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What the Industry Reads First

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BET Her: Viacom Keeps Smaller Nets in the Family

Just because **Viacom** has been focusing on its “Flagship Six” networks since last February doesn’t mean that it has forgotten about its smaller linear offerings. Case in point is eight-year-old **Centric**, which will transition Monday into **BET Her**, a lifestyle network centered on the interests of the African American woman. The BET sister net is aiming to be the go-to destination for that audience around the clock. Reflecting the unique perspectives of its viewers, content will be centered on everything from lifestyle to empowerment. Those behind BET Her are also looking to make it a space to discuss the challenges facing the community, especially those in world of healthcare. “We see these big issues in the world, whether its breast cancer awareness or heart disease or diabetes that a lot of people don’t know disproportionately affect black women, so we’re going to bring that forward and bring that to the light,” said *Michele Thornton*, svp media sales for BET Her and the exec spearheading the net’s launch. So serious is BET Her about this subject, it tapped “BET Her Fights: Breast Cancer” as the brand’s first tentpole event. A one-hour concert airing Oct 22, the special will alternate between performances from the network’s favorite artists and stories from those impacted by cancer. The network’s regular programming will include original content like the third season of *Nicci Gilbert’s* “From the Bottom Up,” as well as one or two original movies per quarter. What won’t be found is much duplication between BET Her and other Viacom nets like **VH1** or **BET**, with Thornton saying that content is only “10% respectively from both networks.” Shortly after ascending to the role of Viacom CEO, *Bob Bakish* announced a strategy that has the programmer [focusing resources on six flagship brands](#)—**BET**, **MTV**, **Nickelodeon**, **Nick Jr**, **Comedy Central** and **Paramount Network**. He made it clear, however, that other properties, including **VH1** and **TV Land** fall into the category of “reinforcing brands.” That’s the goal with BET Her. Though Thornton made it clear that Viacom has been more than supportive of a 24/7 net for the African American woman throughout the development process, partnering with BET was a necessity for it to have a chance at cementing itself as a must-have. “If we really wanted to be smart in a time when there’s so much fragmentation going on, we needed to align with our big sister BET because she is the biggest and baddest black network in the marketplace,” she said. Thornton noted that the network expects all Centric affiliates to carry BET Her following the transition. Centric is currently reaching about 50mln homes, which Thornton said equates to about 22mln African American women. Digital will be an important



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component, with the net using the space to tell many of the community's unspoken stories. With CentricTV.com currently boasting about 1.6 million unique visitors, BET Her will have a solid audience base to tap into. "We're going to press them and push them to BET.com—we're going to have a vertical for BET Her and we're really going to dig in there," Thornton explained when speaking on the content distribution and their chosen focuses. "It's all the things that we have seen through the research and insight that we've done over the last thirty plus years on black women."

Retrans Drama: Will **DirecTV** and **U-verse** subs lose yet another broadcast signal? We should know Friday afternoon, when **Meredith's** contract with AT&T is set to expire. **Dispatch** stations have been dark on **AT&T-owned DirecTV** since Sept 6, while U-verse lost **Capitol Broadcasting** stations on Sept 13. A **Raycom** deal with DirecTV hasn't been wrapped yet either, but multiple extensions are a positive sign.

August Ad Spend: The Rio Olympics makes it a bit hard for year-over-year ad spend comparisons for broadcast, but it's a different story for cable. Cable lost only 1 percentage point compared to Aug 2016, compared to broadcast's -54% YOY loss, according to the latest **Standard Media Index** figures. While **NBCU** cabling had plenty of Olympic coverage last summer, they didn't have the ad dollars. SMI reports 92% of all Olympic spend went to broadcast. The firm said cable's August 2017 stats were helped by a 27% YOY spending boost at ESPN attributed to preseason **NFL** games, more US Open taking place in August than in 2016 and higher unit rates around **MLB** games (not to mention less Olympic competition!). The red-hot cable news slowed down a bit, which also has been born out in recent ratings. For August, the newscasters saw a 2% increase in (6% for the big three—**CNN**, **Fox News** and **MSNBC**). "While overall there is still growth, this is the first month we've seen any loss across these networks with Fox News earning -2.5% less revenue on all news programming. CNN saw a +8% increase, and MSNBC continues to see the highest percentage of growth with a +26% increase across its news programs," SMI said, noting the numbers reflect only the programs considered news.

Our House: **Comcast** continued its major push in the home automation space this week with the acquisition of IoT technology company **Stringify**. A Comcast spokesperson confirmed the startup's earlier announcement, saying, "Stringify's elegant, powerful Internet of Things automation platform and dynamic group of technologists are both natural fits for the team that is building next-generation IoT experiences for xFi and Xfinity Home." At the end of 2Q, Comcast was providing more than 1mln customers with security and automation services. The deal follows a partnership established last month with **Sunrun**, which allows Comcast to take up to 10% equity in the solar energy provider based on customer acquisition figures. Comcast is also involved in enterprise and municipal applications of IoT, as it expanded its **machineQ** service to 12 US markets in July.

Apple a Day: **Comcast** is opening its Xfinity retail stores at 8am local time Saturday to let customers purchase the new **Apple** iPhone 8 and iPhone 8 Plus. Xfinity Internet customers who activate a new Xfinity Mobile line in stores can get the new iPhone and trade in their old device to receive a check for its monetary value.

