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What the Industry Reads First

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Temperature Check: Reality Ebbing at TCA

It's tricky to make pronouncements about the state of cable programming based on what's seen at **TCA**. There are so many factors that determine which shows are presented at the semi-annual tour of the country's TV critics and reporters. Still, after not quite three days, it's clear that the spate of reality programming is ebbing. During the first couple of TCA cable days, there were just two reality shows presented to critics during presentations from **Audience, Epix, National Geo, Discovery Comm, HBO** and **Turner**. First out of the box was a reality series from **Animal Planet**, "Rescue Dog to Super Dog" (Aug 12 premiere). On day three, Turner presented unscripted, live quasi talker "The Chris Gethard Show" (**truTV**). Replacing reality programming are dramas, docu-series and other genres, many with fairly serious topics, including technology-related endeavors such as medicine and space and behind-the-scenes views of institutions that have had limited exposure. Nat Geo this winter is promising an inside look at the military, from ordinary soldiers all the way up to the country's military leader, Gen *Joe Dunford*, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in "Chain of Command." One of the goals of the eight-part documentary series, says showrunner/exec prod *Scott Boggins*, is to show viewers exactly what you're thanking military personnel for when you say, "Thanks for your service." Discovery's three-part, six-hour doc "First in Human" (Aug. 10 premiere) provides unprecedented access to the **National Institutes of Health's** (NIH) Building 10, which is devoted to medical research, specifically "first in human" clinical trials for patients who've exhausted all other avenues. With "The Big Bang Theory" star *Jim Parsons* narrating, cameras will embed at NIH and follow four patients and their doctors during their entire clinical trial. Space-related shows are another trend so far, with Nat Geo greenlighting a series based on *Tom Wolfe's* "The Right Stuff." Over "multiple seasons," the series will "chronicle the first 15 years of America's space program, starting in 1958 with the Mercury mission," Nat Geo chief *Courteney Monroe* told TCA. The space theme continued with **Science Channel** touting its pre-, post- and live coverage of next month's total solar eclipse ("The Great American Eclipse," Aug. 21). The next day, Aug. 22, Science debuts "The Planets."

DISH-Univision Lawsuit: Univision issued a comment Friday following our report that **DISH** is suing the programmer over its [decision to stream Liga MX matches for free](#) on **Facebook** Live in English. It played up its support of DISH over the years, which has included a multi-platform deal signed in 2012 and multi-stream rights deal in 2015 for Sling TV. "UCI is disappointed in DISH's decision to file this suit. For more than a decade, UCI has partnered extensively with DISH to make it one of the most popular TV distribution services with Hispanic America," Univision said. "More people are watching our Liga MX games on our existing Spanish-language cable and broadcast TV networks, as evidenced by our year over year increase in Nielsen TV ratings. We are always looking for innovative ways to build audiences with new platforms. In fact, UCI was one of the first media companies to support DISH by making its popular Spanish-language broadcast and cable networks available on DISH's Sling TV service. We have also sought to expand the Liga MX audience by offering a select number of matches via a new English-language service on Facebook."



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Three's Company—Hallmark Launching New Network: Just hours after **Turner** chief *Kevin Reilly* told **TCA** critics there'd be fewer linear networks within two years as cable consolidates, Hallmark bucked the trend. During its opulent TCA dinner for talent and journalists, **Crown Media Family Networks** pres/CEO *Bill Abbott* said **Hallmark Drama** will be the networks' third linear entry, debuting as a 24/7 property October 1. "We believe in the linear part of our business," Abbott told the crowd at the Warner Estate in Beverly Hills. While Abbott provided few details, he noted Drama will feature "a wholly distinct" lineup from **Hallmark Channel** and **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** and will "evoke the rich legacy and spirit of Hallmark Hall of Fame." Abbott also unveiled the company's initial subscription streaming service, **Hallmark Movies Now**, debuting October 3. It will be available on iOS, Android, Roku and Amazon Fire, among other devices. In addition, Crown Media's MVPD partners will have the opportunity to offer Hallmark Movies Now as a supplementary subscription service to subs. For \$5.99 a month or \$59.99 a year, subscribers will have access to 800-1,000 hours of content.

Ratings with Teeth: Some viewers may have been disappointed Olympian *Michael Phelps* wasn't actually racing a great white shark, but they still tuned in. "Phelps vs Shark" ranked as the highest-rated "Shark Week" telecast ever for **Discovery** across A25-54s (2.66mln L+3), W25-54 (1.34mln) and W18-49 (1.32mln). It averaged more than 5mln viewers in L+3, with Shark Week programming reaching more than 15mln viewers across the whole day. The programmer's emphasis on its TVE app paid off with the premiere of Shark Week marking the highest live and on demand streaming day to date on Discovery Go. -- The CONCACAF Gold Cup helped **Univision Deportes** finish July as the No. 2 most-viewed sports network, regardless of language. The 14th edition of the tourney reached over 29mln total viewers and 13mln 18-49s throughout 25 matches. The final match between USA and Jamaica delivered 2.5mln total viewers on Univision.

At the Portals: *Gizmodo* reports that legal watchdog group **American Oversight** has sued the **FCC**, claiming it failed to comply with the Freedom of Information Act related to net neutrality debate info. The group is asking the DC Circuit to compel the release of records.

You.i TV Gets Reactive: **You.i TV** is now supporting **React Native** as a development framework on top of its You.i Engine. Real Native, a **Facebook**-backed open source Javascript project, is used by many iOS and Android developers, giving You.i further reach in its efforts to work across all platforms. Support will be available in the first half of 2018.

With Hulu, Every Day Can Be Friday: For its first **TCA** presentation under **CTAM's** aegis, **Hulu** highlighted its origins and its future. Unsurprisingly Season 2 of "The Handmaid's Tale" dominated talk, with the first installment pulling in 13 Emmy nominations. Content svp *Craig Erwich* told **TCA** critics, "The series has hands down driven more new subscribers to Hulu than any other show, original or acquired... the audience and their measurable social conversations grew week to week." Erwich said Handmaid boosted the confidence of the artistic community in Hulu, which should lead to even more and better originals. He also announced several original docs, including "Too Funny to Fail," a look at "The Dana Carvey Show," a ratings flop that launched the careers of *Louis C.K.*, *Stephen Colbert*, *Steve Carell* and others. Among the original series Hulu presented at TCA was a nighttime news and talk show starring *Sarah Silverman* called "I Love You, America." The other portion of Hulu's presentation went back to its roots. The streamer announced this fall it will carry all the 1990s series known as TGIF, offering the complete catalogs of "Full House," "Family Matters," "Perfect Strangers," "Hangin' with Mr. Cooper" and "Step by Step."



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