

Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — August 22, 2017

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 28 / No. 160

Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes: Less Viacom Music for Optimum Subscribers

We're still awaiting word on exactly which **Viacom** channels will be returning to **Suddenlink** systems any day now, but we know which networks will soon be leaving **Optimum** packages. Effective Friday, **NickMusic** and **BET Soul** will no longer be available to Optimum customers. Viacom rebranded its **MTV Hits** as kids music channel **Nick Music** last September, with **VH1 Soul** becoming **BET Soul** at the end of 2015. It is hardly surprising to see distributors dropping tiny digital networks, with even Viacom seeming to acknowledge the bloated bundle through CEO *Bob Bakish's* strategy to concentrate on six flagship channels: **Nick**, **Nick Jr**, **BET**, **MTV**, **Comedy Central** and **Paramount** (which will soon replace **Spike**). Optimum/Suddenlink owner **Altice USA** and Viacom announced a new distribution in May that includes advanced advertising and additional rights for the distribution of Viacom content, such as VR and 4K. The new pact also sees Viacom nets returning to Suddenlink after nearly three years. Altice USA CEO *Dexter Goei* told reporters last month that Suddenlink will launch up to 16 channels from Viacom, beginning in late August. Those launches will continue through year-end to hit more than 90% of Suddenlink's footprint. As for **NickMusic** and **BET Soul**, Optimum offered the nets in its residential Preferred, Silver & Gold packages as well as in the commercial Business & Entertainment Preferred packages. This week, Optimum is also retiring **MTV2** and **Nick Jr**. **MTV2** will be removed from the Optimum Value package, with **Nick Jr** being added to the Value offering (this fits with the Viacom flagship strategy). **MTV2** will continue to be carried in Preferred, Silver and Gold packages.

ATSC 3.0 and Retrans: **Verizon** reps met with **FCC** Media Bureau staffers last week to discuss the broadcast TV transition to ATSC 3.0. The company strongly supports the FCC requiring broadcasters to provide a simulcast of their programming in ATSC 1.0. Like **ACA**, Verizon urged the FCC to ensure the simulcast is the same for both signals with approximately the same geographic coverage. Verizon's other suggestions include a one-year "quiet" period prior to the expiration of a retrans deal for an ATSC 1.0 signal, during which time a broadcast station can't negotiate for the first-time carriage of an ATSC 3.0 signal. The company suggested the FCC could find it a violation of the duty to negotiate retrans in good faith if a broadcaster conditioned carriage of 1.0 on a commitment for

Optimizing Field Force Operations.

A Solution for Today, A Strategy for Tomorrow

Discover how leading providers are increasing their field force efficiency and saving money TODAY with advanced, automated solutions to provide the strategic framework for the FUTURE.

Download the new industry analysis from Stratecast to learn how you can optimize your field service operations.

Visit www.csgi.com.



Compliments of CSG



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

first-time carriage of the 3.0 signal.

More Retrans Concerns: The **American TV Alliance**, whose members include **DISH**, **Charter**, **AT&T** and **ACA**, recently met with the **FCC's** Office of the General Counsel to discuss retrans concerns related to a broadcaster proposal to eliminate the "top-four prong" of the local ownership rule, which prevents broadcasters from combining two of the top-four-ranked stations in a market. The group believes the FCC would face "substantial legal hurdles" if it were to relax the rule without seeking further input on how it would affect retrans prices and addressing harms it has already found that would arise. That last bit is a nod to an order adopted three years ago that banned non-commonly owned top-four broadcasters from participating in joint retrans negotiations. At the time, the FCC cited data that joint negotiation by top-four stations increased retrans prices by 20% (or in some cases as much as 43%). ATVA argues that the issues are the same. "If a party can increase prices when it can negotiate on behalf of two noncommonly owned top-four stations in a market, it can also increase prices when it owns two top four stations in that market and negotiates for both," it said in an ex parte filing.

Cisco Buying Springpath: **Cisco** announced its intent to buy hyperconvergence software company **Springpath** for \$320mln. The two are no strangers, having worked together since early 2016 on "HyperFlex," described as the industry's first hyperconverged infrastructure system. The acquisition is expected to close in the first quarter of Cisco's FY2018.

DISH Retrans Rift: Amid retrans negotiations, **DISH** on Friday extended its deal to carry **ABC** affiliate **WLNE-TV** in Providence, RI, through Wednesday. The agreement with station owner **Citadel Communications** was initially set to expire last Friday night. The extension allows the parties a bit more time to negotiate a new agreement before service is interrupted. **DISH** said it has provided thousands of customers with over-the-air antennas. In a statement, the company added it has been "talking with customers in Providence every day about the benefits of digital antennas, the seamless experience on Hopper, and the money they can save now and into the future."

X1 for Sports Fans: **Comcast** unveiled an easier-to-use, immersive sports guide that sections out each major league, creating landing pages for the **NFL**, **MLB**, and even sports like cricket and golf. The guide features live scores and the ability to see any game that is on and preview upcoming ones.

Programming: **Oxygen** is further expanding its true crime offerings with "The Disappearance of Maura Murray," a six-part series following the 13-year-old cold case, Sept 30 at 9pm. -- **VH1** greenlit a third season of "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars," a spinoff of "RuPaul's Drag Race," which just finished its ninth season. The show previously aired on sister network **Logo**. **VH1** also greenlit another season of "RuPaul's Drag Race: Untucked," a behind-the-scenes after show. -- **HGTV** has picked up 14 additional episodes of "Flip or Flop Atlanta" for a second season in 2018. The show marks the second spinoff in the "Flip or Flop" franchise. -- **Netflix** is bringing back "Friends From College" for a sophomore season.

Sports Tackle Hate: **MLB** is partnering with **ESPN** on a bullying prevention initiative called "Shred Hate." The league will incorporate the practices from Shred Hate into its various youth programs while the initiative itself will be modified to incorporate baseball themes into its curricula. **No Bully**, the nonprofit working directly with participating school districts, will also be promoted through both **ESPN** and **MLB's** multimedia channels. Shred Hate will be active during the 2017-2018 academic year in Chicago, DC, and Minneapolis schools, expanding to additional cities following its initial launch.

People: **Linda Cardenas** was named head of viewer experience operations for **Hulu**. She will lead Hulu's viewer experience team at its new contact center in San Antonio, TX, reporting to Hulu's vp of viewer experience **Karen Van Kirk**. Cardenas most recently served as svp, customer service for mortgage lender **SWBC**. -- **NBCUniversal** is adding **Trevor Fellows** to the team as evp, digital sales and strategy, a newly created position. He'll oversee the monetization of new business models for the entire NBCU portfolio as well as focusing efforts on driving revenues through digital and social platforms. -- Longtime **Cox Automotive** and **Manheim** standout **Mary Ellen Marcilliat-Falkner** is joining **Cox Media Group** as svp & chief HR officer, bringing over 20 years of experience to the position.