

Cablefax Daily™

Wednesday — October 23, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 204

MWC LA: Mobile Video, C-Band Spectrum Takes Center Stage

Once again, 5G is dominating Mobile World Congress LA. One of cable's biggest names stopped by Tuesday's opening keynote touched on everything from what the higher bandwidth will power to how to distribute that speed capability to more people. **Viacom** CEO *Bob Bakish* pressed the massive opportunity that exists with mobile video when the wireless industry is open to partnership, pointing to the programmer's content distribution deal with **T-Mobile**. "I truly believe mobile video is the future of video," Bakish said, but admitted that there have certainly been challenges that have held the platform back. "Consumers seem to love the convenience of mobile video, but too few have been willing to pay extra for it." The younger age group that tends to prefer watching on smaller screens is often looking for ways to watch their favorite shows for free on their mobile devices, Bakish said, and the wireless industry doesn't have to wait for 5G to unlock the potential of mobile video. All it takes is connectivity, devices and content, and they're already in place. Bakish said access to a wide swath of marquis content capable of making the jump to mobile viewing is one reason for Viacom's merger with **CBS**, which will "create a company that will have a \$13bln annual content spend and growing." A piece of Washington also made an appearance at the wireless conference to shape out the regulatory side of the 5G coin. The **FCC** will have run three high-band spectrum auctions by the time 2019 comes to a close and chmn *Ajit Pai* hoping to have two midband spectrum auctions wrapped, one for the 2.5GHz band and one for the 3.5GHz band, by the end of 2020. "Midband, I think, is especially prized for its combination of coverage and capacity, so we're looking to hold those auctions in a timely way to enable innovators... to be able to take those building blocks and see where it goes," Pai said. Pai said the biggest lesson he's taking from them for the upcoming midband auctions is that the Commission needs to move as quickly as possible to clear spectrum for 5G. Funny, since speed has been one of the biggest arguments against the FCC running a public auction of C-band spectrum and instead allowing the **C-Band Alliance** to handle the job. Pai was pressed for answers regarding his opinion of a private sale of the band by *Sen John Kennedy* (R-LA) at a hearing last week, and he was equally as aloof regarding the FCC's stance at the MWC LA keynote. As for the bands that will be looked at next, Pai said he's "particularly bullish" on the 6GHz band, which features 160MHz channels that could be used for things like AR and VR. "We're hopeful to find an accommodation for the incumbent users of that band

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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 ● Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com ● Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,749.00/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

as well as some of the next-generation unlicensed innovators who could take this spectrum and really run with it,” Pai said. “Some people might think what’s the big deal, but I think the same was said of WiFi just a generation ago... I’m pretty confident that WiFi 6 will be similar.” Sharing spectrum is also being considered, specifically in the 3.1-3.55 band. And while the innovations that could be powered by 5G and their impact are usually first felt in urban communities, Pai doesn’t want anyone to underestimate what 5G could mean for rural communities. “When you think about what farms and ranches are, it’s not simply the tangible things you can see... these are essentially huge amounts of data that need to be uploaded into the cloud, analyzed quickly and then the services need to be deployed at scale,” Pai said. “One of the things that is going to make 5G relevant in the minds of most people is not so much the spectrum that’s involved or the number of small cells you deploy, but the applications and services that are going to be deployed in the real lives of these American consumers.”

Verizon Subscribers to Receive a Free Year of Disney+: Netflix shares dropped more than 4% by market close Tuesday with news that Verizon will serve as the exclusive wireless partner for Disney+. All new and existing 4G LTE and 5G unlimited wireless customers will receive the service free for a year when it launches in three weeks time. The deal will also be available to new 5G Home Internet and Fios Home Internet customers. Those Verizon customers will have the same experience as any other subscriber: commercial-free viewing, up to four concurrent streams, downloads for offline viewing and the ability to set up to seven different profiles.

Rural America Ready for STELAR to Sunset: The Senate Commerce committee is set to debate STELAR’s reauthorization Thursday, and the Rural & Agricultural Council of America took the opportunity to remind chmn Roger Wicker (R-MS) and ranking member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) that some rural Americans would rather see the legislation be put out to pasture. Rather than focusing on the renewal of STELAR, which RACA says harms rural communities by allowing major satellite TV providers to carry stations from outside rural areas, the government should focus on closing the digital divide. “There is a notable lack of reliable broadband and wireless connections in rural areas along with abysmal internet speeds, and this legislative loophole creates a broadcast television divide,” RACA pres Jack Alexander wrote in a letter sent Tuesday. “Broadcasters work hand-in-hand as first informers with first responders in our neighborhoods, yet for residents of rural America in the communities affected by STELAR, we receive none of this sometimes lifesaving programming during times of crisis.”

