

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — March 22, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 055

Stream Time: Comcast Targets Internet Customers with 'Xfinity Flex'

While many will question whether **Comcast** customers will shell out extra money to have it serve up content that's largely already free, there's a bit more at play with the new Xfinity Flex offering. Comcast is looking to establish itself as the home hub manager, not merely as a conduit to the internet. It wants to help customers not only manage their streaming options, but also control their lights, appliances, internet usage, security, etc. Xfinity Flex, a \$5 upcharge, helps get it in position. While execs didn't really dive into home management during the presentation, it doesn't seem like a large leap to go from accessing Flex to watch a movie to using it to see who's at your front door. When the service rolls out next week, it will combine VOD, ad-supported live streams and subscription apps. Comcast is aggregating some 10K titles free, ad-supported VOD film and TV titles from services such as **ESPN3, Xumo, Pluto, Tubi TV, Cheddar** and **YouTube**. Customers also can add in services they have subscriptions to, such as **Netflix, Showtime, HBO** or **Amazon Prime**. The \$5/month price point also includes a 4K HDR streaming device. "The focus of Flex is to really deepen our relationship with a segment of our customers, and this is primarily directed at our internet only customers in our service area," *Matt Strauss*, evp of Xfinity Services at Comcast Cable, said Thursday during a media presentation. "Given that we're really targeting a segment of our customers, clearly having access to streaming applications on Flex is an important part of the offering." The interface works a lot like X1, and soon customers will be able to upgrade to the full Xfinity X1 cable streaming service right from the guide. While it will feature third-party apps, it won't include live TV apps from competitors, such as **DISH's Sling TV**. One of Flex's biggest purposes is aggregation, similar to X1. "Our focus is not on tonnage," Strauss explained. "We believe in a sea of apps there's an app fatigue among a certain customer. It's really about aggregating the experience, all the different content within these apps." Flex is limited to Comcast's footprint, and the company is targeting its internet-only customers. "We're really excited about bringing this product into our portfolio. It's unlikely you're going to see us running commercials for Flex, it's going to be much more focused on our digital channels," said Strauss. It's a good time for Comcast to launch Flex, after the company saw 6bln hours of video on demand viewed on X1 in 2018, a 20% YOY increase. Plus there are the 1.4mln broadband customers added last year. When asked why customers would pay \$5 a month for a service instead of paying a lump sum for an **Amazon Fire Stick** or **Roku**, Strauss said Comcast's research found

ANNOUNCING Cablefax's TOP OPS Nominations

Help Cablefax compile this influential list of MSOs and Independent Operators by nominating the companies and executives you think should be included in our annual list of leading cable operators.

Honorees will be honored during Cablefax's Celebration of Leadership Gala on Thursday, June 6, 2019 at the Yale Club in NYC and profiled in the July issue of Cablefax: The Magazine.

The Independent Operator of the Year Award (IOY) is presented in conjunction with ACA and NCTC

Submit Today at: www.CablefaxTopOps.com

Questions: Contact Mary-Lou French at mfrench@accessintel.com or 301.354.1851.

Who deserves to appear in Cablefax's annual power Top Operators list?

It's free to enter – but you must submit your entries by March 29!



BIG IDEAS

in the Big Easy

MEET US IN NEW ORLEANS May 20-22, 2019!

Register early
& save BIG...
up to \$500 off
standard rates!

Don't miss **THE premier annual conference** for successful media finance professionals, **Media Finance Focus 2019**. MFM & BCCA's 59th Annual Conference will tackle **Big Ideas in the Big Easy**. With highlights including expert speakers, networking opportunities and cutting-edge content, **be sure to register NOW to take advantage of discounted Early Bird rates!**

REGISTER TODAY!

mediafinancefocus.org
847-716-7000

EARLY BIRD Registration
(1/22-4/8/19)

NEVER-MEMBER:

\$1,585/attendee*

* Fee includes a one-year trial membership to MFM.

MFM'S VISION

To make media finance employees more knowledgeable and valuable today while developing the next generation of global media leaders.

BCCA'S VISION

To be a media-specific leader that provides knowledge and strategic tools for order-to-cash optimization.



