

CABLE-TEC EXPO DAY 3

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What the Industry Reads First

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Touch Points: Improved UX Design and Functionality Remain High Priorities

Comcast's incorporation of voice control into its X1 user interface has changed the way its customers access and discover content, but it might just be the tip of the iceberg. VIPER, a startup division within Comcast, is working on technology that, if mastered, would take the search function as we know it to a new level. Instead of users being limited to simple metadata searches (i.e. program title), the technology VIPER is developing would provide users with search results based on linear dialogue on a specific program. VIPER senior principal architect *Chris Lintz* during a presentation at **Cable-Tec Expo** on Thursday used someone interested in "Donald Trump and healthcare" as an example. When that person comes home, he or she would have multiple video clips on their cloud DVR featuring discussion of Trump and healthcare policy. Depending on their settings, they might have even received a mobile notification that a new clip is waiting for them. "Investors can stay on top of every important conversation about their stocks. Fantasy football fans can capture news and interviews with their roster of players. Researchers and entertainment fans will no longer miss content that brings value to their lives," Lintz wrote in his technical paper on the concept. The technology would be able to analyze closed captioning data, which Lintz called the "low-hanging fruit," but could also identify shot changes or transitions in a program and analyze the audio and video associated with them. Think of a cable news show moving from one segment to another. It would even be capable of searching Comcast content that a particular customer isn't entitled to in their plan, which could create upsell opportunities. Lintz said the tech is still in the development phase, adding a trial late next year would be a best-case scenario. Improving the user interface to keep up with OTT services like **Netflix** has been a priority across the industry. The incorporation of those very OTT services into set-top boxes has become fashionable among pay-TV providers, who see the strategy as a way to keep customers in their environment and provide additional value. **Arris** CTO *Charles Cheevers* shared data Thursday indicating that such efforts are useful in improving customer satisfaction and could potentially reduce cord-cutting. A survey of 900 Americans across multiple states and job functions showed a correlation between integrated OTT sources and customer satisfaction. More than 85% of respondents who rated their satisfaction an 8-10 on a 10-point scale commented on the importance of OTT service integration and the ability to access multiple services via a single remote or HDMI input. Cheevers pointed to additional set-top box functionality as a way to distract from customers'



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desire to reduce the cost of their video services, or simply as a way to justify high prices. “The set-top box and the user experience it drives remain the key element for retaining customers and growing with them as we see screen technology evolve,” Cheevers wrote in his paper. While customers certainly seem to enjoy the ability to utilize OTT services via their set-top boxes, Cheevers’ research also showed that they still utilize live TV service much more frequently. Among users set-top boxes with integrated Netflix functionality, live TV had more than 10 times more session use on average than the next-most accessed menu, which was the grid guide. Still, Netflix sessions tended to be longer in duration.

Nada on Univision: The loss of **Univision** networks wasn’t brought up on **Verizon’s** 3Q call Thursday, but plenty of letter writing is happening. The **National Hispanic Media Coalition** sent a letter this week to Verizon’s CEO lamenting the blackout, which began at 5pm ET Monday. Citing the recent disasters in Mexico and Puerto Rico, NHMC head *Alex Nogales* wrote, “I advise that you put Univision back on the air while you work out your business arrangements. Anything else is detrimental to our community and Verizon risks being ostracized by Latino consumers that will not forget that at a time of crisis and need Verizon turned its back on us.” On Thursday, Verizon sent a letter to **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai*, declaring that the Spanish-language programmer has insisted on unreasonable terms that would raise prices for its customers. The telco has said Univision wants double its current annual payment. In the letter, Verizon defended its decision not to seek another contract extension Monday. “Univision’s proposals made it clear that the parties were at an impasse, and that a further extension would not result in an offer that would deliver a reasonable rate for Verizon’s customers,” the company said. Interesting to note that Verizon is pointing customers to the \$5.99/month direct-to-consumer offering Univision NOW, telling the FCC it’s “a much better deal than what they are offering Verizon for customers who watch their channels through FiOS.” The service has linear feeds of Univision and **UniMas** along with some library content, but does not include **Galavision** or the popular **Univision Deportes**. Univision CEO *Randy Falco* took Verizon to task in his own letter to Pai on Tuesday, saying he’d never seen a distributor so “precipitously reject an extension and abruptly cease negotiating with a broadcaster.” A few politicians have weighed in on social media, with Reps *Hank Johnson* (D-GA) and *Adriano Espaillat* (D-NY) encouraging both companies to negotiate.

