

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — May 10, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 090

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5 Qs: Talking Original Programming with Charter Content Chief Katherine Pope

Charter certainly turned heads in 2017 when it signaled plans to delve into original programming. And now with its first original “L.A.’s Finest” set for a VOD premiere on May 13, the industry’s eyes are on Charter SVP and head of original programming Katherine Pope, who has shepherded the cop comedy/action/drama to the small screen. **This is Spectrum’s first big original to launch. How are you feeling?** It’s really exciting. The timeline on making a scripted drama is so long. And especially because this is our first, we’ve been working on everything that goes into it—making sure that the platform works, making sure that the user experience is there. **In this era of peak TV, more granular audience data seems to be all the rage. What’s your take on the balance between data and your “gut” as a creative executive?** I’m definitely a data person. I grew up in broadcast television where you got ratings every night, and the ratings meant something. So I like that feeling. I like adjusting and processing and really analyzing the data, but I still believe that if you could design a data set for a hit show, everybody would do it. It doesn’t work that way. You have to take all the information you can get and then you really have to go with your gut. **Of course, Spectrum has also announced other projects, including the reboot of ‘90s sitcom “Mad About You.” Should we then expect a wide variety of content and genres?** When I first started, I thought “I just need to figure out Spectrum’s demo. Easy peasy.” But, of course, it’s everybody. It’s in 41 states. It’s New York City and L.A. But it’s also Tampa and San Antonio. So I very quickly needed to think about the two paths you can take: You can try to appeal to everybody, which is obviously what the broadcast business tries to do, or you can just start to slice up the demo. And that’s really the path we took. Let’s look around at the TV landscape. What groups aren’t seeing themselves reflected on television, and what might be the opportunity... If there’s a show that a subscriber says, “This show is for me. That’s my show,” I think that will create a stronger bond. I want some of our subscribers to love one of these shows. We want to create a connection. **So on that point, do you consider subscriber stickiness a major factor in your creative decisions?** I think you have to. As somebody who likes data and research, I like to understand what the mission is... One of the huge, compelling reasons I took this job is because I felt Charter had a really clear view of what they wanted to do with original content. They really wanted to create exclusive, high-quality premium shows for their subscribers. It sounds so simple. I’m sure you talk to people all the time who say “We want to get noticed! We want to



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be part of the conversation!" Well, is that a business strategy? I don't even understand. So for me, the idea of we want to make shows for our subscribers—I really get that. That gives me such a clear sense of purpose and duty. I know who I'm speaking to. We create and own the guide—the way they navigate around their content. It all feels like a very clear strategy and something that I was really excited to do. One of the reasons I'm really excited about "L.A.'s Finest" is this widening gap between broadcast and cable and streaming. I feel like this show is not quite straight ahead enough for broadcast, and not quite edgy enough for cable and streaming. I think that people want that. **In February, a car stunt gone wrong on the L.A.'s Finest set gravely injured co-showrunner Brandon Sonnier, who lost part of his leg. How is he doing?** This is the guy who absolutely loves what he does, and he loves this show. He was at our final mix and in editing. We feel like we want to do right by this launch. It's a terrible thing that you can't fix after the fact. But we treasure him, and we hope he'll have a lot more episodes to make.

A+E and AT&T: Remember how **A+E Networks** went public late last month, warning **AT&T/DirecTV** viewers that they could lose **A&E, History, Lifetime** and other nets? Neither side offered us any update on negotiations, but A+E's KeepMyChannels.com website is no longer up, signaling that the two may have quietly reached a deal. The dispute quickly fell out of the public eye. A+E came out guns blazing on Saturday, April 27 (the same day its popular "Live PD" airs) with messaging encouraging viewers to call AT&T/DirecTV/DirecTV NOW about the nets. But the programmer had **toned down** its message by the next day to simply "AT&T – DirecTV customers, we are working to ensure you keep A&E, History, Lifetime and all of the A+E Networks currently available to you. Thank you for your support."

Fox Investor Day: **Fox Sports** chief *Eric Shanks* sees the sports betting opportunity as "simply massive." During **Fox Corp's** Investor Day presentation Thursday, he touted that the Fox Bets app will be up in time for the start of this year's football season. Fox expects sports wagering to be a \$7bln market with an additional \$1bln in marketing and advertising by 2025. Shanks added that Fox's research has found that 27mln people would consider using a sports betting app, a figure that he said is 50% higher than fantasy sports. Sports and news are the big focal points of the new Fox, and both were on display during the webcast presentation, with the company touting itself as "The Power of Now."

Fox News/Fox Business CEO *Suzanne Scott* said that more than 200mln people are reached between the various Fox News Media platforms, with the current fiscal year on track to be the brand's highest ad revenue year yet. On the broadcast front, management pledged to meaningfully accelerate retrans growth. Fox Corp announced its board has approved a semi-annual dividend of \$0.23 per share on the Company's Class A common stock and Class B common stock. The dividend declared is payable on June 3 with a record date for determining dividend entitlements of May 20.

