

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — April 5, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 065

Stream Theme: Acorn TV Joins Others in Raising Prices

Yes, vMVPDs have been raising prices lately, but now an SVOD is getting into the game. On Wednesday, **Acorn TV** increased its monthly subscription price by \$1 to \$5.99. The change impacts current and new subs. The annual rate increased \$10 to \$59.99. It's the first increase for the service since 2013. "We remain committed to improving the customer experience with more Acorn TV Originals and exclusive premieres, new ways to watch, and enhanced product features—this modest price increase will ensure we can keep providing that value," a spokesperson told **Cablefax**. **AMC Networks** purchased Acorn TV entertainment owner **RLJ Entertainment** over the summer, paying \$65mln for shares it didn't already own. RLJ Ent includes SVOD **Urban Movie Channel**, which is keeping its \$4.99 monthly rate. At the time of AMCN's purchase, UMC and Acorn had more than 800K subs combined, an increase of 45% from a year ago. Acorn subs aren't the only ones seeing larger bills. **Netflix** informed many subscribers this week that its previously announced price hike will take effect in May, though some subs have already seen the new prices. It's the first increase for Netflix since 2017. The basic plan will jump to \$9 from \$8, while the service's most expensive option, which offers 4K content and up to four simultaneous streams, is increasing to \$16 per month from \$14. Last month, anime streaming service **Crunchyroll** announced its first substantial price jump since its 2016 launch, with the monthly price rising to \$7.99 from \$6.95. In the crowded SVOD market, some streamers have opted to go the other direction. In August, nonfiction-focused **CuriosityStream** slashed its monthly rate to \$2.99/month from \$5.99, and dropped its 4K plan to \$9.99 monthly from \$11.99. In February, **Hulu's** cheapest plan dropped to \$5.99/month from \$7.99. Acorn is known for its UK programming, including *Agatha Christie* specials (RLJ Ent has a 64% stake in **Agatha Christie Limited**). In February, Acorn TV announced the first renewal of one of its originals, bringing back mystery series "Agatha Raisin" for a third season. Even with the price hike, Acorn TV is still less than streaming competitor **BritBox**, a jv between **BBC Studios** and **ITV** that will set you back \$6.99/month or \$69.99/year.

Shaking Hands: It's a deal. **CommScope** completed its \$7.4bln acquisition of **Arris** Thursday, bringing the Arris and **Ruckus Wireless** brands under its roof. The two first agreed to the deal in November, when CommScope also an-

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- Cablefax Publisher Michael Grebb.

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nounced that **The Carlyle Group** had re-established an ownership position in the company through a \$1bln minority equity investment to help CommScope finance the deal. With closing, Carlyle Group representatives *Daniel Akerson* and *Campbell Dyer* have been appointed to the board of directors, effective immediately. The combined company is expected to bring \$11.3bln in revenue and adjusted EBITDA of \$1.8bln. CommScope is expecting short-term benefits including a 30%+ accretion to adjusted earnings per shares within the first year. It's also massively expanded its product offerings and R&D capabilities, now having an estimated 15K patents and patent applications globally. "With Arris, CommScope is now positioned to create innovative, end-to-end communications solutions—something that neither company could otherwise achieve on its own. Simply put, this combination creates a communications company with remarkable breadth, depth, and capabilities, a company that will shape communications connectivity and networks of the future," CommScope pres/CEO *Eddie Edwards* wrote in a blog post Thursday. "To compete and win globally, we will work together to help our customers meet the growing demand for network accessibility and bandwidth." As previously announced, Arris CEO *Bruce McClelland* moves into the COO role at the combined company. CommScope will report 1Q earnings on a standalone basis on May 9, but plans to issue guidance for 2Q and the full-year on a combined basis.