ACCOMMODATIONS:

Hilton New Orleans Riverside | New Orleans, LA

Rate: \$229/night + tax

FOR RESERVATIONS:

www.mediafinancefocus.org/hotel-information

Call 1-504-561-0500 or 1-855-760-0870

Reference Media Finance Focus or MFM/BCCA Conference for our negotiated rate. Book by 4/25/19**

** Beware housing pirate scams – book directly with hotel.



Media Finance
FOCUS
MFM bcca 2019

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 ● Senior Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com ● VP Marketing: Amy Jefferies, 301.354.1699, ajefferies@accessintel.com ● Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: 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

there's a large segment of customers open to leasing a device. "When we took a step back and designed Flex, we see it as being more than just a piece of hardware. We're looking at this more of a service, and the service is the experience of the way we're going to be able to provide the guide. I think for \$5, it's a relatively low price point for customers to try it," he said. Flex also comes with the company's award-winning voice remote. "We think our voice remote is going to be another great value proposition with Flex. It was designed to be very personable, and it was designed to control the TV and make it easier for search and discovery," Strauss said. Flex also offers music streaming options, with access to **Pandora** and **iHeartRadio**. "For many people the TV is the best speaker in the home," Strauss said.

You've Got a Friend: *Ajit Pai*, who dealt Title II the death blow as **FCC** chmn, was greeted with a standing ovation by **ACA Connects** members at the independent operators' annual DC gathering Thursday. It was a bit of a love fest on the stage, with ACA pres/CEO *Matt Polka* running through the chairman's agenda items—"I would call it an FCC grand slam. You ended Title II regulation of ISPs, you're facilitating pole attachments, a huge issue for our members. You're expediting access to public rights of way at reasonable costs, and you're opening large blocks of spectrum. How can you top this?" Pai returned the love: "Part of that agenda has been inspired by ACA's advocacy, so thank you for that. Pole attachments alone. People's eyes glaze over when you describe why this is important, but as your testimony pointed out, this is 13% of the cost of building broadband." One area that the ACA crowd and Pai may be less chummy on is the C-band, with operators concerned about interference as the Commission tries to free up spectrum from the mid-band for 5G. "It's a critical and complicated issue," Pai said, before doing a "Big Lebowski" Dude impersonation (a lotta ins, a lotta outs...). "We understand that there are a number of people, especially some broadcasters, small cable operators and others, who rely on that spectrum for the delivery for critical services. We're trying to tease out what are the different ideas here." That includes looking at a private sale of spectrum or an FCC-led auction process. The agency is currently seeking input. "It's important for us to make the right decision, not a right now decision," he said. The crowd gave him another standing O as he exited, so it must have been an OK answer...

New York State of Mind: No luck for the *Dolan family* in its efforts to get the **NY PSC** involved in its suit against **Altice USA** over the management of **News 12**. *Charles Dolan* sent a letter to the regulators Tuesday calling for a review of Altice's management and compliance with conditions established upon its acquisition of **Cablevision**. "DPS continues to review Altice's required filings to ensure that the company remains in compliance with requirements that it maintains a strong customer-service workforce by committing to no layoffs throughout 2020," NY PSC public information officer *James Deen* said. "At this point in time the company is in compliance; our review remains continuous and ongoing."

Cablefax

Leaders Retreat

April 29-30, 2019
Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo

Extremely Limited. Don't Wait Any Longer to Get Your Seat at the Table.

www.cablefax.com/event/CLR19



JEFF WEBER
CEO
Zone.TV

The Cablefax Leaders Retreat fosters off-the-record executive discussions that simply can't be had anywhere else. **But don't just take our word for it...**

“The Leaders retreat was very valuable for me — a great group of senior leaders that could mix and debate in a safe, relaxed environment. Looking forward to next year!”

Sponsored By:



Industry Partners:



All in the Family: It's not easy surviving in the world of video and broadband. But when it comes down to it, you can make it through anything if you're doing it with your family. That is, your employees. They can then tell the company's story firsthand to the community and bring more people into its system. For **Mediacom**, that has meant using programs from **NCTI** to offer training opportunities and upward growth for employees. "A good chunk of it is self-training where they will go online, take courses... and they get the next level of pay," Mediacom evp, programming & HR, *Italia Commisso Weinand* said at an **ACA Connects** Summit panel. She added that employees can grow their salaries by almost 30% in a year. "It helps us because they're well-trained and because they want to hang out with us." When it comes to smaller systems like Missouri-based **Boycom**, it means taking active roles in supporting community organizations like **Kiwanis** and local sports teams. "Everyone hits the door at Boycom because they know we invest in the community," president *Patricia Jo Boyers* said. "We support everything there is to be supported, almost to our detriment." The problem is getting the community to understand those investments when everyone's convinced that cable is the bad guy that sends a bill every month. "There is not a community untouched where American cable companies aren't employers," **WICT** CEO *Maria Brennan* said. "I think that is a story that is not nearly told enough."