Weather Disasters: The images and stats coming out of Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria and in Mexico following an earthquake are just staggering. The **FCC** reported Thursday that more than 95% of Puerto Rico's wireless cell sites are out of service. **Telemundo** announced a four-hour live special hosted by *Don Francisco* to raise money for victims of both Maria and the quake. It will air Sunday at 7pm ET. **Univision** has a live, seven-hour special airing Saturday that will benefit those in Puerto Rico and Mexico as well as Florida and Texas. "Unidos por los Nuestrós" will begin airing at 7pm ET on the flagship broadcast channel, as well as **Univision Deportes** and streaming service **Univision NOW**. Spanish language-broadcaster **LBI Media** has activated a campaign across its nets, including **Estrella TV**, to raise money in support of Mexico's victims. Donations are being driven to www.youcaring.com/TodosConMexico.

Crystal Clear: Beginning with Oklahoma-Baylor this weekend, **DISH** will deliver select college football games from **FS1** in 4K to its customers with a 4K-enabled Hopper 3 set-tops. The move is part of a broader agreement between DISH and **Fox** that includes future 4K coverage of college basketball, **MLB** and **NASCAR**. DISH joins **DirecTV** and **Layer3** in offering Fox's 4K telecasts. The satellite provider also offers 4K content from **NBCU**, **Netflix**, **The Orchard** and **Mance Media**.

Ratings: **ESPN** and **ESPN2** are averaging 224K viewers P2+ per game for the **WNBA** playoffs, up 6% from 2016. -- A day after **Telemundo** touted a 2016-17 ratings victory over **Univision** in key demos, Univision fired back, pronouncing it was the most-viewed Spanish-language network in primetime among all viewers for the 25th consecutive season.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

BET Breaks into Late-Night with 'The Rundown'

BET is taking another stab at the late-night space, tapping African American comedy icon and BET family member *Robin Thede* to serve up the satire. "We love it when we get an opportunity to introduce a female late-night show host and Robin—it is her time," *Connie Orlando*, BET's interim head of programming, said in an interview with **Cablefax**. Launching Thursday (9/28) at 11pm ET/PT, "The Rundown" will provide audiences with a 30-minute weekly recap of all things politics and pop culture through everything from sketch comedy to parodies. Thede will also be providing social commentary on current events with her unique point of view. The show will be taped on the day it airs, preventing it from losing its timeliness. "It gives us a lot of flexibility to be current and be relevant, and be a part of the conversation," Orlando said. Thede's made a name for herself in the world of comedy as the first and only African American woman to serve as head writer on a late-night comedy series—**Comedy Central's** "Nightly Show." Since then, she's served as a cast member and writer for a number of shows and productions, including the first two seasons of BET's "The Real Husbands of Hollywood." "The Rundown" also acts as a continuation of Thede's collaboration with *Chris Rock*, who is serving as an executive producer on the project. Rock hosted the 2014 BET Awards, Thede's first writing assignment. It's Thede's combination of no-holds-bar analysis with her pure comedic talent that will allow her to cement herself as a late-night fixture, according to Orlando. "I think she'll be around for a long time," Orlando said. "She uses the funny to get the impact... As a network, you're always looking for things that are relevant, radically bold and fun, and this checks a lot of boxes for us." – *Sara Winegardner*

Reviews: "Liar," premiere, 10pm, Wednesday, **Sundance**. What happened here? A seemingly well-mannered surgeon (the wonderful *Ioan Gruffudd*) is on a date with a schoolteacher (*Joanne Froggatt* of "Downton Abbey"). Things proceed extremely well: dinner, laughter, banter, drinks and then off to the teacher's home for a night-cap. The next morning, though, the teacher accuses the surgeon of rape. The surgeon says it was consensual sex. Then the layers of the onion are peeled back, one at a time. The teacher's ex is a police officer and her sister works with the surgeon. The surgeon's former wife was a suicide and his teenage son is one of the teacher's students. We anxiously await the truth about "Liar." -- "Vice Principals," 10:30pm, Sunday, **HBO**. That there are several ways to interpret this original and dark comedy from *Danny McBride* and *Jody Hill* about administrators in a suburban high school might not be enough to garner many viewers. Still, it's a treat for those who get it. Is school principal *Lee Russell* (a tremendous performance from *Walton Goggins*) the devil or just an attention-starved, insecure megalomaniac? Both interpretations are plausible, as are others. Interestingly, McBride's vice principal *Neal Gamby*, ostensibly Russell's sidekick, may be in the midst of a personality change: under his dented suit of armor there may be a heart. -*Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings (9/11/17-9/18/17)			
		Mon-Sun Rtg	(000s)
1	ESPN	1.3	2867
2	FOXN	0.9	2111
3	MSNB	0.7	1625
3	NFLN	0.7	1211
5	USA	0.6	1496
5	HGTV	0.6	1366
7	TBSC	0.5	1142
7	HIST	0.5	1049
7	ID	0.5	1031
10	CNN	0.4	1016
10	DSNY	0.4	865
10	TNT	0.4	831
10	ADSM	0.4	821
10	HALL	0.4	802
10	TLC	0.4	800
10	DSE	0.4	77
17	FOOD	0.3	806
17	FX	0.3	780
17	DISC	0.3	774
17	A&E	0.3	756
17	TVLD	0.3	712
17	LIFE	0.3	666
17	AMC	0.3	641
17	FRFM	0.3	625
17	NAN	0.3	603
17	HMM	0.3	583
17	NKJR	0.3	569
17	OWN	0.3	542
29	CMDY	0.2	557
29	VH1	0.2	546
29	BRAV	0.2	507
29	INSP	0.2	504
29	SYFY	0.2	503
29	APL	0.2	500
29	DSJR	0.2	458
29	WETV	0.2	438
29	SPK	0.2	433
29	BET	0.2	416
29	TRAV	0.2	403
29	LMN	0.2	401
29	NGC	0.2	393
29	WGNA	0.2	372
29	MTV	0.2	362
29	TRU	0.2	347

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



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