

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Channel Changes: Starz Leaving Comcast Packages on Feb 11

When **Starz** and **Comcast** reached a renewal agreement last month, it was clear that the premium net's carriage as part of existing Comcast packages was only temporary. The two promised a "path for an orderly transition to an a la carte business" for Starz down the road. We've come to that juncture. Comcast has started notifying customers that it will begin removing **Lionsgate**-owned Starz from packages as of Feb 11. That fits with plans to keep Starz in current Xfinity lineups until the series finale of "Power," which premieres Feb 9. Under the new agreement with Starz, the channel will be available to Comcast customers separately from those packages at a reduced rate of \$8.99/month (it used to cost around \$12/month—higher than the \$8.99 monthly charge for the Starz standalone app). Those who subscribe to Starz a la carte will also receive **Starz Encore**, **Starz Encore Westerns**, **Starz Encore Black**, **Starz Encore Action**, **Starz On Demand** and **Starz Encore On Demand**. Additionally, Comcast will be removing Lionsgate-owned **Movieplex** programming on March 24. Under the renewal, Comcast NBCU and Starz struck a long-term licensing pack for hundreds of hours of Lionsgate content on upcoming streamer **Peacock**. NBCUniversal also is licensing content to Starz to be featured in the US and on its international streaming service, STARZPLAY. While Starz is falling out of packages, Comcast inked an expanded deal with **Epix** earlier this year that saw the **MGM**-owned premium net added to Xfinity packages on Dec 10.

**CBA Wants to Help FCC Coordinate C-Band Clearing:** The **FCC** has taken on the responsibility of conducting a public auction for 280 MHz of C-band spectrum by the end of 2020, but the **C-Band Alliance** still wants to be very involved in the proceeding. The CBA said in an FCC filing Friday that the Commission must name the CBA as the clearing coordinator responsible for the operational aspects of clearing and transitioning the C-band spectrum for 5G uses. The CBA's members include **Telesat**, **Intelsat** and **SES**, which provide more than 95% of the current US C-band satellite service that is used for content delivery. That technical experience and control of space assets would allow CBA's members to work together with ground stations to allow 5G operations to begin as quickly as possible, the group said in its filing. The CBA also reminded the FCC that if it wants to meet its goal of completing the

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auction by the end of the year, the Commission will need to give the foreign satellite companies a reason to want to give the spectrum they currently use to the highest bidder. “Without fair and appropriate incentives to drive the CBA’s cooperation, the timeline for clearing and transitioning the C-band would balloon to 10 years or more,” CBA wrote.

**Good Faith Fight Rages On:** The **AT&T-Deerfield 9** saga continues. The nine broadcast groups told the **FCC** this week that a judge’s dismissal of AT&T’s breach of contract suit against **Max Retrans** undermines the FCC Media Bureau’s November finding that the broadcasters violated rules requiring good faith retrans negotiations. AT&T returned serve Friday, saying the court’s decision actually reinforces the Media Bureau decision. The US District Court for Eastern Missouri found Jan 16 that the nine station groups were participating in a joint negotiation led by Max Retrans’ **Duane Lammers** and thus not a “third party” and entitled to confidential information. “While AT&T believes the court’s decision with regard to that narrow issue was incorrect, that decision does not address, let alone resolve, the distinct issue decided by the Bureau in its Order: whether each defendant met its obligations to negotiate in good faith for carriage of its own stations,” AT&T wrote in its missive, adding that the court and the Bureau found the only agreement being negotiated was with an unnamed broadcast group that’s not part of the Deerfield 9. “In sum, the court’s order reinforces the Bureau’s well-supported finding that, despite AT&T’s months-long efforts, defendants refused to negotiate any deal that would have prevented ‘them [from] going dark.’” The Deerfield 9 (**Deerfield Media, Howard Stirk Holdings, Waitt Broadcasting, GoCom Media, Mercury Broadcasting, MPS Media, Nashville License Holdings, Roberts Media** and **Second Generation of Iowa**) have asked the FCC to reconsider the Media Bureau decision.

