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What the Industry Reads First

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Battle Royale: YouTube TV's Expansion, Sinclair Deal Highlights vMVPD Moves

Increased competition between the major virtual MVPDs is on display this week, with several players in the space making moves to expand their reach and appeal to potential cord cutters. **Google's** offering, **YouTube TV**, expanded into 14 new markets Thursday, making it available to 50% of US households. New areas include Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Columbus, OH, Jacksonville-Brunswick, Las Vegas, Louisville, Memphis, Nashville, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, Seattle-Tacoma, Tampa-St. Petersburg-Sarasota and West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce. It plans to add another 17 markets in the coming weeks, marking a significant acceleration of its staggered rollout. Its Silicon Valley counterpart in the space, **Hulu**, launched in May, a month after YouTube TV, but jumped right in nationwide. Despite its smaller reach, YouTube TV claims to now have the complete set of all four major broadcast nets in more markets than any of its competitors. The service got a major boost by making a deal with **Sinclair Broadcast Group** to carry all of its **ABC, NBC, Fox** and **CBS** affiliates as the vMVPD launches in Sinclair markets. As part of the Sinclair deal, YouTube TV also added **Tennis Channel** to its lineup at no additional charge to subscribers. Sinclair said it also expects YouTube TV to soon add its **CW** and **MyNetwork TV stations**, as well the **Comet TV** sci-fi channel. Local channels have been an increased point of emphasis among all of the vMVPDs in recent weeks. Hulu on Thursday added three Fox stations, bringing its local count to 201. **PlayStation Vue** on Wednesday added another 15 local nets—11 ABC and 4 NBC—for a total of 186. Those two services seem to be the clubhouse leaders in terms of local nets, along with **DirectTV Now**, whose count was unavailable at press time. The use of local broadcast stations as a point of differentiation among streaming options is a boon for broadcasters. In a research note Thursday about Sinclair's deal with YouTube TV, **Wells Fargo Securities' Marci Ryvicker** wrote, "Consistent with what we've been hearing from peers, we think the economics are similar to, or better than, the net retrans generated from the traditional MVPDs." That jibes with comments from execs at cable nets like **NBCUniversal** CEO *Steve Burke*, who have also said the economics for carriage on vMVPDs are better for programmers than in traditional pay-TV packages. Meanwhile, as YouTube TV continues to expand its footprint, it seems to be preparing to increase its marketing muscle. The company hired **Fox Broadcasting CMO Angela Courtin** as global head of YouTube TV & Originals Market-



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ing, according to *Deadline*, and also added former **WGN America** programming exec *Jon Wax* as head of drama, scripted & current programming. (Wax's departure from WGN America follows Apple's recent hire of his former boss, WGN America pres/CEO *Matt Cherniss*, as its head of US programming.) Like Hulu, YouTube hopes its original **YouTube Red** content can become yet another differentiator, as it has for **Netflix** with its SVOD service.

Corner Kick: Another day, another sports streaming service. **Turner** on Thursday announced it will launch a stand-alone OTT sports service next year. Newly acquired multiplatform rights for **UEFA** Champions League and Europa League soccer matches will serve as a core element of the product. Turner made the three-year rights deal with UEFA official Thursday, though *SportsBusiness Journal* reported it back in February along with **Univision's** Spanish-language rights. In addition to making matches available on the OTT service, some will also be televised throughout the length of the deal. **Bleacher Report** will also provide extensive UEFA coverage and serve as a portal to live matches on the OTT service. It is unclear at this time what other content will be available on the service. Turner said it does not plan to move any content it currently airs on its linear nets—such as the **NBA** and **NCAA** Tournament—to the new service. Turner's streaming service announcement follows recent announcements by **ESPN** and **CBS** about plans for their own OTT offerings. Turner's direct-to-consumer portfolio includes **FilmStruck** and **Boomerang**.

Comcast Takes Wireless Nationwide: **Comcast** has completed its rollout of **Xfinity Mobile** across its footprint, with the service now available through retail stores and online. The wireless service leverages Comcast's MVNO deal with **Verizon**, as well as its 18 million WiFi hotspots. The company says nearly 70% of Xfinity Mobile customers connect to Xfinity WiFi when they are outside their homes. The service, which is available exclusively to Xfinity Internet customers, allows users to choose and easily switch between paying \$45/month for unlimited data or \$12 per GB of data each month. The majority of customers are choosing "By the Gig." For those on the unlimited plan, however, Comcast notes it reduces speeds after customers exceed 20GB of usage. Accounts can have a different payment structure for each line, with the company noting almost 25% of accounts so far have at least one line on each option. Available handsets include **Apple** iPhones, **Samsung** Galaxy devices and the **LG X Charge**.

Kentucky Fried: A federal judge in Kentucky ruled against **AT&T** in its lawsuit against the city of Louisville in which the telco company asserted an ordinance outlining new procedures to accommodate new broadband providers on utility poles. **Google Fiber** pushed for the new rules as part of its effort to enter the region. The judge determined Louisville has the authority to manage its rights-of-way and, therefore, the ordinance is valid.

Four Games at Once: **ESPN** is making it easier for fans to binge on sports with the launch of tvOS MultiCast on its app for **Apple TV**. The user interface delivers a second-screen experience all on one screen and five different ways to simultaneously view up to four live streams. It also has a slider scroll that allows the consumer to choose from 30-plus events across all the ESPN networks.

