

# Cablefax Daily™

Monday — December 23, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 245

## Tis the Season: Fox, NCTC & Comcast, Starz Among Year-End Deadlines

At **Cablefax's** Most Powerful Women luncheon earlier this month, we surveyed the room, asking attendees if their New Year's Eve plans included champagne, an early bedtime or carriage negotiations. While champagne handily won, 16% of the crowd said negotiations were on their dance cards. As Dec 31 draws closer, we're getting a better sense of who may be up late talking business. **NCTC's** contract for **Fox News** and other Fox channels is up Dec 31 and co-op members are getting vocal about negotiations. The usual suspect—price—is the pain point. "@FoxNews is popular, especially in NW IA, but an 800% increase in cost since 2004 is completely unfair to Premier's hard working customers, who ultimately bear the cost of these price hikes!! Good Faith negotiations can't just be one-sided. #playfairandbalanced #fox," tweeted **Ryan Boone**, COO of Northwest Iowa's **Premier Communications**. Shrewsbury, MA, community-owned and operated utility **Selco** sent out a similar tweet, adding "SELCO and @NCTCTWEETS want a fair deal. No one wins when negotiations fail." Some members seem to be contemplating nixing channels. One California HOA and NCTC member that provides video and broadband services said its assessment would drop in 2020 to \$10.96 from \$19 in 2019 if it removed its local Fox-owned Fox and CW stations. Another contract expiration on the horizon is **Comcast-Starz**. It's been public for months that the two are facing a Dec 31 deadline. On Dec 10, Comcast reduced the number of Starz channels it offers, removing channel such as Starz Edge and Starz Kids & Family. Comcast said if it's not able to reach an agreement by Dec 31, it will no longer be able to carry Starz content and customers won't be charged for it. As part of its routine notification process, Comcast has said its contracts are expiring in December with broadcasters **Nexstar** and **Tegna**. None of the parties offered comment on the current status. A possibly positive sign is that broadcast stations aren't running any crawls warning Comcast subs of potential blackouts. Of course, sometimes the most contentious negotiations don't pop up until the eleventh hour. **Cablefax** will keep you posted on all on the carriage developments leading in to 2020 and beyond... After all, the next retrans/must carry election cycle deadline is Oct 1, 2020. Happy New Year!

**Music Labels Awarded \$1bln in Cox Piracy Suit:** A US District Court jury on Thursday found **Cox Communications** liable for the piracy infringement of more than 10K songs and awarded \$1bln in damages to music labels **Sony Music**,

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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

**Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group and EMI.** The labels raised the suit in June 2018, claiming Cox contributed to and profited from copyright infringement committed by its broadband subs. They argued that Cox implemented a “thirteen-strike policy” as a deterrent to copyright infringement that never automatically terminates a subscriber for repeat offenses, the company is not protected by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which protects service providers from repercussions based on a subscriber’s activities. Cox said it plans to appeal the case, calling the judgment an egregious amount and unwarranted. “Today, you can download a song for a dollar. This judgement is for nearly \$100,000 per song,” Cox said. “We provide customers with a powerful tool that connects to a world full of content and information. Unfortunately, some customers have chosen to use that connection for wrongful activity. We don’t condone it, we educate on it and we do our best to help curb it, but we shouldn’t be held responsible for the bad actions of others.”

**ViacomCBS Buys Minority Stake in Miramax:** ViacomCBS is acquiring 49% of Miramax from beIN Media Group for \$375mln. Terms of the agreement include a \$150mln upfront cash payment. The company also committed to investing \$45mln annually over the next five years (\$225mln total) for new film and television productions and working capital. beIN will retain a 51% stake in TV and film studio and retain its current leadership team. ViacomCBS’s **Paramount Pictures** also entered an exclusive, long-term distribution agreement for Miramax’s film library and an exclusive, long-term first-look agreement, allowing Paramount “to develop, produce, finance and distribute new film and television projects based on Miramax’s IP.” The deal is expected to close in Q1 2020.

**DISH Devices Offer Google Smart Home Support:** DISH’s Hopper and Wally receivers now support the Google Nest Hello Video doorbell. When the doorbell rings, Nest Hello sends on-screen notifications directly on to the television. DISH is the first pay TV provider to integrate a Google Nest device into its ecosystem through Google’s Device Access program. The program allows qualified partners to request secure access and control of Nest devices in their apps, giving consumers more options to control their devices.