**Cincinnati Bell Gets Buyout Bid:** Cincinnati Bell received a non-binding buyout proposal from an “infrastructure fund” for \$12/share cash. That’s 14% above the \$10.50/share **Brookfield Infrastructure** is planning to pay under an agreement announced Dec 23. Cincinnati Bell is in discussions with the fund, but for now, the Brookfield deal remains in effect.

**PlayStation Vue Countdown:** Time’s almost out for **Playstation Vue** customers to make the switch to a new provider, with the service shuttering Jan 31. On Jan 21, the **YouTube TV** app was added to the Playstation store, giving Vue fans a similar service that can be streamed on Playstation consoles. They aren’t exact matches though. Vue viewers will lose some channels, including **NFL Network** and **Cooking Channel**.

**Lawmakers Question NTIA’s Role in Spectrum Management:** House Commerce chmn **Frank Pallone** (D-NJ) and ranking member **Greg Walden** (R-OR) sent a letter to the US **Government Accountability Office** Friday urging it to conduct an updated review of the **NTIA**’s federal spectrum management processes. In particular, Pallone and Walden would

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like the GAO to investigate how federal spectrum users interact with NTIA and the FCC, how the NTIA and the FCC interact and the cause of recent federal spectrum management process breakdowns. According to Pallone and Walden, those breakdowns occurred in areas like the 2.5GHz FCC docket and the 24GHz FCC auction. “Last year, it was clear that the federal spectrum management process broke down,” the pair wrote. “Rather than working through the NTIA as the central repository and manager of federal spectrum, we are concerned that many of the federal agencies with spectrum allocations may have circumvented this statutory process.”

**T-Mobile Amps Up Miami 5G Coverage:** T-Mobile added some oomph to its 5G network in Miami ahead of the Super Bowl, enhancing its in areas where the biggest crowds are expected to be. That includes Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Beach and the Miami and Fort Lauderdale airports. T-Mobile has more than doubled LTE capacity at Hard Rock Stadium and to enhance indoor capacity at indoor venues, T-Mobile built new distributed antenna systems and deployed additional small cells throughout the city. The wireless provider also deployed mmWave 5G for customers in parts of Miami including nearly all of Bayfront Park.

**Ratings:** The Jan 18th premiere of BBC America’s “Seven Worlds, One Planet” drew 1.9mln P2+ and 652K A25-54 across its four-network simulcast on BBC America, AMC, IFC and Sundance TV in Nielsen L+3 ratings.

## Cablefax Dashboard

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### Up Ahead

- Jan 27-30:** Realscreen Summit; New Orleans
- Feb 7:** Cablefax 100 Nomination Deadline
- Feb 10-12:** Caribbean Cable Telecommunications Association Annual Meeting; The Bahamas
- Feb 16-18:** NCTC Winter Educational Conference; Las Vegas
- March 17-19:** ACA Connects Summit; DC

### Research

- > Approximately 3/4 of smart speaker owners use their smart speaker to search for media content including music, TV shows, movies, podcasts and audiobooks.
- > Concerns about privacy and security remain a roadblock for adoption for 66% of potential buyers.
- > 59% of those who regularly use voice control have concerns about privacy.

(Source: [Hub Research](#))

### Quotable

“This is neither a Republican nor a Democratic issue, it’s an American issue, and it is crucial that the Trump administration and members of Congress work together to surpass China in the 5G race. One of the first steps is opening access to the digital spectrum, specifically the mid-band spectrum, that companies need to roll out 5G technology. The mid-band spectrum, also known as the C-band, has the right balance of coverage and capacity to facilitate 5G adoption throughout urban, suburban and rural America... Chairman Pai has been clear that this auction is a priority, and has been pushing for its execution for some time. But this needs to be done the right way—and the right way is to move with deliberate speed.” – **5G Action Now chmn Mike Rogers in a CNN op-ed**



## Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax’s Annual Top Power Players?

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