Tick Tock: When one battle ends, another begins. A blackout could be on the horizon for **Telemundo** as its carriage deal with **Liberty Cablevision** in Puerto Rico was set to expire at 6pm Thursday night. As the clock ticked closer to the deadline, Telemundo warned customers of possible service disruption. "Liberty Cablevision of Puerto Rico is dropping Telemundo, **NBC** and the **NBCUniversal** cable networks on Thursday evening, after the Liberty Latin America Board rejected the agreement that their leadership team in Puerto Rico had negotiated and accepted as fair," NBCU said in a statement. "NBCUniversal is sensitive to challenges on the island and proposed terms and prices that recognized the difficult situation in Puerto Rico." The island has been working to restore its communications networks after damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. NBCU directed subscribers to visit www.necesitotelemundo.com to see what other providers offer Telemundo. "After years of cooperation and several months of discussions, we are disappointed to see NBCUniversal use their size and scale to bully a local provider and put our customers in the middle of negotiations," Liberty Puerto Rico pres/CEO *Naji Khoury* said in a statement, claiming that NBCU is attempting to charge retrans fees for Telemundo and NBC that would see the cost of those channels double over two years. "These rates are essentially in line with US market levels, which are much higher than what would be considered fair for a market like Puerto Rico." Khoury also said that Telemundo and NBC Puerto Rico

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are available over-the-air with the use of an antenna for free. The dispute comes just one week after **DISH** and **Univision** settled their nearly year-long fight, restoring Univision, Univision Deportes, UniMas and Galavision to DISH and DISHLatino.

Burning the Midnight Oil: After a back-and-forth that lasted deep into Wednesday evening, the Save the Internet Act passed through the **House Energy and Commerce** full markup by a party-line vote of 30-22, pushing it through to the House floor. “Our bill protects consumers and small businesses from abusive and discriminatory practices by internet service providers and protects free speech and innovation,” chmn *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) said in a statement. “Our bill protects consumers and small businesses from abusive and discriminatory practices by internet service providers and protects free speech and innovation. It’s time for the full House to vote to keep the internet open and free, and I will work to make that happen soon.”

Vyve Launch: **Vyve Broadband** launched 200 Mbps internet service to residential customers in the Torrington, WY, market. The local team had recently completed successful testing of the service, and the launch increases the fastest internet speeds by four times. Local businesses are also getting a boost, with the addition of a 250 Mbps service.

Partner Up: **Deluxe Entertainment** and **Amazon Web Services (AWS)** announced a multi-year collaboration to offer faster and at-scale solutions for content creators and distributors. AWS will also be Deluxe’s primary cloud provider, fully integrating its services to enable end-to-end content solutions.

In the States: Interesting bill was introduced in the Georgia legislature this week, just before the session ended. The Republican-sponsored bill would create a state Journalism Ethics Board to develop a canon of ethics for journalists and among other things, to provide for an interviewee’s access to copies of photographs and audio and video recordings taken by members of the media. The bill is inactive until the legislative session resumes next year.

New to the Lineup: As of Thursday, **HBO** is available as a premium subscription on **The Roku Channel**. Roku Channel users will have access to a 7-day trial before spending \$14.99/month on the channel. It joins more than 25 other premium subscriptions already available on The Roku Channel, and it won’t be the last addition. **Cinemax** will soon also be available for subscribers.

Ratings: **truTV’s** “Tacoma FD” brought the laughs, delivering 312K viewers in the A18-34 demo in L+3, according to **Nielsen**. It also brought in 598K A18-49 and 850K total viewers. -- **Nickelodeon’s** debut of “The Substitute” on April 1 ranked as the top show with Kids 6-11 in its time period across all TV, and scored YOY double and triple-digit increases with Kids 2-11 (+36%) and Kids 6-11 (+100%). The premiere of the prank show saw 866K total viewers.