Beating the Heat: **Comcast** and **Rogers** are both dedicating significant resources to manage the energy used to cool their edge facilities. Both companies presented their findings at **Cable-Tec Expo** from recent trials at several of their respective facilities. At Rogers, HVAC costs account for about 38% of a given facility’s energy usage, behind only the IT critical processes themselves (55%). Comcast senior manager, sustainability *Daniel Marut* estimated based on modeling at 10 facilities that the company can save approximately \$10mln by more efficiently managing energy at its 1,600



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edge spaces, or about 3% of its annual electricity spend. Rogers senior engineer *John Dolan* determined from similar modeling that the company could save \$2K per computer room air conditioning unit by raising the set point by 1-degree Fahrenheit, which accounts for savings of \$1mln per 50 similar facilities. Dolan stressed that airflow is key, so keeping supply and return air separate is the most effective way to improve the efficiency of a cooling system.

Tech It Out: WICT held its annual Tech It Out conference as part of **Cable-Tec Expo** on Thursday, giving some of the industry's most accomplished women the opportunity to share their experiences with others. Moderator *Jana Henthorn*, pres/CEO of the **Cable Center**, noted it has been a "horrible couple of weeks" for women in the news, referring to the sexual harassment and assault accusations against *Harvey Weinstein*. "It was bad in the cable industry prior to HR; really, really bad when I was starting out in cable," Charter svp, operations *Deborah Picciolo* recalled. "If somebody is doing that behavior to you, it's speaking out and saying, 'it's not acceptable, I will not tolerate it.' And now, obviously, go to HR, as well." **Arris** director of product line management *Tal Laufer* said comments that belittle women are still frequent in the workplace. She urged women to take offenders aside and let them know their remarks are unacceptable. During the Q&A portion of the event, an audience member expressed concern about the average age of Expo attendees, lamenting the lack of youth in cable. Laufer stressed the importance of emphasizing that cable, particularly through broadband, is enabling people to do incredible things. "Young people are looking for this kind of meaning, to feel like you're doing something to change the world," she said.

Verizon 3Q: Verizon said the ongoing shift from traditional linear video to OTT impacted **FIOS** video, which posted losses of 18K in 3Q. FIOS Internet adds of 66K beat the consensus of 55K. DSL losses totaled 76K, which **MoffettNathanson** said was "quite a bit worse" than consensus expectations of -35K. Thursday's earnings call didn't shed any light on content partnerships that CEO *Lowell McAdam* mentioned at an investor conference last month. CFO *Matt Ellis* said that the transaction has taken longer than expected (McAdam had indicated one partnership could be ready by the end of September). As for OTT, Verizon thinks it makes sense to be in the space, but it doesn't want to launch a "me too" product. "We're continuing to look at what makes sense for us to launch that's differentiated in that space, probably around live programming. But how and when we launching something will be TBD," Ellis said. *Bloomberg* reported this week that the telco is aiming to launch an online TV service in the spring, citing unnamed sources. Verizon was tightlipped on M&A, with Ellis declining to comment on a **Sprint-T-Mobile** combo. "We have the right set of assets to compete irrespective of the industry structure. That's what we're focused on, and I'm very confident in our ability to be successful however things play out with other people."

A Whole New World: **AMC** launched a VR app placing users into the nets' original series, including "The Walking Dead" and "Into the Badlands." The AMC VR app takes users through scenarios like becoming a walker from the hit zombie-centric series or tackling martial arts training in the fight camp from Badlands. To celebrate The Walking Dead's 100th episode, the AMC VR app will have an extended 360-degree bonus scene from Sunday's Season 8 premiere following the episode's conclusion. The app is available on iOS, Android, Gear VR and Google Daydream. Meanwhile, **Sling TV** is giving new customers free access to Sling Orange this weekend. Running from 8am ET Sun through 3am on Monday, the preview features free live and on-demand content just in time for AMC's premiere of Walking Dead.

FCC Counsel: **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* announced the appointment of *Thomas Johnson* as general counsel. Acting general counsel *Nick Degani* will revert to his role as senior counsel to Pai when the transition occurs next week. Johnson currently serves as deputy solicitor general for West Virginia Attorney General *Patrick Morrisey*.

More Fox For Hulu: Nine additional **Fox** affiliates have come to **Hulu**, giving the service more than 290 affiliate channels. These additions mean that 80% of TV households across the US have access to three or more broadcast stations.

Vegas Strong: **Yurview**, a local origination TV network managed by **Cox**, announced plans to broadcast and stream "Vegas Strong: A Night of Healing" nationwide on Oct 19 at 8pm PT from The Orleans Arena in Las Vegas. The benefit event honors victims, survivors and first responders from the tragic Oct 1 shooting and features performances from top country artists. The event will stream live nationwide at YurView.com/VegasStrong.

