

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — August 11, 2017

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 28 / No. 153

Keeping it Real: WE tv Sticks to Reality in a Sea of Scripted

While scripted dramas grab a lot of the headlines these days, **WE tv** is sticking with what it knows best: reality TV. The net reinforced that commitment Monday with the renewal of “Mama June: From Not to Hot” for a ten-ep second season, slated for early 2018. Keeping it “real” seems to be paying off with steady ratings gains when many peers are seeing dips. May saw an average of 1mln total viewers on an L+3 basis, 42% higher than May 2016. Helped by the launch of “Mama June,” 2Q saw ratings jump 12% for A24-54 YOY. The show was consistently Friday night’s top cable program among adults and women 18-49 and 25-54. Reality’s heyday hit more than a decade ago, with shows like “Real Housewives” and “The Osbournes” forever synonymous with the genre. But WE tv pres/gm *Marc Juris* thinks there’s quite a bit more life in reality. “It has changed the notion of storytelling because we are all producing our own stories every day for Facebook or Twitter,” he said. “I feel it has a greater resonance now and relatability. I feel like there’s a bigger and bigger opportunity for reality because that’s what people are looking at all day on Facebook.” Those same social platforms also are having an impact on reality shows, with the story no longer ending when an episode, or even a season, is over. Smart networks know that and find ways to embrace it. Think of **Bravo’s** “Watch What Happens Live,” which can tackle the recent bombshell divorce announcement of RHONY’s *Luann D’Agostino* just episodes after viewers saw her wedding. WE has gone as far as to film new scenes. When *Tamar Braxton* collapsed live on “Dancing with the Stars” a couple years ago, the net was just three days away from premiering a new season of “Braxton Family Values.” Rather than just pretend it didn’t happen, the net immediately assembled a crew and made sure the latest developments were part of the premiere’s storyline. That continuation of the story fits with WE tv’s overall reality approach, which has included telling the next chapter of former reality stars, such as “Honey Boo Boo’s” *June Shannon* of **TLC**, **E!’s** *Kendra Wilkinson* or former Bravo matchmaker *Patti Stanger*. “There’s a familiarity the audience has with them. There’s definitely an interest in their lives. And I think they understand their audience as well,” Juris said. WE tv wasn’t immune to the temptations of scripted, launching “The Divide” in 2014, a drama originally developed for scripted sibling **AMC**, but it axed it after one season. “It’s important not to try and do everything for everyone,” Juris said of the endeavor. “We were successful on our Thursday and Friday nights... and it felt like we should build on that so that we represent something. Because it’s harder and harder to stand for something

The banner features three main sections. On the left, a woman in a dark jacket holds an axe, with the text 'HANDCRAFTed AMERICA' and 'EVERY CRAFT HAS A STORY SEASON 3'. In the center, the text reads 'DESTINATION FRIDAYS' with a calendar grid showing 'SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT' and 'A NIGHT OF ORIGINALS BEGINNING AT 8p ET'. On the right, a man holds a large fruit basket, with the text 'State PLATE' and 'A HEAPING HELPING OF AMERICA SEASON 2'. At the bottom center is a play button icon and the 'insp INSP.COM' logo.

CABLEFAX DAILY (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher: Michael Grebb, 323.380.6263, mgrebb@accessintel.com ● Community Editor: Alex Silverman, 212.621.4951, asilverman@accessintel.com ● Dir. of Bus Dev.: Rich Hauptner, 203.899.8460, rhauptner@accessintel.com ● Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com ● VP Marketing: Amy Jefferies, 301.354.1699, ajefferies@accessintel.com ● Marketing Manager: Charlotte Clay, 301.354.1710, cclay@accessintel.com ● Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Diane Schwartz, SVP Media Comms Group, dschwartz@accessintel.com ● Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,699.97/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

when there are so many choices,” he said. “For us, the brand has to represent one thing or another. It’s hard in linear TV for original scripted and original unscripted to co-exist and be what the viewer anticipates and expects.”