Programming: **A&E** is teaming up with **WWE Studios** for five two-hour documentaries under the “Biography” banner focused on iconic WWE Superstars like *Booker T* and *Stone Cold Steve Austin*. The first three films, currently in pre-production, are slated to air in Spring 2020. -- **Comedy Central** and *Roy Wood Jr.* signed a comprehensive first-look television and media deal. The agreement includes Wood’s third one-hour stand-up special and an original digital series. -- Chef *Alex Guarnaschelli* struck a new, exclusive multi-year, multi-platform deal with **Food Network**. The agreement is made up of projects in primetime and daytime across linear and digital platforms, including a new primetime series and serving as a recurring co-host of “The Kitchen.” -- **Showtime** is offering the Season 2 premiere of “The Chi” for early sampling, free on Showtime streaming and TV on demand. It debuts linearly on April 7 at 10pm. -- *Elvis Presley’s Graceland* and **Hallmark Channel** are creating a two-day immersive fan event tied to the net’s “June Weddings” programming franchise. June Weddings Fan Celebration at Graceland, taking place May 18-19, will include sneak peeks, a movie lineup, a VIP tour and wedding-themed parties and receptions. -- **BET Networks** announced the second wave of artists taking the stage at the 7th annual BET Experience at L.A. LIVE. *Mary J. Blige, H.E.R., Summer Walker, Queen Naija* and *Bri Steves* will kick off the-female lineup.

On the Circuit: **IAB** established the first-ever NewFronts West Advisory Board ahead of the second annual Digital Content NewFronts West. The event will take place Sept 11-12 in LA at NeueHouse Hollywood. This year’s event theme “Relationships Matter. Take a Stand!” will allow leaders to share insights and explore innovations advancing the digital media and marketing landscapes. -- The number of technical abstracts submitted for **SCTE-ISBE** Cable-Tec Expo reached a new high of 264 this year. More than 75 organizations authored abstracts across a most-ever 11 categories. The conference will take place Sept 30-Oct 3 in New Orleans.

People: **Condé Nast** tapped *Roger Lynch* as its first global CEO, taking effect April 22. He most recently served as CEO of **Pandora**, but previously led **Sling TV**.

Cablefax

Leaders Retreat

April 29-30, 2019

Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo

AGENDA

April 28, 2019

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. | WELCOME RECEPTION

April 29, 2019 – DAY ONE

8:30 – 10:30 a.m. | **Let's Get It Started: Leadership Amid Consolidation & Audience Fragmentation**

In this welcome session, we'll set the stage for two days of game-changing discussions vital to the future of the business.

Amid this era of consolidation, we'll share strategies to maintain one-on-one consumer connections we'll discuss how to wow consumers, innovate in an increasingly chaotic arena and inspire creativity at all levels.

To kick things off, we'll turn to **Comcast Corporation's David L. Cohen**, who will discuss cable's role in the community and how a commitment to localism can help operators big and small shine. Cohen will discuss how Comcast initiatives, such as Internet Essentials and Comcast Cares Day serve overall business goals as they expand local relationships and customer bonds.

Then we'll open it up to the room to share battle stories (and scars) as we debate solutions and strategies and discuss how to organize the corporate culture to compete and partner with content distribution "frenemies." And where can content owners and distributors work together to better serve consumers.

This discussion will segue to **CTAM's Vicki Lins**, who will share exclusive data on how CTAM's Connected Consumer initiatives shed new light on how the industry brands and portrays itself in the media and across its marketing matrix. As part of the ensuing discussion, participants will discuss the best ways for all sides of the industry to work together toward common goals.

10:30 – Noon | **Morning Break and Welcome Brunch**

Noon – 1:30 p.m. | **Industry Leaders Forum: Turning Over Every Revenue Rock**

Finding new revenue is how the top leaders in this industry ensure a healthy environment where employees and customers can thrive and contribute to the growth of the business.

But as the conversation between distributors and content owners evolves, it's clear that macro-economic trends can create challenges even as companies enhance the customer and viewer experience.

MoffettNathanson's Craig Moffett will start us off as we delve into the central question about cable's traditionally core product: What's the future of video? He'll dissect the market and give us a sense of where the business is headed—and what kind of strategies may best position different industry sectors for success.

