

**Special Report: Summer Programming - page 3**

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## **International Drama: Court Grants Preliminary Injunction in Discovery-Sky Tussle**

**Discovery Communications** has spent considerable money over the past couple years in an effort to make itself a heavyweight international player through **Eurosport**. So when **Sky Deutschland** started running ads that all of Germany's **Bundesliga** soccer matches for the upcoming season would only be available on Sky platforms, it didn't sit quietly. "Discovery has an obligation to ensure fans understand which Bundesliga matches they can watch, when they can watch them, and where. With consumers at the core of our business, we therefore felt it necessary to take action against Sky Deutschland, who have blurred the lines between fact and fiction," the programmer said, noting that Eurosport Player will broadcast 40 matches live and exclusively across the 2017/18 season. This includes every Friday night primetime match, five Sunday afternoon and five Monday evening matches—all exclusively—as well as the Supercup and four relegation games. The Regional Court of Cologne stepped in and issued a preliminary injunction on Monday, preventing Sky from continuing with its "Every Game. Every Goal." marketing campaign that it has run for years. Sky still has the bulk of Bundesliga broadcast rights, but a new regulatory ruling requires the professional soccer league's rights to be split between at least two broadcasters, with Discovery the victor of Friday night games for four years. The games will air exclusively on its direct-to-consumer Eurosport Player (not on the linear channel of the same name). The new rights deal nearly doubled revenue for the Bundesliga to more than \$5.3bn over the next four seasons, according to reports when it was announced in June 2016. In addition to Sky, German public broadcasters and Discovery, **Amazon** picked up Internet audio rights for the four-year period. During last quarter's earnings call, CFO *Gunnar Wiedenfels*, who has lived in the German market all his life, said he's convinced the deal will help the company strengthen its portfolio in the market. All of this comes as *Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox* seeks regulatory approval to buy Sky (Fox already owns 39%). It's a process that has taken longer than expected, but regulators have said a decision will be made by Thursday.

**FamilyNet Dons a Stetson:** **Rural Media Group** will rebrand its **FamilyNet** cable network as **The Cowboy Channel** effective Saturday. Programming will shift from airing sitcoms of the '70s & '80s to being anchored by western sports and everything that encompasses the western lifestyle. At launch, Cowboy Channel will have distribution in more than 30mln homes that carried FamilyNet, including through **DISH, AT&T U-verse** and **Charter**. The company,



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which also owns **RFD-TV**, said Cowboy will have an “aggressive” OTT strategy through cable partners and will be offered on digital platforms including **Amazon Fire Stick**, **Hulu**, **Roku** and **Apple TV**. Lest anyone think RMG just decided to put on some boots and call itself a Cowboy Channel, founder/pres *Patrick Gottsch* said the intent when FamilyNet was purchased in 2012 was to make it a western lifestyle companion net to rural-focused RFD. “At that time we just didn’t pull the trigger as I was uncomfortable that there was enough original programming or interest to support such a full-time independent channel and decided that RFD-TV was able to handle the demand,” he said. “However, over the past four years, we have been able to prove the viability for such a channel lead by the success of RFD-TV’s ‘The American,’ which has developed a strong track record of **Nielsen** ratings and built tremendous sponsor/advertiser support for our yearly rodeo at AT&T Stadium.”

**Dead on Demand:** **Vimeo** scrapped its previously announced plan to launch an SVOD service next year featuring original content. In turn, it has also shuttered its development team. *The Hollywood Reporter* first reported the change of course. Vimeo interim CEO *Joey Levin* released a statement Monday explaining the company’s reversal. “This was a difficult decision—the idea of pursuing an SVOD service for Vimeo has always been intriguing, and I would have loved to see the incredibly talented *Alana Mayo*’s programming vision realized here at Vimeo,” Levin said. “She and her team are creative, sharp, risk-takers, and I believe will all, to a person, have an incredible future in programming. But the opportunity ahead for Vimeo to empower creators is too large and too important for us to attack with anything other than absolute focus and clarity.” The aforementioned Mayo, who left **Paramount Pictures** in March to join Vimeo as its head of originals, will now depart the company. Vimeo has had some success with original content in the past, with web series “High Maintenance” gaining popularity before being turned into an **HBO** show. The sheer volume and financial muscle of the competition, however, coupled with the cost of acquiring and producing quality content, made Vimeo’s SVOD push an uphill battle from the get-go.

**All Things Altice:** **Altice** has entered into exploratory discussions with Portugal-based **Prisa** about an acquisition of its stake in **Media Capital SGPS**. Media Capital is a Portuguese media group with a presence in TV broadcasting, A/V production, radio, digital, music and entertainment. Meanwhile, US subsidiary **Altice USA** had a strong start to trading following its Thursday IPO, finishing the week at \$34.30 per share, up 14% from its \$30 initial offering price. The stock had its first down day Monday, finishing the day at \$33.90.