April at the Commission: Guess what's on the agenda for the **FCC's** April Open Meeting? More spectrum auctions aimed at unleashing the 5G wave! The five commissioners are set to vote on a public notice of auction procedures for the 37 GHz, 39 GHz and 47 GHz spectrum bands, which would be the agency's third major spectrum auction of the year. Bidding is currently underway in the 24 GHz band auction, with the 28 GHz band wrapping earlier this year. The item seeks comments on using an ascending clock auction, followed by a sealed bid assignment phase. Chmn *Ajit Pai* wants to offer up 100 megahertz blocks of spectrum licensed by partial economic area service areas. The upper 37 GHz and the 39 GHz bands would offer the largest amount of contiguous spectrum in the millimeter wave bands for flexible-use wireless services—a total of 2,400 megahertz. The 47 GHz band will provide an additional 1,000 megahertz. There's also a proposal to establish a process for the **Defense Department** to operate in the 37 GHz band on a shared basis in limited circumstances. *Pai's* "Media Modernization" efforts also continue, with the FCC set to nix rules requiring cable ops to keep a current, hard copy of cable channel listings in their local offices.

More White Space: The **FCC** is adopting changes to its rules for fixed white space devices. In the Report and Order released Thursday, the Commission said it will now require all fixed white space devices to incorporate a geo-location capability and eliminate the option for the coordinates of a fixed device to be determined by a professional installer. Fixed white space devices must periodically re-check their geographic coordinates at least once a day and report the coordinates to the white space database. The FCC also addressed a number of petitions for reconsideration of the actions it took in the TV White Spaces Order, responding to concerns from players like **NAB** and **Microsoft**. It upheld most of its previous decisions while also increasing the antenna height above ground limit for fixed white space devices in less congested areas. The Commission said that its changes will allow for simpler, DIY installations while providing a means for a fixed white space device to automatically re-establish its coordinates in the case of a power outage or equipment reboot. "This positive step is long overdue and we urge the Commission to expeditiously take further steps to provide internet service providers additional access to TV white spaces," said the **Dynamic Spectrum Alliance**, whose members include **Amazon, Comcast, Facebook** and **Microsoft**. DSA recommended the Commission issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on proposals in the record to allow access to additional TV white space channels, offering more flexibility to deploy narrowband IoT networks.

New Deal: **Nielsen** and **Univision** have reached a long-term deal for national and local TV ratings measurement of all of the latter's properties. The expanded agreement will see Univision joining as a subscriber to Nielsen SVOD Content Ratings, Local Nielsen Media Impact and Nielsen National Out-of-Home Reporting Service.

To the Slopes: **Adaptive Spirit** is headed back to Vail next month for its 24th Annual fundraiser. The event, the largest individual fundraising effort for the US Paralympic Alpine, Nordic, Snowboard and Biathlon teams, sold out its event sponsorships in record time. Kicking off on April 4, the gathering will feature a "Disrupt or Give Up?" panel as well as a "Brain Trust Breakfast" with **Cox's** *Kristine Faulkner*, **Cable ONE** CEO *Julie Laulis* and **WOW!'s** *Roger Seiken*. Emceeding April 6's closing banquet will be **NBC Sports Group** reporter *Tanith White*.

Programming: "Schitt's Creek" will return to **Pop** for its sixth and final season in 2020. "We are so grateful to have been given the time and creative freedom to tell this story in its totality, concluding with a final chapter that we had envisioned from the very beginning," co-creators *Daniel and Eugene Levy* said in a statement to fans.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Killing It...

