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What the Industry Reads First

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Keeping up with the Upfronts: New Approaches, Formats Reign

While the tried and true strategy of networks hosting lavish NY events remains the norm, this season some companies are tweaking tactics to stand out from the pack. Many are opting for more intimate agency- or city-based gatherings to complement their larger events. Among those taking less traveled paths for their main presentation, **Disney Channels** several years ago ditched its NY event, opting instead to host execs at Disney World. **Univision** this year is pivoting away from a single mass event and hosting four identical presentations for 500 execs each at hip venue Spring Studios on May 14-15. The formal portion will run 30 minutes vs the company's traditional 90, with an emphasis on guests interacting on different floors of the studio dedicated to UCI entertainment, sports and news. "UCI has been focused on innovation and disruption to accelerate our evolution... We want to ensure this strategy is reflected in all the ways we engage, including with our Upfront, which is why we broke from the pack to modernize the Upfront—host in different area and venue, and to bring culture to life," *Tonia O'Connor*, UCI chief revenue officer, told CFX. "We are hosting briefer presentations and offering clients the opportunity to experience first-hand our portfolio and content." Sometimes opportunity for a change of pace simply comes knocking. **Crown Media Family Networks** was set for its usual formal presentation at the Rainbow Room, but Mother Nature had other ideas, forcing a cancellation of the mid-March event. "That morning everyone was so disappointed," says *Bill Abbott*, Crown president/CEO, who noted a resked was impossible during Upfronts. "Then we looked out the window and thought about the snow, and about Christmas and suddenly it all made sense. Here we were in the biggest city in the world with the biggest ratings in holiday programming." Quick thinking from the social media team, a call to a prop facility to rent a Santa suit, and the good sportsmanship of talent of *Candace Cameron Bure* and *Danika McKellar* resulted in a clever two-minute **Facebook Live** Upfront presentation that to date has received 137,000 views. While Abbott says the ad hoc presentation didn't allow Crown to share their entire Upfront story, he's pondering integrating more social media in future years. "There's no question social has become more a part of the picture, and potentially we would

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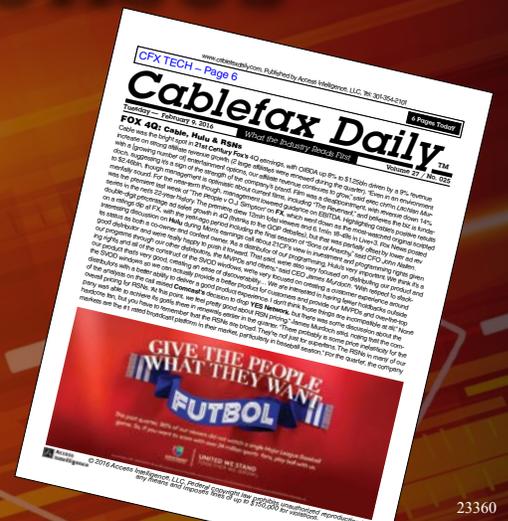
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be able to do something for the people who can't make it to the event—the Rainbow Room only holds 200 after all,” he says. -- *Cathy Applefeld Olson*

Money, Money, Money: **Discovery** CEO *David Zaslav* saw a pay raise to \$42.25m in 2017, up from \$37.2m in 2016. His base salary remained at \$3m, and stock awards were nearly flat at \$14.99m, but option awards increased to \$15.6m from \$11.1m. He wasn't the only exec to receive a salary boost. Chief development, distribution and legal officer *Bruce Campbell* received \$7.76m, more than a \$1m raise. On the other hand, former CFO *Andrew Warren* saw a slightly lower \$2.93m, current CFO *Gunnar Widenfels* (who joined the company in April of last year) received \$6m, former CCO *Paul Guagliardo* rose to \$5.98m and pres/CEO of **Discovery Networks International** *Jean-Briac Perrette* saw his pay decline to \$8.23m from \$11.59m in 2016.

Net Cities: The **ACLU** is asking cities and towns to become their own ISPS in an effort to secure net neutrality for their areas after the **FCC's** repealing of open internet rules. The organization released a report early Thursday morning arguing that the city-based alternative would offer residents an alternative to private service providers now obligated to treat any and all web traffic equally. “Nothing the FCC has done prevents a city, county or town from directing its own municipally run service to honor strong network neutrality and privacy policies,” reads the report, which was principally authored by *Jay Stanley*. “If the commercial providers are determined to make money by violating the privacy and speech rights of their users, and if some policymakers are determined to clear the way for them to do that – then states, cities, towns and counties should take matters into their own hands by creating publicly owned services that do honor those values and can help ensure an open internet.” The report was sent to more than 100 mayors across the country who had fought against the FCC's decision. Twenty-two states have fought against such proposals, prohibiting localities from building public networks, says the report.