**Five-Year Plan:** The share of households without a traditional pay-TV subscription will increase to about a third by 2021, according to projections from **Kagan**. As that number declines, adoption of virtual MVPDs will increase. Kagan anticipates nearly 11mln households (8.5%) will use such services by 2021, compared with an estimated 2-3mln today. In addition, the firm expects 18mln households (14%) will rely solely on OTT delivery of video content by 2021.

**Turner Promotions:** *Coleman Breland* has taken on the expanded role of pres, content experiences, while continuing his role as pres, **TCM** and **FilmStruck**. *Richard Warren* was promoted to Breland’s previous post as pres, Turner content distribution. Both report to Turner pres *David Levy*. Warren, previously evp, content negotiations & strategy and associate general counsel, will now oversee all brand distribution, affiliate marketing, interactive television and business development for Turner’s 10 domestic entertainment, news and kids networks as well as continued oversight of TCD’s strategic planning, business operations, and legal and business affairs. Breland’s new job takes a company-wide approach for seeking out business models inside and outside the traditional TV ecosystem.

**Interlocking Rings:** **Discovery** has partnered with Italian telecom company **TIM** to deliver an exclusive Olympic channel to TIM subscribers beginning with the 2018 PyeongChang games. The operator will offer its customers a branded 24/7 linear news and highlights channel, along with exclusive short form content. Subscribers will also have access to **Eurosport** player, where fans will be able to access VR, and AR sports content.

**Measuring Out-of-Home:** **Fox Sports** signed on to **Nielsen**’s national out-of-home measurement reporting service, which features weekly reports that include daily data for program and commercial audience estimates. This opt-in service leverages Nielsen’s PPM technology from nearly 77,000 installed panelists.

**People:** **Crown Media Family Networks** promoted *Jane Gross* to vp, on-air promotion, a step up from her previous role as creative director.

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### Cable's Themes of Summer

Summer—that wonderful season where you can go to the beach, eat ice cream outside, and then settle in for some of the year's best primetime. The season once associated with reruns seems to offer more and more special programming each year, and 2017 is no exception. From summer classics like **Discovery Channel's** "Shark Week" to new events like the **Smithsonian Channel's** patriotic Fourth of July, summer is shaping up to be a season of compelling television. Networks are increasingly finding ways to build thematic programming blocks in the summer months. Here's the scoop on a few very different summer flavors.

#### Glorious Americana

**Smithsonian Channel** might not have an official name for its patriotic programming slate, but programming and production evp *David Royle* likes to think of it as "a glorious summer of Americana." The network will debut two new series near the Fourth of July holiday including "America in Color" and "First Ladies Revealed." Patriotic summer programming isn't an entirely new concept to Smithsonian, as its "Aerial America" series has been giv-



**From Smithsonian Channel's 'First Ladies Revealed':** President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy watch the 1st America's Cup activities aboard USS Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. off Newport, RI.

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# AMERICA IN COLOR

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ing viewers a birds-eye view of the nation's most treasured landmarks every summer since 2010.

This summer, however, Smithsonian might have an advantage. With a new, "slightly" controversial president and all that's come with it, viewers might very well flock to a series like "First Ladies Revealed" (premieres July 2, 9pm). Royle thinks the show will play off of people's curiosity with *Melania Trump* and where she fits into the scheme of our nation's history.

"I think the viewer who looks at it will be fascinated to see the extraordinary range of strong characters and the roles they played. At the same time they'll be wondering how does Melania Trump fit into this? Is she going to be a *Jackie Kennedy* or an *Eleanor Roosevelt*? Or even a *Hillary Clinton*?" said Royle.

The channel's other new show debuting around Independence Day, "America in Color," (July 2, 8pm) will showcase iconic moments in America's 20th Century, not as they were portrayed in black and white, but as they were lived in color. "We believe this is the most ambitious project colorizing factual images that has really ever been undertaken for American television," Royle said. The series takes pivotal footage from the 1920s-1960s—everything from the attacks on Pearl Harbor to performances by *Elvis Presley*—and shows them in brilliant 4K color.

Smithsonian hopes Americana programming will become as synonymous with the network as fireworks are with Independence Day. The chance to tell stories about America's history in the context of today's political climate could be a strategic summer programming win. "The Smithsonian has a sort of emotional pull on people and when you get to July 4th, a channel like ours, which is a non-fiction channel, telling dramatic entertaining stories about America's history and culture, this is a time when we really come to the full," said Royle.

## Fins In

**Discovery Channel's** "Shark Week"—a summer programming staple that needs no introduction—has been going strong for 29 years. So, how does a series stay at the forefront of summer viewing year after year? "You're asking the million-dollar question," said *Lara Richardson*, group evp of marketing for Discovery Channel, **Animal Planet** and **Science**. "I don't know exactly how we keep it fresh except we know we have to."

