

Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — September 12, 2017

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 28 / No. 174

Irma's Aftermath: Assessments Continue as Storm Moves North

The general consensus seemed to be that things could have been much worse for Florida as Irma made land-fall over the weekend. Even with the storm making some shifts and weakening, there was still plenty of impact. **Nielsen** reported Monday that ratings will be delayed with its team evacuating Tampa Bay due to the hurricane. **Comcast** was beginning restoration efforts Monday, with damage including a fiber line on a primary hub serving Palm Beach County, according to a Palm Beach Post report. A spokesperson said power issues are mainly to blame, not just to customers' homes but also to local Comcast distribution points that serve neighborhoods. Comcast said its hotspots, which it opened up for free in advance of the storm, have remained 90% operational throughout the storm. **Atlantic Broadband** and **Charter** also were assessing damage Monday. Atlantic Broadband said internet, phone and TV was down for William's Island, Indian Creek, Bay Harbor Islands, Surfside, South Miami, Miami, Miami Beach, Aventura and Sunny Isles. While Florida bore the brunt of the storm, Irma's impact was felt in much of the Southeast, including Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama. Last week, [investors were spooked by the possible financial impact of Harvey](#) in Southeast TX. Expect this week's **Goldman Sachs** investor conference, whose lineup of speakers includes **Charter's Tom Rutledge** and **Altice USA's Dexter Goei**, to dive deeper into the topic. On television, there were plenty of meteorologists and reporters being battered by Irma's rains and wind, notably **CNN's Sara Sidner** who was clutching a balcony in Daytona in the 1am ET hour to keep from being blown away. Networks had to decide Monday whether to stick with Irma or move to 9/11 anniversary coverage. For the first time since 2006, **MSNBC** chose not to re-air footage from that day as it happened. "We have decided internally to move away from the re-air and instead focus on other ways of commemorating 9/11 such as long-form documentaries," a spokeswoman said. **Fox News** stuck pretty much to what it normally does on the anniversary, with one Irma report in the 9am hour between moments of silence. CNN, Fox and MSNBC all carried the White House moment of silence at 8:46am, but Fox News devoted the most attention to the attacks, including the reading of victims' names at the National September 11 Memorial. Meanwhile, the **FCC** has its Disaster Information Reporter System in effect for Florida, Georgia, Alabama,

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Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The agency has waived for at least 90 days Lifeline rules impacting Florida residents. It lifted rules requiring that carriers de-enroll subscribers who do not pay a monthly fee for their Lifeline-supported service and do not use that service for 30 consecutive days. As of 11am ET Monday, the FCC reported that nearly 7.6mln subscribers in Florida were without service from cable and wireline providers, with widespread power outages to blame in many instances.

Retrans Watch: **Cable One** had a brief dust-up with broadcaster **Forum Communications**, impacting **ABC** affiliates in Fargo (**WDAY**) and Grand Forks (**WDAZ**). While the stations went dark on the MSO after their contract expired Friday morning, the two reached an agreement Monday with stations returning in the afternoon. **Dispatch's** two stations in Indianapolis (**WTHR-NBC**) and Columbus (**WBNS-CBS**) remain dark on **DirecTV**. Notre Dame is on the road this week, so Saturday's game will be on **ESPN**. However, the **NFL's** Browns are playing Sunday on CBS. Meanwhile, DirecTV and **Raycom** are still in negotiations over stations in 43 markets, with the two extending contract talks again Monday, the third extension since their contract expired last month.

Young Folks: An **ION Media**-commissioned **Nielsen** study reported a rise in the number of broadcast-only homes over the last 5 years. The 41% increase brings the total to 15.8mln households as more millennial viewers make the switch. The median age of viewers in broadcast-only homes is 34.5 years, five years lower than the median age in total TV households, 39.6 years. Broadcast-only households were also more likely to have children in the household as well as a greater number of working head of householders than total TV homes. The study also found broadcast-only has become the choice of those looking for programming catered to diverse audiences, with 42% of Hispanic, Asian and African-American households favoring the option vs 30% of total TV households.

Creative Arts Emmys: It remains to be seen if this weekend's Primetime Emmys will follow a similar trend, but **HBO** led Sunday's Creative Arts Emmy wins with 19. Runner-up **Netflix** had 16, with five of those for "Stranger Things." **HBO's** "Westworld" also nabbed five wins as did **NBC's** "SNL." Programmers with multiple wins include **NBC** (9), **ABC** (7), **Fox** (5) and **Hulu** (5).