Fox’s Cable Business Booms: 21st Century Fox’s cable nets delivered in Q417, accounting for more than half of the company’s quarterly revenue. The company reported Wednesday that quarterly revenue in the segment grew 10% YOY to \$4.3bln. Revenue for the entire company in 4Q increased 1.5% to \$6.77bln, falling just short of expectations, according to *Thomson Reuters*. Domestic affiliate revenue increased 10% YOY, led by **Fox News**, RSNs, **FX Networks** and **FS1**. Domestic ad revenue increased 6% YOY thanks to higher ratings at Fox News and increases at **Nat Geo**. The ad gains came despite not having the Copa America soccer tournament on FS1, as it did in 4Q16, as well as having fewer **NBA** and **NHL** playoff games on RSNs. Cable net programming revenue for the entire FY17 increased by 7% YOY to \$28.5bln.

Starz Align: Lions Gate’s 1Q revenue nearly doubled YOY to \$1.01bln thanks to the inclusion of recently acquired **Starz** in the quarterly numbers released Wednesday. Revenue was essentially in line with estimates of an even \$1bln. Starz generated \$343mln in revenue and ended the quarter with 24.1mln subs, down slightly from the 24.2mln it ended the corresponding quarter with last year.

Liberty Not High on Altice’s Charter Bid: Liberty Media pres/CEO *Greg Maffei* on Wednesday addressed a report that **Altice** planned to make an offer to acquire **Charter**. It seems Liberty, which owns 27.3% of Charter, would be reluctant to accept an offer from Altice, given that stock in the newly formed company would likely be a considerable part of the deal. “The idea that we would take equity we don’t want is probably unlikely,” Maffei said. “A lot of this is going to be based on leveraging up Charter, and if we want to lever up Charter we have that opportunity. So, any deal that would be appealing to us and other Charter shareholders I think would have to add real value and show real capabilities that are beyond what we think is a very well-positioned company.”

Facebook’s Video Push: Facebook is launching a new platform for professionally produced shows called Watch, which will be available on mobile, desktop and connected-TV apps. Facebook director of product *Daniel Danker* in a statement said the company is launching Watch for a limited group of users in the US with plans for a wider rollout soon. He added while a limited group of content providers is involved in the initial rollout, all users will eventually be able to create shows. From the cable community, **A&E** and **Univision** are involved in the launch. Univision’s involvement centers around streaming live **MLS** and **LigaMX** matches, the latter of which is the subject of a lawsuit brought by **DISH**.

Seeso Closing Its Doors: NBCUniversal will shutter comedy streaming service **Seeso** later this year. The service, which launched in January of last year for \$3.99/month, offered next-day eps of “SNL” and “The Tonight Show,” along with a modest slate of original series and stand-up specials. Streaming service **VRV** has picked up Seeso originals “Harmon-Quest,” “My Brother, My Brother and Me,” “Hidden America with Jonah Ray” and “The Cyanide and Happiness Show.” Those programs will be available on its **VRV Select** service, which is part of a combo bundle that costs \$9.99 per month.

No Mystery in Alaska: GCI has reached a multiyear deal with technology company **Synacor** that will see the Alaska-based operator upgrade to Synacor’s hosted email platform and deploy its Advanced Cloud ID service to streamline authentication for TV Everywhere streaming. Once a GCI user is signed into one app, any other supported app requiring authentication on any device will automatically log the user in. For more on Synacor, see CEO *Himesh Bhise*’s recent interview at www.cablefax.com as part of the CFX Video Series sponsored by **CSG International**.

Spheres of Influence: **WWE Network** will be available in China for the first time beginning Aug 18, launching exclusively on the country’s **PPTV** streaming service as an SVOD offering. It will feature all WWE PPV events, including **WrestleMania** and **SummerSlam**.

PS Vue Adds CBS Affiliates: **PlayStation Vue** on Wednesday added seven local **CBS** stations to its lineup. Users of the virtual MVPD in Houston, DC, New Orleans, Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, San Antonio, Tampa-St. Pete and Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem (NC) will now have access to their local CBS affiliates.