In the Courtroom: The government aimed to bring its key evidence to the courtroom Thursday for a central argument in its antitrust case against **AT&T** and **Time Warner**, discussing information suggesting the \$85bn merger could lead to dramatic subscriber declines among AT&T's competition, according to a recap from the *Washington Post*. Cable companies and providers could lose around 12% of their customer base if they were to potentially enter a programming dispute with an AT&T-owned Time Warner, according to MIT marketing professor *John Hauser*, who appeared in federal court as the DOJ's expert witness. The

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studies were used to determine potential losses if AT&T-Time Warner decide to use blackouts as a way to pressure companies to settle in retrans disputes. Nearly 29% would switch providers in the case of a permanent blackout, the results of the 1,600-person study showed. The study is key in the DOJ's potentially uphill battle to victory, but Hauser reportedly acknowledged during questioning that he has not analyzed any real-world programming disputes, which could show far fewer subscriber losses than proposed by the surveys.

Training Day: NCTI is partnering with **GCI Communication Corp.** on a three-year enterprise license agreement to train its technicians. The deal includes NCTI's networking courses and its master technician curriculum. Additionally, GCI has chosen NCTI's suite of mentoring and leadership courses to strengthen its employees' management and problem-solving capabilities. The program will launch in early April with onboarding sessions for trainers, managers and HR professionals.

Paid Prioritization: Comcast senior executive vp *David Cohen* again voiced his support of a paid prioritization ban. "How about if we agree to a prohibition on paid prioritization, and we have a limited exception created in some way for this concept of specialized services," Cohen said at the **Free State Foundation's Telecom Policy Conference** Tuesday. Cohen first offered support of such a ban at the **ACA 25th Anniversary Summit** earlier this month.

Call for Nominations: **CTHRA** is accepting nominations for the Team Innovator of the Year and Aspiring Leader awards through June 15. Recipients are recognized at a luncheon held at CTHRA's HR Symposium on October 2 in Philadelphia in partnership with its media partner, **Cablefax**.

Going Smart: **Starz** launched an app on select **LG** Smart TVs designed to support its standalone, direct-to-consumer service and its authenticated TV Everywhere offering. Available for \$8.99/month, the Starz app is available on 2018 LG OLED TVs and LG Super UHD TVs with the AI ThinkQ platform in addition to its 2016 and 2017 models with webOS. Earlier this week, **Showtime Networks** launched its own standalone streaming service **Showtime** as well as its authentication service Showtime ANYTIME on LG Smart TVs, making it the first cable network to launch on LG platforms.

Play Ball: **fuboTV** added **SNY** to its Fubo Premier package, marking it as the first OTT provider to offer all three NY RSNs in its basic package. SNY is the exclusive destination for 127 live **New York Mets** games. Fubo Premier is available for \$19.99 for its first month and \$44.99/month after.

Programming: **WGN America** expanded its slate of offerings with *Tim Allen's* "Last Man Standing." The comedy, which shows the comedian as a marketing director for an iconic outdoor goods store, will join its programming schedule on April 30. -- Renovators *David and Chenoa Rivera* will repair outdated properties in Northern California's Sierra Nevada Mountains on **HGTV's** upcoming home renovation program "Rustic Rehab." Premiering April 26 at 11pm, the eight half-hour episodes show the couple overcoming construction challenges such as faulty foundations in creating mountainside retreats in Paradise, CA. -- **Facebook Watch** is opening April with additional shows and clips ready to bring on the laughs. #Comedy TBT unlocks **Comedy Central's** vaults to show programming with *Keegan-Michael Key, Jordan Peele* and the cast of "Reno 911." -- Freeform has decided not to renew sci-fi drama "Beyond" after two seasons. The news arrives following the series' Season 2 finale last week. The second season saw a ratings fall around 50%.