Too Little Too Late: Even though **Univision** had a big victory to celebrate with the March settlement of its carriage dispute with **DISH**, it came too late in the quarter to put a positive spin on the company's 1Q results. Still, Univision CEO *Vince Sadusky* called it a "major win" for both companies on Univision's earnings call Wednesday. He added that it underscores that Univision is an invaluable partner whose content is of huge importance to Hispanic Americans. Univision saw revenues fall 8.2% YOY to \$611.9mln while adjusted OIBDA dropped 19.6% to \$204.3mln. Advertising revenues in the media networks segment also saw a hit, decreasing 4.8% to \$297mln. The decline is primarily due to drops in network advertising revenues that could partially be attributed to Univision's lack of carriage on DISH. What remains a mystery is



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how much Univision received from **Great Hill Partners** for digital media group **Gizmodo Media Group** and **The Onion** in the deal first announced in early April. Univision purchased the publications in August 2016 for \$135mln.

Redl Resigns: News that **NTIA** chief *David Redl* has resigned hit during the **FCC's** open meeting Thursday, with commissioners telling reporters they learned of the news from the dais. "I think his knowledge of issues is second to none and regret he has stepped down from his post," *Jessica Rosenworcel* said. Chairman *Ajit Pai* said having just learned of the news, he couldn't comment on how Redl's departure will affect any ongoing work between the NTIA and FCC. "He was a vocal advocate within the Department of Commerce for repurposing federal spectrum for commercial use and fostering the private sector's lead in 5G deployment," Pai said. NTIA is the White House's primary adviser on telecom policy—an especially notable role given the demands to free up more spectrum.

FCC Hurricane Report: An **FCC** report released Thursday on communications providers prep and response to 2018's Hurricane Michael identified three factors as the causes of slow restoration of wireless service in the Florida Panhandle: insufficient resilient backhaul connectivity, inadequate reciprocal roaming agreements and lack of coordination between wireless providers, power crews and municipalities. The investigation found that recovery efforts themselves often led to communications outages. Recommendations from the report include providers participating in training activities with state emergency operations centers and diversifying backhaul options, including microwave and satellite links. Recall FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* was particularly critical of wireless' response after Michael. Cable and wireline also were featured in the report, which noted that their facilities were more likely to survive the storm because of protected plant. However, cable and wireline also were "also vulnerable to disruption due to uncoordinated activities of repair crews," the FCC concluded. -- In other FCC news, the commissioners voted unanimously Thursday for an NPRM seeking comment on reallocating spectrum in the 1675-1680 MHz band, currently used by weather forecasting services, for shared use between incumbent federal users and non-federal, flexible-use wireless operations. The five also agreed to seek comment on a toll-free number auction. Instead of doling out 833 toll-free numbers on a first-come, first-serve request, the auction would feature competitive bidding for 17K numbers in the new toll free code. The FCC also unanimously approved **Theia Holdings'** application to construct, and operate a satellite constellation that will be used to provide high-resolution earth-imaging data in the United States and globally. Theia's proposed satellite system is comprised of 112 satellites operating in non-geostationary satellite orbit and could be used for fixed satellite and earth-exploration satellite services. Over the past 18 months, the FCC has approved requests by **OneWeb**, **SpaceX**, and other companies proposing NGSO constellations to provide broadband services using satellite technology.

Telemundo Upfront: **Telemundo** unveiled a multiplatform programming lineup for 2019-20 that features more than 900 hours of original content. Standouts include "Operación Pacifico," a series about a federal agent tasked with capturing drug lord El Guapo, and a Spanish-language version of the **NBC** game show "The Wall." The programmer will increase news coverage and co-host the first Democratic presidential primary debates with **MSNBC** and **NBC News** on back-to-back nights June 26 and 27 from Miami. When it comes to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, **Telemundo Deportes** will produce more than 2600 hours of live coverage during the event.

Coming Onboard: **Sky** is now an investor in cross-platform tools developer **You.i TV**. You.i TV currently offers a video experience platform that delivers content across multiple platforms with an architecture designed for maximal code reuse. It also now supports **React Native**, an open-source development framework. The deal will see *David Beazley*, director, software engineering for **Now TV**, Sky's online streaming service, join the You.i TV board. The investment comes as part of You.i TV's Series C funding announced in November.

