspecified. And what a story: Mary, an ER physician (*Caroline Dhavernas*), and a former cosmetic surgeon (*Richard Short*) help people who want to end their lives. Death scenes in this 6-ep series are handled sensitively and even include (dark) comedic moments. Since every series needs additional complications and sex (right?), "Mary" weighs itself down with an ex-husband and an amorous detective. Still, Mary is a refreshing look at mortality. -- "Jackson," 8pm, Monday, **Showtime**. The Jackson here is Jackson, MS, site of the sole abortion clinic in the state. The doc looks at abortion forces pro and con, putting the camera on not only the clinic's director, but the organizer of the protesters who camp outside the clinic daily. The most poignant story involves *April*, a young, unmarried mother of four. There's little doubt how April's mother feels about another unwanted pregnancy her daughter faces. -- "L.A. Riots: As We Watched," 10pm, Sunday, **AHC**. Yet another look at the '92 riots and this doc includes narration as well as excellent footage (the docs reviewed in the past 2 weeks lacked narration). Like those two, this one is worth a long look. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable Rankings (4/24/17-4/30/17)			
Mon-Sun Prime			
1	TNT	1	2388
1	FOXN	1	2361
3	ESPN	0.9	1931
4	MSNB	0.6	1466
4	HGTV	0.6	1427
4	USA	0.6	1427
4	TBSC	0.6	1297
8	DISC	0.5	1163
8	ID	0.5	1002
10	HIST	0.4	1030
10	DSNY	0.4	1008
10	CNN	0.4	899
10	A&E	0.4	892
10	TLC	0.4	871
10	FX	0.4	818
10	NFLN	0.4	732
10	DSE	0.4	79
18	FOOD	0.3	781
18	BRAV	0.3	767
18	ADSM	0.3	722
18	NAN	0.3	716
18	HALL	0.3	716
18	TVLD	0.3	684
18	LIFE	0.3	661
18	VH1	0.3	661
18	AMC	0.3	644
18	FRFM	0.3	619
18	NBCS	0.3	595
18	NKJR	0.3	576
18	HMM	0.3	532
18	DSJR	0.3	528
18	INSP	0.3	525
33	SPK	0.2	522
33	APL	0.2	505
33	OWN	0.2	490
33	SYFY	0.2	479
33	ESP2	0.2	459
33	WETV	0.2	453
33	NGC	0.2	443
33	LMN	0.2	440
33	TRAV	0.2	413
33	EN	0.2	404
33	MTV	0.2	400
33	FXX	0.2	375

\*Nielsen data, supplied by ABC/Disney, is based on coverage area of individual networks



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