People: OOH data measurement company **Tunity** named Nielsen vet *Paul Lindstrom* and former media exec *Bruce Tuchman* to its leadership team as head of research and analytics and president of sales, respectively. -- **Bravo** elevated *Erin Miskey* to vp, Bravo production & operations. Miskey started at Bravo in 2005 as a coordinator for the New York production team and began serving in a managerial capacity in 2008. She'll now oversee post production for all series and digital projects for Bravo original programming. -- Former cable executive *Juliette Morris* has joined audio streaming company **Tuneln** as its first CMO. She'll be charged with all marketing efforts for audience and brand growth, reporting to CEO *John Dunham*. Morris previously oversaw **NBCUniversal's** partner marketing, communications, local ad sales and integrated marketing strategies with its distribution partners. She's also held leadership roles at **Viacom** and **HBO/Cinemax**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

A tru Oasis...

Forget about “peak TV.” Perhaps we should all be talking about “peak comedy,” whose explosion on linear TV, OTT platforms and even the largely user-generated world of **YouTube** has re-energized this highly accessible genre for both creators and fans. One net that firmly latched onto this trend in the last couple years is truTV, which started as a reality TV hub but has since gone all in on the lighter side. “We’ve worked hard to develop a distinct brand of comedy,” says **truTV** pres *Chris Linn*, who has overseen two solid years of ratings growth as the net carves out its own comedy niche. “We’re not trying to be **Comedy Central**. We’re not trying to be **IFC**. The way we’ve done that is by focusing on creator-driven, comedic formats from a really distinct point of view... They’re all shows that start with talent at the core.” If that means letting creators run a bit wild, with edgy or sometimes bizarre content, all the better—although Linn notes that the ad-supported net doesn’t necessarily try to compete with no-holds-barred fare on premium or OTT nets. “We think of ourselves as the oasis away from the dark, the heavy, the conflict-driven, politically divisive,” he says. “We’re trying not to be distracted by what other people are doing.” Of course, comedy’s highly digestible and shareable nature also easily ports from TV to mobile and beyond. “We want to be on as many platforms as possible to touch the viewer in as many ways as we can,” Linn says, noting that he sees direct-to-consumer easily co-existing with traditional linear TV. “That’s what we think the future of distribution will be—many, many touchpoints.” At the same time, who knows what the future will bring? “There’s no one singular strategy that is the answer because the landscape is so dynamic,” he says. “Everything should be focused on viewer demand and viewer behavior.” — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: “The Zen Diaries of Garry Shandling,” 2pm ET, Friday, **HBO**, on demand. It’s not easy to recommend investing some 5 hours in a documentary, even one as good as this 2-part, cathartic examination of Shandling. If it were solely a look inside Shandling’s soul, facilitated through talking heads (*Kevin Nealon* is particularly insightful) and pages of his Zen-like notes and audiotapes, we’d warn the doc is great viewing for Shandling fans only. Fortunately, filmmaker *Judd Apatow* has a comedian’s sense of timing and moves the story nicely. He also realizes non-stop pathos can be a turn-off, so this excellent work is loaded with fun, including Shandling’s debut on **NBC’s** “The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.” Shandling’s clever nerdy self-deprecation killed on the Carson show, providing him tremendous security. Unfortunately, Shandling was unable to accept that finality. He searched for deeper serenity and funnier material. His search for the latter was more successful than the former. -- “I Am MLK Jr.,” 9pm, Wednesday, **BET** and **Paramount** and “King in the Wilderness,” 8pm, Monday, **HBO**. Two excellent recaps of Dr. King’s life, with invaluable commentary from Andrew Young and others who participated in King’s nonviolent movement. Both films feature terrific footage. The slight edge goes to “Wilderness” for its insights, depth and voice. You can’t lose with either one, though. -- *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (3/19/18-3/25/18)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
TBSC	0.973	2963
FNC	0.731	2225
MSNBC	0.658	2003
HGTV	0.490	1492
USA	0.478	1457
NICK	0.436	1328
CNN	0.393	1198
DSNY	0.348	1060
HIST	0.343	1044
ID	0.342	1041
TNT	0.338	1029
DISC	0.321	976
A&E	0.320	974
AMC	0.307	936
HALL	0.290	883
TLC	0.289	879
ADSM	0.288	877
FOOD	0.283	861
NAN	0.264	805
ESPN	0.263	802
TVLAND	0.245	746
FX	0.230	700
BRAVO	0.205	624
DSJR	0.200	608
VH1	0.199	607
APL	0.182	555
INSP	0.179	544
LIFE	0.177	540
SYFY	0.168	512
TRAVEL	0.167	509
NATGEO	0.151	461
HBO	0.150	458
WETV	0.147	449
NKJR	0.146	444
HMM	0.141	430
MTV	0.139	424
GSN	0.139	424
FRFM	0.126	384
PARA	0.126	383
E!	0.121	367
COM	0.120	365

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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