Nomination Time: Nominations are being accepted for the 2019 Women in Technology Award. The honor is jointly presented by **WICT**, **SCTE-ISBE** and **Cablefax** and will be given during SCTE-ISBE's annual awards luncheon on Oct 2 at **Cable-Tec Expo** in New Orleans. Nominations are due June 21. -- **C2HR** is seeking nominations for its new Social Impact Award, which celebrates local and national social good initiatives, as well as its Team Innovator and Aspiring Leader honors. The three awards will be presented at the C2HR conference in Philly on Oct 17. Nomination forms and a list of past award recipients are available [here](#).

People: *Mike Suggett* has been upped to head of programming and development for **MotorTrend Group**. -- **BET** named *Staci Hallmon* svp, media sales for **BET Her**, effective immediately. She joins the company from marketing firm **Ferocious Unicorn** where she served as a founding partner. -- The **MPAA** promoted *Gail MacKinnon* to senior evp, global policy & government affairs, according to a company-wide email from chairman/CEO *Charles Rivkin* obtained by **Cablefax**. MacKinnon was **Time Warner Cable's** chief govt relations officer from 2008-2016. The promotion expands her current responsibilities to include oversight of all international advocacy and policy, including in the APAC and EMEA regions.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'The Employables' Celebrates Differences

A&E's new docuseries "The Employables" (premiered May 8, 10pm) follows two neuro-diverse job seekers who've struggled to find work due to their condition. "We hope that it shows people that these individuals deserve a chance just like anybody else, and employers have a lot to gain just by giving people a chance," *Edward Hambleton*, co-ep for the series, told **Cablefax**. The premiere episode sees individuals with Tourette's and autism as they hunt for employment and meet with experts. It's based on an original format called "Employable Me" produced by **Optomen** and the **BBC** in the UK, but it wasn't necessarily easy to bring to the US. "We're all very invested in it and wanted to see it made here. It was quite hard to get it picked up by a network here, and eventually A&E decided to partner with us on it," said *Maria Silver*, pres of Optomen and ep of the series. "It's not easy, because it's the first season here it was quite hard to gain individual's trust. We worked with different organizations as well, we were understandably unsure of the way a TV company is going to approach something like this." The show was in production for more than a year, with filming often being disrupted. "Somebody has a meltdown, you might have to wrap the crew for the day. It's not an easy show to make, it's unpredictable and challenging," said Silver. In the end, it's incredibly rewarding for producers, job seekers and viewers themselves. "The moments that stand out for us are when the job seekers are successful and they get those jobs and connections. And to see the employers begin to recognize what an asset these people can be. I think seeing those genuine reactions come to fruition when you're working so hard to deliver that message," said Hambleton. — *Mollie Cahillane*

Reviews: "Line of Duty," Season 5 premiere, Monday, streaming on **Acorn TV**. Want to know what all the fuss is about in Britain? It's the baby, of course. No, not that baby, it's the baby that will pull you into Season 5 of Britain's top-rated series of 2019. The stakes are raised immediately with a terrific opening scene, as a police transport of sensitive materials encounters what appears to be a slight hitch. (Sorry, we don't want to spoil it.) The police case begins there, but there's a bottleneck in an unusual spot. Though American viewers will know only *Stephen Graham* (Al Capone on **HBO's** "Boardwalk Empire"), they'll likely quickly gravitate toward *Vicky McClure*, who's captured a **BAFTA** for her work on this series. And no fretting about not having seen seasons 1-4. We promise, you'll have no trouble diving into this excellent police procedural. After you binge this season, go back and enjoy the earlier ones on Acorn TV. -- "Home Videos," premiere, 7pm, Sunday, HBO. The actor-comedian Jerrod Carmichael heads home for a pair of home movies, exploring what his family members think of their lives as black Americans. This first special concentrates on Carmichael's female relatives. The best conversation is one with his mother, an extraordinary woman with a great deal of tolerance and forgiveness. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (4/29/19-5/5/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.800	2,442
TNT	0.761	2,323
ESPN	0.600	1,833
MSNBC	0.558	1,705
HGTV	0.393	1,202
A&E	0.393	1,199
HBO	0.389	1,187
TBSC	0.348	1,064
HIST	0.339	1,036
HALL	0.333	1,017
USA	0.321	981
NBCSN	0.282	860
ID	0.280	854
TLC	0.277	845
DISCA	0.275	840
FOOD	0.257	784
CNN	0.243	744
NICK	0.235	717
BRAVO	0.211	644
TVLAND	0.203	621
INSP	0.194	593
ADSM	0.182	555
NAN	0.175	534
DSNY	0.166	507
AMC	0.154	470
SYFY	0.150	459
VH1	0.150	457
FX	0.148	452
LIFE	0.145	442
DSJR	0.144	440
APL	0.143	436
WETV	0.135	414
CRN	0.134	409
MTV	0.131	401
GSN	0.131	401
TRAVEL	0.127	389
NKJR	0.127	388
NATGEO	0.116	353
PARA	0.113	345
HMM	0.108	329
FRFM	0.105	322

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

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