People: Pop has appointed *Kent Rees* to the newly created position of CMO. He will report directly to pres *Brad Schwartz* beginning Monday. -- Multiscreen app provider **You.i TV** is gaining a new CFO in *Rob White*. White last served as CFO/COO of **Object Technology International**, where he was a key figure in the company’s acquisition by **IBM**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Old Ducks, New Tales

As children, *Francisco Angones* and *Matt Youngberg* were both superfans of "DuckTales," spending their after-school hours watching the animated adventures of Scrooge McDuck. "I loved the concept of taking these classic Disney characters that are known for comedy, and you set them on these adventures," Youngberg reminisced. "That was something, storytelling-wise, I came to embrace in my career." These fond memories only raised the bar for the pair when bringing their own vision to the beloved cartoon. **Disney XD's** "Ducktales" reboot follows the escapades of Duckberg-based millionaire Scrooge (*David Tennant*), his moody nephew Donald Duck (*Tony Anselmo*) and his three grandnephews—Huey, Dewey and Louie (*Danny Pudi*, *Ben Schwartz* and *Bobby Moynihan*). The popularity of the series led to the creation of video and computer games, comic books and a film release, giving the original audience myriad ways to maintain bonds with the material. This access created a unique challenge for Angones, the story editor, and Youngberg, the exec producer, when approaching the reboot. "A difficult thing for creating a show that has a legacy of 30 years is to create a show that's not just an homage," Youngberg said, when discussing how to honor the original program while attracting new viewers. "It's been a check for ourselves through the entire process." Angones added, "We wanted to create a 'Duck-Tales' for everyone." Both agreed now feels like the right time for the show to make its return to TV. Angones and Youngberg wanted to create a show to connect the original viewers, many of whom are now parents, with their children. This meant further examining the family dynamics between Donald and Scrooge as well as those of the three grandnephews, fostering an unexpected emotional depth to the animated series. "The people who grew up loving the original series are now at the age where we're creating, and we have so much passion for it that we want to bring it to a new audience," Youngberg explained. - *Sara Winegardner*

Reviews: "Diana: In Her Own Words," 9pm, Monday, **National Geographic**. In 1991, *Diana*, Princess of Wales, five years before her divorce from *Charles*, Prince of Wales, secretly allowed a friend to interview her on audiotape. It was one year before the couple's separation, and the bitterness in Diana's voice is apparent, as is her sadness. While Britons are familiar with the tapes, many Americans will find Diana's words revelatory. Much of what Diana discusses concerns "the third person" in the royal marriage: *Camilla Parker Bowles*. The genius of this film is how the footage syncs with Diana's words. At times you feel she is watching with you and providing narration. While it only provides Diana's side of the story, you have to marvel at her fortitude. How else to explain her ability to look ravishing and composed in public while, if she's to be believed, her personal life was miserable. -- "World Beaters," 1pm ET, Sunday, **ESPN**. A smile-producing short doc on the history of the Little League World Series and last year's David vs. Goliath final between NY's Maine-Endwell and Korea. One of the best parts is great footage of big leaguers as Little Leaguers. - *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable Rankings (7/31/17-8/6/17)			
Mon-Sun Prime			
1	FOXN	1.0	2186
2	MSNB	0.8	1760
3	USA	0.6	1489
3	HGTV	0.6	1473
5	TBSC	0.5	1210
5	HIST	0.5	1079
5	ID	0.5	1004
8	CNN	0.4	1044
8	A&E	0.4	1015
8	FX	0.4	899
8	FOOD	0.4	897
8	DSNY	0.4	886
8	DISC	0.4	878
8	HALL	0.4	826
8	TLC	0.4	823
8	HMM	0.4	692
8	DSE	0.4	73
18	SYFY	0.3	775
18	ADSM	0.3	745
18	TVLD	0.3	742
18	TNT	0.3	726
18	NAN	0.3	688
18	AMC	0.3	667
18	BRAV	0.3	659
18	ESPN	0.3	650
18	LIFE	0.3	595
18	NKJR	0.3	566
18	OWN	0.3	500
18	DSJR	0.3	478
30	FRFM	0.2	560
30	VH1	0.2	545
30	INSP	0.2	512
30	SPK	0.2	500
30	APL	0.2	498
30	NGC	0.2	452
30	MTV	0.2	439
30	TRAV	0.2	438
30	BET	0.2	432
30	EN	0.2	411
30	LMN	0.2	407
30	WETV	0.2	400
30	GSN	0.2	397
30	TRU	0.2	386
30	CMDY	0.2	369

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





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