The marketing angle for the shark-themed programming week might have something to do with it. While the programming topic has remained the same, the show's advertising has adopted a lighter feel over the years, embracing the "summer" of the seasonal programming

more and more. Richardson, who joined Discovery Channel from **TLC** in 2012, noted that the turning point for Shark Week's marketing really came with the 2013 "It's a bad week to be a seal" spot, in which a seal about to be released back into the ocean gets eaten by a shark.

"It was a very risky thing for the company to do... but



**Discovery Channel jumps back into the water with its 29th 'Shark Week' on July 23. This is the first year in the franchise's history that Shark Week will sync up around the world, airing during the same week on Discovery Channel in more than 220 countries and territories.**

when we did that promo I think the whole franchise took a turn and we brought ourselves back. We didn't take ourselves so seriously and we started to embrace the fun of it, the summer that Shark Week is synonymous with," she said.

Discovery's light-hearted advertising also can be seen in this year's promo, which has international musician **Seal** devoured by a shark. The programming's summer vibes have clearly worked as a consistent draw for people over the years. Richardson said that when she first came aboard people would tell her that they scheduled their summer vacation around Shark Week. "I don't think it's going away, I think that every year we find something new to say to our audience, we certainly attract new viewers each year," said Richardson. "I think it's just something about sharks that really intrigues people of all ages." Shark Week will premiere this summer on July 23, with the lineup including "Phelps vs. Shark," in which Olympian Michael Phelps races the ocean's most efficient predator, and "Great Hammerhead Invasion."

## All Wet

From water parks to water ice, nothing cools down a hot summer day like, well, water—a fact **Travel Channel** is using to its advantage with its summer programming event "Dive In." "Dive In" kicks off the channel's second

Travel Channel kicked off its second year of 'Dive In' programming on June 4 with new episodes debuting on Sunday night.



summer of water-themed shows focused on beach vacations, over-the-top waterslides and more, with new episodes airing on Sunday nights. The event seeks to capture the adrenaline rush that comes with the summer season.

According to *Courtney White*, Travel Channel's programming svp, more than 10 million viewers tuned in for "Dive In" programming last summer, and it grew the network's Sunday P25-54 prime time ratings more than 33% over the prior year.

With those kind of stats, "Dive in" has become a priority for Travel Channel, complete with full-press PR and social media efforts. The appeal might have something to do with the fun of the pool without getting wet. "We feature programming that transports our viewers to that summer vacation feeling from the convenience of their living room," White said. "It's capturing that delight and anticipation that comes with the transition from boots to flip-flops, when the endless possibilities of summer fun await."

The franchise kicked off June 4, with new episodes debuting every Sunday evening through Labor Day. This year's programming slate includes new eps of "Xtreme Waterparks" and 14 new hour-long episodes of "Top Secret Swimming Holes."

## Christmas in July

Hallmark Channel's "Christmas Keepsake Week" is one summer programming event that doesn't tie into the season at all. "It's just a little bit of a change," said *Bill Abbott*, pres/CEO of Hallmark parent **Crown Media Family Networks**. And given the nice ratings for the stunt, now in its fifth year, there are plenty of people looking for something a bit different.

From July 14-23, Hallmark Channel becomes a Christmas oasis in a sea of summer sizzle. The 10-day programming franchise, which coincides with Hallmark's Keepsake ornament preview weekend, consists of Christmas programming and very short interstitials based on what Hallmark is offering in stores as well as previews for the channel's original content for its actual holiday season. And yes, there will be pretty of merriment in November and December, with Crown producing 30-32 original movies across both its channels. Christmas in July lets viewers behind the scenes for some of those movies to build anticipation for the latter half of the year.

Abbott is especially excited about the level of quality in this year's Christmas programming. "We evaluate every line in every script, story development, character development and it's really become an exceptional focus of our programming team," he said. "We cast in a way that is an upgrade over what we've done historically."



**Hallmark Channel will premiere new original holiday film 'The Christmas Cure' on July 15 as part of the network's Christmas Keepsake Week.**

The channel, which uses its summer programming as a marketing tactic in itself, seems to have pinned down what its audience is after with its combination of upgraded programming and promotion both in the retail and programming space. "Hallmark in the holiday space isn't exactly difficult to promote in market and you add that to the better content, to the better casting, to the higher profiles and all the sudden you've got a snowball that is impossible to stop," said Abbott.

This pre-countdown to "Countdown to Christmas" includes the premiere of "The Christmas Cure," about an emergency room doctor (*Brooke Nevin*) who returns home for Christmas and has to decide if she'll stay (July 15, 9pm).