Roku Bulks Up Ad Business with dataxu: Roku is strengthening its advertising business with the \$150mIn purchase of dataxu, a demand-side platform allowing marketers to plan and buy video ad campaigns. It will complement Roku’s

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OTT advertising platform by giving marketers a single solution through which to optimize their ad spend across TV and OTT providers. The acquisition is expected to close in 4Q19 and will be discussed during Roku's 3Q19 earnings call on Nov 6.

Discovery Taps Synamedia for Asia Distribution Help: Discovery is using Synamedia's virtualized Digital Content Manager to increase operational efficiencies for its global distribution in the Asia Pacific region. Discovery is centralizing its Asia Pacific uplink compression systems to its Sterling, VA, broadcast center and then using the Digital Content Manager to transition its distribution architecture to an IP-based virtualized video processing environment. Discovery also uses Synamedia's PowerVu Network Center to distribute its live linear international channels to the Asia Pacific region.

XFL Season Sets Feb 9 Start Date: The XFL revealed its 10-week regular season schedule and only 79 days stand between the first kick-off and the championship game. It all begins Feb 9 on ABC at 2pm with the DC Defenders hosting the Seattle Dragons. That game will be followed by the Los Angeles Wildcats taking on the Houston Roughnecks in Texas at 5pm on Fox. The top two teams in each division will square off for the right to play in the league championship on April 26 at 3pm on ESPN. The East final will be held on April 18 at 3pm on Fox and the West final is scheduled for April 19 at 3pm on ESPN.

Celebrating the FAXIES: Congrats to all the winners and finalists at Cablefax's FAXIES luncheon Tuesday at the Edison Ballroom in NYC. Publisher Michael Grebb set the tone of the afternoon, launching the event with an original song about the Golden Age of TV, at least until "Netflix buys everyone." Speeches were short and sweet, but Univision svp of corporate communications Bobby Amirshahi took his time congratulating PR Executive of the Year, Univision's evp and chief communications officer Rosemary Mercedes. "She joined the company as its second ever communications person about 12 years ago, and to think through all of the regime changes and changes in our industry to really rise in the ranks and be the chief communications officer of this company, I think that says a lot," Amirshahi said, accepting the award on behalf of Mercedes, who was unfortunately attending a funeral. AT&T's Xandr took home the award for Marketing Team of the Year, having launched just over a year ago after the company purchased AppNexus. Kirk McDonald, Xandr's chief business officer, accepted the award, quipping that his team was too shy to join him on stage. Smithsonian Channel earned PR Team of the Year. "I'm a lucky lady to lead this team." Joanne Brahim, vp of communications, said while accepting. "We have a lot of fun together, which I think is very important, but we've covered everything from international to our linear to domestic programming, our OTT service, events, talent management, corporate communications, is there anything I'm missing there?" she joked. "We're just excited to see what 2020 brings the brand and our team." Check out the full list of winners [here](#).

Food Network Kitchen Celebrates Launch Day: Discovery launched DTC platform Food Network Kitchen Tuesday across Amazon devices, iOS and Android devices. The app will offer 25 live classes a week as well as on-demand classes, recipes, shows, grocery ordering and delivery. A launch discount is giving customers a 90-day free trial period and a one-year subscription price of \$47.99. For each purchase of an annual subscription to Food Network Kitchen, Discovery will provide up to 100 meals to kids as part of its "Turn Up: Fight Hunger" initiative with No Kid Hungry. The campaign aims to provide 1bln meals for kids living with hunger in the US over the next five years.

C-Band Ahead: The House Communications subcmte is the latest group of legislators taking a look at what's best for the C-band. The subcmte will hold a hearing entitled "Repurposing the C-Band to Benefit all Americans" at 10am. "The FCC must repurpose the C-Band in a manner that promotes competition, spurs the 5G revolution, and yields revenue for important priorities here at home. What we don't want is the Federal Communications commission to become mired in litigation that slows 5G deployment," subcmte chmn Mike Doyle (D-PA) said in a statement.

Ratings: This college football season to date, ESPN's viewership is up 11%. Saturday's 9pm showdown between Alabama and Tennessee earned 4.248mln viewers, the second most-watched game of the week across all networks, trailing only ABC's "SNF." The net also conquered the noon time slot, with Florida vs South Carolina bringing in an audience of 3.193mln viewers. The ESPN audience was up 42% year-over-year and peaked at 4.13mln viewers late in the second half.

Programming: The first original series from the jv between Discovery and Chip and Joanna Gaines has been revealed. "Home on the Road (WT)" will arrive on the Magnolia network in Oct 2020 and chronicle the lives of husband and wife Abner Ramirez and Amanda Sudano Ramirez as they tour North America with their band JOHNNYSWIM.

People: Connie Orlando was upped to evp, specials, music programming & music strategy at BET Networks. She's been with BET since 2007, most recently serving as evp/head of programming.