And as more content gets peeled away from that traditional bundle and goes direct-to-consumer, we'll turn to **Wolfe Research's Marci Ryvicker** to give us a sense of how the vast and sweeping changes to the business model is affecting distributors, programmers and even the technology sector as relationships evolve and revenue models shift in line with consumer trends.

Learn from your peers, share your own success stories and pow-wow with the best and brightest to uncover new business opportunities, platforms and partnerships.

1:30 – 6:00 p.m. | **Afternoon Activities**

Join your peers for a round of golf, adventures with alligators, a boat tour or other bonding activities.

6:00 – 7:15 p.m. | **R&R: Relax and Refresh**

7:15 p.m. | **Cocktail Reception**

8:00 p.m. | **Dinner**

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April 30, 2019 – DAY TWO

6:15 a.m. | Sunrise Walk (optional)

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Breakfast

9:00 – 11:00 a.m. | Industry Leaders Forum: How Blockchain, AI and More Change Everything in Media

During our 2018 Retreat, senior leaders agreed that Blockchain could vastly change the business in unpredictable ways. But what exactly is Blockchain, how does it work—and what does it have to do with TV, broadband and consumer entertainment?

First, we'll ask **Adventure Corp.'s Michael Hoydich** to walk us through Blockchain-based "tokens" and other ways that the technology could generate several new revenue streams for distributors, programmers, content producers and other entertainment sectors. You won't want to miss this one as we open it up to the room and dive headfirst into this intriguing (and sometimes confusing) world best known for driving cryptocurrency—but fast becoming so much more.

But as everything from Blockchain to Virtual Reality waxes and wanes in the public consciousness, savvy leaders often must pivot on a dime to ensure they can fully exploit business opportunities. That's why we'll check in with **Alcacruz's Emily Ward**, whose has evolved into serving the hot sports and eSports markets. Then we'll share strategies on how to stay nimble in such a fast-evolving marketplace—no matter what sector of the business involved.

After that discussion, we'll turn to **SCTE's Mark Dzuban** to give us an update on the most important technology developments affecting cable and broadband, including how artificial intelligence, 10G and, yes, even holograms could help revolutionize the services that operators and programmers provide to customers. From telemedicine to new entertainment options, the future looks exceedingly bright despite challenges around competition and consolidation.

We'll discuss ways top executives are exploiting these fundamental shifts, firing up the rank and file to integrate these new innovations, and making high-level strategic moves.

We'll share success stories from those who have already implemented strategies, and brainstorm ways companies can apply to different corporate environments.

11:00 – 11:30 a.m. | Networking Break

11:30 – 12:30 p.m. | Industry Leaders Forum: Seizing the Future, Learning from the Past

We'll examine how industry leaders are prioritizing strategies with a laser-focus on both short-term and long-term opportunities and threats.

Of course, it's impossible to properly assess those opportunities without understanding the current playing field—made even more tenuous as we head into primary season and what's sure to be a contentious Presidential election next year.

Because Congress, the FCC and other agencies affecting cable and broadband don't operate in a vacuum, we'll turn to **NCTA's Dane Snowden** and **ACA's Matt Polka** to give us a sense of how priorities in Washington are shifting as the political season heats up. What can we learn from the last two years of a new Administration and its priorities?

We'll discuss how to apply that knowledge to better navigate every nook and cranny of Washington policy and ultimately help our businesses thrive, tackling how different sectors of cable & broadband can work together to apply pressure on policymakers—or perhaps even just get out of each other's way.

In addition to policy talk, we'll handicap several industry changes in 2019 and beyond and share experiences to forge a strategic vision that could generate new businesses and partnerships.

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. | Lunch

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. | Industry Leaders Forum It's a Wrap... Now What Can We Take Back to the Office?

In this final roundtable, we'll discuss overall takeaways from the last two days of discussions—and we'll brainstorm key actions that senior executives must take today to ensure a robust and growth-oriented strategy going forward.

3:00 p.m. | Final Toast and Good-byes

Registration is limited! www.cablefax.com/event/CLR19

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Planetary Programming...