Programming: **NFL Network** is focusing on rising football talent with its new Tuesday night block. "Football Town: Valdosta," debuts Tuesday at 10pm ET, and will take an in-depth look at the winningest high school football program in the country. It will be followed by "Elite 11" at 10:30pm ET, a deep dive into the two-week summer competition between the nation's top high school quarterbacks as they fight to make it to the Beaverton, OR, finals or be named Elite 11 MVP. -- **Showtime** ordered a second season of "I'm Dying Up Here," a drama centered on the L.A. stand-up comedy scene of the 1970s. Created and executive produced by *Jim Carrey* amongst others, the series will head back into production this fall, with 10 eps set to premiere in 2018. -- **Sony**-owned streaming service **Crackle's** "StartUp," an original drama series following a group of unlikely entrepreneurs, is returning for a ten-episode second season on Sept 28.

Big Apple Ads: **LBI Media** is coming to Times Square and beyond with a new outdoor ad campaign for **EstrellaTV Network**, promoting its programming and talent to the new homes it's reaching as a part of expanded distribution deals with **DISH**, **DirecTV**, **Cox** and more. The campaign, running from Sept 18 through Nov 30, aims to increase brand recognition of EstrellaTV's highest rated shows, including "Rica Famosa Latina" and "Noches Con Platanito."

People: **Viacom** promoted *Liza Burnett Fefferman* to svp, communications, a move that expands her role to include oversight of communications for **MTV** in addition to **VH1** and **Logo**. She joined Viacom in May 2016 from **Radius**. -- Former **FTC** chmn *Edith Ramirez* is taking a new role at **Hogan Lovells** as co-head of its antitrust, competition and economic regulation practice. She'll also serve as a partner in the privacy and cybersecurity practice. -- **OverTier**, the company responsible for operating the **NFL's** revamped OTT platform in Europe, hired *Sam Jones* as its CEO. The joint venture between **Bruin Sports Capital** and **WPP** formed earlier this year as part of a long-term agreement with the NFL. Jones, who most recently served as a group managing director at **Bauer Media Group**, will report to Bruin CEO *George Pyne*.



Sling Wins Fight Night with PPV

The book isn't closed on any big-time boxing promotion until all the money is counted, and last month's *Floyd Mayweather-Conor McGregor* megafight is no exception. Industry folks are still waiting to find out whether the **Showtime** card broke Mayweather's previous record for most PPV buys—4.6m against *Manny Pacquiao* in 2015. Showtime and **UFC's** refund offers to customers who experienced technical difficulties streaming the fight—plus a class-action lawsuit—could complicate that calculus.

Regardless of whether the fight breaks the record, however, **Sling TV** is already chalking up its own presentation of the fight as a success. The **DISH**-owned live TV service became the first virtual MVPD to offer a PPV event with UFC 214 in July, but the August boxing match between the undefeated champ and UFC challenger was a far more significant test.

While OTT services and pay-TV providers alike experienced difficulties with order volume in the moments leading up to the fight, Sling's fight night went off without a hitch.

"Given its higher viewership, we absolutely needed to make sure that our systems could handle all that pressure on the back end," said Sling vp, business development and operations *Sruta Vootukuru*. "Not only in the back end, since the majority of the volume of buys typically tends to happen just before the event—most people are making a last-minute decision about whether they want to watch the fight or not—the front-end systems needed to be really buttoned up and able to handle that immense load within such a finite window of time."

Vootukuru said the company had been preparing to offer PPV for nearly two years, a long time considering Sling only launched in 2015. Given the \$100 price tag for customers, it wasn't something the company took lightly. Fight night was an all-hands-on-deck scenario for Sling,

which had multiple command centers and two so-called "war rooms."

"We had representation from across all areas," Vootukuru said. "When I say all areas, literally think of marketing, production operations, customer care, social, digital. Everyone was there, everyone had at least one to two people representing, if not more. We watched all the fights that preceded the main fight, too, and we were making sure that the social sentiment was really good and keeping our finger on the pulse of any concerns that any customer experienced."

Macquarie Research's Amy Yong estimated MVPDs selling the fight would take about 40-50% of approximately \$500m in PPV revenue for the Mayweather-McGregor fight. It's unclear whether the economics are the same for virtual MVPDs like Sling, particularly given networks are believed to receive higher rates for carriage from such services. Vootukuru declined to comment on PPV economics for Sling, as well as how many customers purchased the fight through the platform. Still, she said she was happy with the event in terms of both PPV buys and subscriber acquisition.

Sling continued its PPV offerings over the weekend with UFC 215 and this weekend is offering **HBO's** highly anticipated middleweight between *Canelo Álvarez* and *Gennady Golovkin* on Saturday night.

In what has become a very competitive ecosystem, several virtual MVPDs have recently sought to set themselves apart by accruing as many local broadcast nets as possible. For Sling, which has stayed out of that particular arms race, PPV for now remains a totally unique feature in the market.

Going Mobile: Mobile World Congress Americas gets under way in San Fran on Tuesday. Expect on-the-ground coverage in **Cablefax** this week, focused on how cable operators fit into a 5G future, opportunities in the IoT sphere and the dynamic regulatory environment.



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