Season One of **BBC America's** "Killing Eve" was such a hit that it's easy to forget that creator *Phoebe Waller-Bridge*, the actors and the producers all must live up to the hype for Season 2. It won't be easy. But neither was making a show about a female serial killer (*Jodie Comer*) and her frenemy-ish female nemesis (*Sandra Oh*), perfectly mixing drama and humor into something quite unique. With Season 2 kicking off in just a couple weeks (April 7), critics and fans who so praised the inaugural season can't wait to see where it all goes from here (Oh's character Eve, after all, did try to kill Comer's character Villanelle. Sort of. It's complicated). As the show was just starting to gain steam, Waller-Bridge—now busy with S2 of Amazon's "Fleabag" as well as other projects—hand-picked actress and writer *Emerald Fennell* to be the S2 showrunner. Fennell jokes that she wormed her way in before the brass realized it would clean up during awards season. "You would have gotten Spielberg instead," she told **Cablefax**. "I didn't know whether people would respond to the tone because the tone is very specific... People just love seeing their characters and the level and depth of dark humor. It's something that people didn't realize at first. But we felt like we could fly under the radar and figure out what we wanted to do with it." Of course, while Fennell hopes the second season will wow existing fans and even bring in new ones, she can't reveal any upcoming spoilers (or else, yes, Villanelle would have to kill us). So fans will just have to hope that the show's tendency to take risks and carve its own path will continue. "Now it's obviously an enormous amount of pressure. There are lots of things about it that are daunting. But if I suggest something really outlandish, you know you can because the audience from Season One understands the context." Either way, millions are counting the days to April 7. — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: "Now Apocalypse," 9pm, Sunday, **Starz**. Mix alien lizards, 20-something angst, a bit of sci-fi, drugs and plenty of sex in multiple genres, and you get an idea about the content of this new series from filmmaker *Gregg Araki*. The series probably won't have wide appeal, but will thrill Araki's fans, whose films sometimes are crazily brilliant. In keeping with Araki's storytelling predilections, the main characters in "Now" are young and sexy. There's Severine (*Roxane Mesquida*), a stoic, worldly, monogamy-hating sex goddess, who's also a rocket scientist, sort of. She's paired, only sometimes, with her boyfriend, Ford (*Beau Mirchoff*), a naive hunk, whose roommate Uly (*Avan Jogia*) is in a perpetual cannabis fog. Uly's also in love with the unsuspecting Ford, who's an aspiring screenwriter. And there's the unbelievably sexy Carly (*Kelli Berglund*), a would-be actress who supports herself as a cam girl and dominatrix. For those who want TV that breaks boundaries, this might be your show. -- "Billions," 9pm, Sunday, **Showtime**. Bottom line: We won't tell you to skip this and next week's eps, but we'll say not to miss episode four, which debuts April 7. Billions' intricate financial stories sometimes require viewers to have a friend with an MBA nearby, but we think this season initial eps dragged at times. Ep 4 makes up for that and more. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (03/04/19-03/10/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.763	2,330
ESPN	0.694	2,120
MSNBC	0.595	1,818
HGTV	0.418	1,276
HIST	0.398	1,214
USA	0.378	1,156
DISC	0.371	1,134
HALL	0.323	986
ID	0.311	951
TBSC	0.309	944
CNN	0.302	922
FOOD	0.295	900
TNT	0.284	868
TLC	0.275	839
NICK	0.273	834
A&E	0.255	778
BRAVO	0.230	702
INSP	0.220	673
AMC	0.220	672
TVLAND	0.216	661
NAN	0.209	640
FX	0.194	592
ADSM	0.193	588
TRAVEL	0.166	506
MTV	0.164	502
LIFE	0.161	491
APL	0.159	485
DSNY	0.158	482
DSJR	0.157	481
FRFM	0.151	462
SYFY	0.149	456
VH1	0.147	450
ESPN2	0.140	427
HMM	0.140	426
NKJR	0.137	418
WETV	0.133	406
NATGEO	0.133	405
PARA	0.128	390
OWN	0.123	375
GSN	0.123	375
HBO	0.121	370

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

Cablefax Selected by SCTE•ISBE
as Exclusive Partner for the Official Show Daily

Featuring Expanded Coverage in
Print, Online & Video Show Dailies



Supercharge Your Exposure!

As the only official publications of cable's premier trade event, our Cablefax SCTE•ISBE Cable-Tec Expo Show Daily editions and video coverage will give advertisers and audiences new opportunities to connect with key decision-makers in the industry

- Cablefax Publisher Michael Grebb.



Space is selling quickly! Contact Olivia Murray at omurray@accessintel.com or 301.354.2010