Programming: **Tennis Channel** acquired exclusive TV rights in the US for the newly formed Laver Cup, an annual competition between six of Europe's top stars and six from the rest of the world. The acquisition comes via a multiyear deal with event organizers **TRIDENT8** and **Tennis Australia**. The inaugural edition of the event is slated for Sept 22-24 in Prague. -- **Univision** will premiere the second season of "El Chapo" on Sept 17 at 10pm ET/PT. The 12 eps this season will be the first Univision original programming to air with English subtitles. **Netflix** is involved in the production of the series, along with Story House Entertainment, and the series will hit Netflix at a later date. -- Netflix renewed another original series, "Ozark," for a second season composed of 10 new eps. *Jason Bateman* stars in, produces and directs the drama. -- **Logo** and the **ACLU** are partnering to promote "Forbidden: Undocumented & Queer in Rural America," a new documentary following undocumented immigrant *Moises Serrano*. The film highlights Serrano, a gay man born in Mexico and raised in North Carolina, in his struggle to pursue the American dream. The film is set to premiere Sept 1 at 8pm ET/PT. -- **TLC** is bringing back paranormal investigation show "Kindred Spirits" for a second season. It is also introducing a new show, "Evil Things," will follow the stories of individuals claiming they've been victims of paranormal activity caused by haunted objects. Both shows premiere Sept 15. -- **MTV Unplugged** will return Sept 8 with multi-platinum singer/songwriter *Shawn Mendes*. -- Popular docu-series "Mary Mary" returns on **WE tv** for its sixth and final season Sept 28.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Hilarious Baroness...

Good comedy is like porn. You know it when you see it. And sometimes, it's also naked. "There's an ongoing tradition that male nudity can be hilarious, but why can't female nudity be hilarious?" asks *Jennifer Whalen*, co-creator of IFC's new comedy series "Baroness Von Sketch Show," which premiered this month. Adds co-creator *Meredith MacNeil*, who stars in a sketch depicting a gym that puts women in a separate locker room when they turn 40: "You can see women's bodies in all of their glory and shapes and sizes," she says. "It doesn't always have to be in a sexual way." Of course, nudity isn't really the point of Baroness Von Sketch, whose humor comes from a decidedly female perspective but also resonates across genders. Who doesn't have annoying co-workers? Who hasn't accidentally ordered a "Grande" at an indie coffee shop? And who hasn't progressed from using dry shampoo to eating a bear? Okay, maybe not that last one but still... "The thing that keeps the show burning in the writer's room is making sure that we're telling the truth," says MacNeil. "And that everything we're pulling from has relatable moments in it." The show, which ran for 2 seasons in Canada before IFC picked it up for the states, already has a following for its "Red Wine Ladies," whose wine habits and TMI-inspired conversations know no limits. "Especially as you get older, and you've got careers and family and partners or whatever, to find the time to get together with your favorite people that you don't see very often—you make a date, and you are going to get drunk," says showrunner and co-creator *Carolyn Clifford-Taylor*, who with other co-creators, including the hilarious *Aurora Browne*, painstakingly whittle down concepts into their relatable cores. To be sure, these gals know when to end a sketch. "It's being ruthless that way and knowing whether all the information is there—or is it too much," Clifford-Taylor says. Yep. You know when you see it. — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: "Mr. Mercedes," 8pm, Wednesday, **AT&T Audience**. Like many authors, *Stephen King* isn't always happy with how TV treats his books. He should be very pleased with this adaptation of his novel starring leonine *Brendan Gleeson* as a retired police detective and *Harry Treadaway* as a maniacal but intelligent killer. King's book is loaded with delicious narration, plumbing the inner thoughts of his characters. That's hard to do well on TV, so showrunner *David E. Kelley* has created an appropriately depressing visual tableau that becomes a character in the teleplay. He's also added a character to King's story, the detective's nosey, sex-starved neighbor, which *Holland Taylor* plays beautifully. Adding to Gleeson's outstanding performance and Treadaway's appropriately creepy portrayal, *Breeda Wool* makes the most of limited screen time as the killer's bored work colleague. — "Asian Provocateur," Thursday, **Sundance Now**. It's a tall order to claim a show is "like nothing else you've seen on TV," but this British import comes close. Season 1 covers comedian *Romesh Ranganathan's* trip to Sri Lanka to find his roots. He finds a lot more than that, including comedy nirvana in the things he does, including an Ayurveda cleanse, and those he meets—his Sri Lankan relatives are hilarious, as is his driver in episode 1, who understands just enough English to be dangerous. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable Rankings			
(8/07/17-8/13/17)			
Mon-Sun Prime			
1	FOXN	0.9	2136
2	MSNB	0.8	1754
3	NFLN	0.7	1280
4	USA	0.6	1429
4	HGTV	0.6	1409
6	TBSC	0.5	1225
6	HIST	0.5	1097
6	CNN	0.5	1062
9	A&E	0.4	1012
9	ID	0.4	961
9	DSNY	0.4	956
9	DISC	0.4	949
9	ESPN	0.4	895
9	FX	0.4	888
9	TNT	0.4	814
9	TLC	0.4	797
9	HMM	0.4	719
9	DSE	0.4	74
19	FOOD	0.3	822
19	ADSM	0.3	776
19	HALL	0.3	774
19	TVLD	0.3	709
19	NAN	0.3	637
19	BRAV	0.3	606
19	VH1	0.3	594
19	AMC	0.3	587
19	NKJR	0.3	540
19	DSJR	0.3	483
29	SYFY	0.2	558
29	INSP	0.2	505
29	APL	0.2	504
29	FRFM	0.2	500
29	LIFE	0.2	493
29	SPK	0.2	492
29	OWN	0.2	477
29	TRAV	0.2	451
29	NGC	0.2	443
29	MTV	0.2	421
29	WETV	0.2	411
29	CMDY	0.2	403
29	LMN	0.2	389
29	EN	0.2	372
29	BET	0.2	350
29	GSN	0.2	347

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

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