**Distribution:** RCN, Grande and Wave launched **Amazon Prime** on their **TiVo** set-top boxes. The app is now integrated with the TiVo guide and can be launched directly from the box.

**Programming:** **Nat Geo** is highlighting the best of its 2019 programming, starting with “Expedition Amelia: Bob Ballard’s Search” Monday, 8pm. The net will also air a marathon of “The Hot Zone” beginning Dec 28 at 5pm. -- **Outdoor Sportsman Group Networks** is kicking off 2020 with a slate of new programming across its linear channels. New scripted “reality” series “Longmire” premieres on **Outdoor Channel** on Monday at 9pm. “Wardens” returns Feb 3 at 8:30pm. Over on

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RESUMES

**Sportsman Channel**, “Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour” (Fridays, 8pm) is getting a boost with 10 additional hours of content weekly. “The Reel Life” is heading to **World Fishing Network** in 2020, taking over weeknight and weekend blocks of programming on Sundays from 6-11pm, Tuesdays 6-11pm and Thursdays 6-11pm.

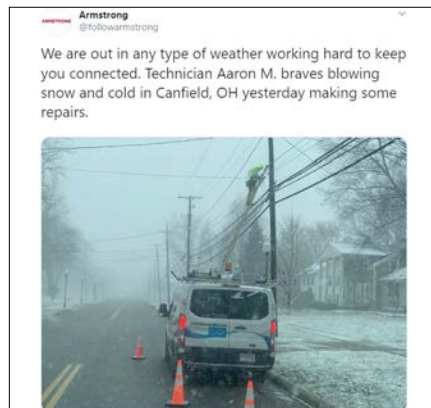
**People: Food Network** named *Patty Suh* vp, programming and development. She previously served as vp, development at *Steve Harvey’s East 112th Street Productions*. -- **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* appointed *Monisha Ghosh* as the agency’s CTO. Ghosh will be the Commission’s first female CTO when she starts on Jan 13. She replaces *Eric Burger*, who has been serving at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy since October. Ghosh has been serving as a rotating program director at the National Science Foundation since 2017.

**We Moved!:** **Cablefax** sends a sincere thanks for all the end-of-year treats we’ve received, from cookies to cakes to maybe even a sugar plum fairy or two. We’ve noticed some packages to Rockville, MD, have been delayed because they have our old address. Please update your records: 9211 Corporate Blvd. Fourth Floor. Rockville, MD 20850.

**Editor’s Note:** This is your last issue of **Cablefax Daily** of 2019. The Jan 2 issue should hit your inbox on Dec 31, and we’ll keep you abreast of any breaking news between now and then. Have a wonderful holiday season!

## Cablefax Dashboard

### Tweet Tweet



### Up Ahead

**Dec 20:** [Cablefax Work Culture 2020 Entry Deadline](#)

**Jan 7-10:** [CES 2020](#); Las Vegas

**Jan 21-25:** [NATPE Miami](#)

**Jan 27-30:** [Realscreen Summit](#); New Orleans

**Feb 16-18:** [NCTC Winter Education Conference](#); Las Vegas

### Research

- > Out of 700 US business and technology decisionmakers, 73% reported they are currently creating their own first-party IP using technologies like machine learning (39%), IoT (37%), AI (32%), blockchain (29%) and mixed reality (21%).
  - > 75% believe that inventing their own digital solutions to solve complex business and societal issues (an approach defined as tech intensity) is the most effective way to build competitive advantage today.
  - > 40% believed that tech intensity would lead to improved connectivity in rural areas.
- (Source: [Microsoft](#))

### Quotable

“Live television, we felt like it was the holy grail. If we could create content that could be appointment viewing, and it’s live, it’s that added value. You want to experience it as it happens. People don’t typically tune into live events after the fact. It’s how do we create content that’s DVR proof, that the audience is going to show up and watch and want to participate in the viewing experience. It’s very rare now that content, whether it’s unscripted or scripted, has that community viewing experience.”

– **Big Fish Entertainment founder Dan Cesareo** on *CTAM’s “Thinking Out Loud” podcast*

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