Standing Ovation: **Ovation** and **Spectrum** have come together to launch the Ovation+Spectrum Stand for the Arts Awards initiative. Ovation will donate \$60,000 to six Spectrum markets in support of local arts, cultural, and educational organizations: NYC, LA, Austin, Columbus, Syracuse and Raleigh. Awards of \$10,000 will be presented through Oct and Nov to the recipient in each market by Ovation and Spectrum reps, while government officials and local press will also be invited to attend. Award winners were evaluated on their level of community outreach and engagement, their ability to create inclusive access to arts programming and innovative approaches to arts education.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Hell's Kitchen

Several weeks ago, **Cablefax** shined a light on the dearth of crafting and hobby programs on cable today. "At Home with Amy Sedaris"—set to premiere Tuesday on **truTV**—won't quite fill that void, but it'll have longtime fans of the genre in stitches. The titular comic is at her best as the host of her own satirical cooking and crafting show, brilliantly poking fun at the quaint charm of the programs she enjoyed as a child growing up in North Carolina. The sketch comedy disguised as a how-to-style homemaking show, a la *Martha Stewart*, is almost befuddling in its uniqueness. "It's first and foremost a comedy show with Amy Sedaris," said truTV svp, development and original programming *Angel Annussek*. "She's obviously working off the presentational format of the various cooking shows and crafting shows from her youth as a jumping off point for comedy for her." Even while she's spoofing it, however, her love of crafting and the domestic arts shines through. "She's not creating a character out of full cloth," Annussek said. "She is bringing her true self to this project. It's a very personal project for her." Despite being a lifetime crafting enthusiast, Sedaris isn't exactly a virtuoso. While making a paper flag for her "potato ship" during the first episode, for example, she dumps way too much Elmer's glue out of the bottle. Rolling with the punches, she uses the excess adhesive to make the flag look like it's blowing in the wind and continues despite her sticky fingers "She's genuinely trying to do these crafts, but she's not that great at it," Annussek explained. "It's weirdly relatable. You watch these other crafting shows and people are making these spectacular dishes and crafts that you know you would ever in a million years be able to attempt. So, watching Amy do it, it just makes you feel OK with yourself." — *Alex Silverman*

Reviews: "Tokyo Project," 8:50am ET, Saturday, **HBO 2**. There are several levels for viewers to see this film. One level is as a travelogue. The cinematography captures a side of Tokyo rarely seen on screen. Often maligned for being crowded, dirty and tacky, the city seen here is bright, clean, romantic, gorgeously unhurried and even spacious. A favorite moment in this 32-minute short comes without dialogue: it's when a bartender, wearing a clean, white jacket, makes art of mixing a drink for Sebastian (*Eben Moss-Bachrach* of "Girls"). There are other moments of beauty, including when the camera focuses on the face of Emmy-winner *Elisabeth Moss* and her captivating, ice-blue eyes. Unfortunately, the film slips when dialogue is introduced and a predictable love story ensues. Certainly Moss-Bachrach and Moss have on-screen chemistry, but in the end, it's as a travelogue that this project works best. -- "Make It Out Alive," 9pm, Sunday, **Smithsonian**. This series seems to be a departure for Smithsonian. Instead of wonderful specials about *MLK* or *JFK*, this new series tells compelling stories of people attempting to survive disasters such as the Mount St. Helens eruption and the San Francisco earthquake of 1989. The stories are told with intelligence and sensitivity, but the approach—who will live, who won't—feels like a comedown from Smithsonian's loftier level. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings (10/02/17-10/08/17)			
		Mon-Sun Rtg	(000s)
1	ESPN	1.7	3744
2	FOXN	1.1	2451
3	TBSC	1	2382
4	FS1	0.7	1618
4	MSNB	0.7	1480
6	CNN	0.5	1175
6	USA	0.5	1139
6	HGTV	0.5	1133
9	DSNY	0.4	925
9	HALL	0.4	924
9	TNT	0.4	912
9	FOOD	0.4	912
9	HIST	0.4	904
9	ID	0.4	898
9	DISC	0.4	817
9	FX	0.4	809
9	NFLN	0.4	648
9	MLBN	0.4	597
9	DSE	0.4	80
20	A&E	0.3	778
20	ADSM	0.3	775
20	TLC	0.3	775
20	BRAV	0.3	649
20	AMC	0.3	629
20	TVLD	0.3	601
20	NKJR	0.3	563
20	HMM	0.3	440
28	LIFE	0.2	546
28	NAN	0.2	515
28	OWN	0.2	491
28	FRFM	0.2	485
28	SYFY	0.2	471
28	INSP	0.2	459
28	DSJR	0.2	427
28	APL	0.2	422
28	VH1	0.2	417
28	TRAV	0.2	412
28	LMN	0.2	408
28	CMDY	0.2	394
28	BET	0.2	381
28	MTV	0.2	377
28	SPK	0.2	362
28	EN	0.2	357
28	WETV	0.2	341

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

Cablefax Awards Gala

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