It's no secret that increasingly elaborate nature content has become all the rage. And certain networks have spent lots of time and money staking their claim to this nature arms race, complete with intricate shots in stunning high-frame rate 4K to make that slo-mo oh so magnifico. **Discovery Inc** chief *David Zaslav* just this week lauded the company's renewed partnership with **BBC** to combine the "Planet Earth," "Blue Planet" and "Frozen Planet" franchises into something akin to the highly lucrative **Marvel Cinematic Universe** exploited expertly in recent years by **Disney**. And yes, Zaslav also referenced a direct-to-consumer component that would mean pulling these properties from **Netflix** where they now reside. The timing of all this talk seems quite fitting, considering that Netflix—never one to cede one inch to traditional TV players—will on Friday launch its own ambitious nature project: "Our Planet." As with most things, Netflix isn't messing around, snagging the *Oprah* of nature narration *David Attenborough* to add that instant credibility. At a special screening held during **Winter TCA** in February, Netflix showed some pretty fabulous footage that included everything from rare birds doing dance choreography to impress a mate to never-before-seen drone footage of wolves working as a pack to stalk their prey. Netflix, with seemingly endless pockets, could easily become the **DC Comics** to Discovery-BBC's **Marvel**. But unlike the soft-environmental approach favored by the aforementioned franchises, Netflix will go full force with a bold "let's save the planet" message. "For the first time... we're trying to deal with the challenges that our planet faces," said producer *Alastair Fothergill* at the screening. "It's not a finger-wagging series at all. It's not about that. It's about explaining the problems and also, very important, the solutions... What we do over the next 20 years will literally control our planet for thousands of years." Don't expect subtlety. One sequence showing city-sized chunks sliding off of polar ice sheets and splashing spectacularly into the ocean below is both beautiful and chilling. As it should be. — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: "Brockmire," 10pm, Wednesday, **IFC**. It's April and hope springs eternal in baseball circles. It's also the return of "Brockmire," the *Hank Azaria* vehicle where the superb actor plays a vice-laden baseball announcer. Next week's ep features Brockmire getting set to call a spring training game en route to his return to MLB. Trouble is, former flame Jules (a wonderfully saucy *Amanda Peet*) also returns (we missed her last season), and she's got a confession—her date is Brockmire's best friend. That should be enough to tip over the precariously balanced announcer. Brockmire says he's a changed man, and this won't topple him. We'll see. — "Wyatt Cenac's Problem Areas," 11pm, Friday, **HBO**. We loved Cenac first season. He approaches issues with a combination of seriousness and quirky comedy. It's more of the same in the season opener. He does a fine job relating his youthful experiences working at a fast-food joint to why unions matter. From there he segues artfully to education in America, and then discusses teacher strikes. A portion of that discussion includes a segment where he interviews striking teachers in W. VA. Interestingly, he also interviews students who supported the teachers. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (03/24/19-03/31/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
TBSC	0.975	2,977
FNC	0.927	2,832
MSNBC	0.488	1,490
HGTV	0.404	1,233
USA	0.394	1,203
HIST	0.391	1,195
A&E	0.337	1,029
ESPN	0.326	996
DISC	0.302	924
ID	0.302	923
HALL	0.300	916
NICK	0.285	871
TLC	0.280	856
FOOD	0.276	842
TNT	0.254	776
AMC	0.254	776
CNN	0.235	717
TVLAND	0.216	661
BRAVO	0.216	661
ADSM	0.200	610
VH1	0.198	605
NAN	0.195	596
INSP	0.189	578
FX	0.185	565
SYFY	0.173	528
LIFE	0.161	493
MTV	0.156	477
DSNY	0.154	470
DSJR	0.151	460
PARA	0.150	459
TRAVEL	0.148	452
WETV	0.142	434
FRFM	0.138	420
APL	0.135	411
GSN	0.131	401
NATGEO	0.130	398
HMM	0.124	380
NKJR	0.120	366
HBO	0.118	360
E!	0.115	351
LMN	0.111	338

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

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