

Cablefax Daily™

Monday — March 30, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 061

Free Spree: Linear Programmers Line Up with Complimentary Content

While there's tons of talk these days about what's streaming on SVODs, linear programmers are reaching out to their MVPD partners with a host of free previews as America hunkers down during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to fattening up their linear offerings, MVPDs are proceeding with caution when it comes to programming changes. **Comcast** had been planning to move **Cartoon Network** to its digital preferred tier from digital starter in some markets this month. In light of the current crisis, the channel shift has been deferred until further notice. The number of networks offering free-views allowing affiliates to place channels on more widely distributed tiers for a period of time for no additional cost continues to grow. Here's a rundown of some of the current offers. **Disney Media Networks** is making **Disney XD**, **Disney Junior**, **FXM** and **Nat Geo Wild** available for a 30-day free preview. These networks are typically digital basic networks, so customers who aren't at that level of service can view them and their corresponding VOD content. **Outdoor Sportsman Group** is making its networks available for free to partners through the end of April, significant since some of its channels are on sports tiers. **NCTC**, **DISH** and **Sling** are among the MVPDs taking advantage of the offer, which includes **Outdoor Channel**, **Sportsman Network** and **World Fishing Network**. **REVOLT**, the hip hop-focused content brand from *Sean "Diddy" Combs*, is offering a 30-day freeview to current partners in an effort to help customers practice social distancing. "REVOLT is in a unique position as its content is squarely positioned with the Gen Hip Hop audience (that is Millennial & Gen Z) much of whom are particularly craving alternative content," said *Angela Turner*, svp, affiliate & consumer marketing. "Several partners have signed on for the freeview offer, available thru July 1st, and conversations continue with many others." The cable news networks have been opening up their coverage of the coronavirus, with **NBCU** making **MSNBC** and **CNBC** available to all video customers, regardless of subscription package. **Fox Corp** is making **Fox News** and **Fox TV** stations available to all its pay TV partners' customers, regardless of specific package, at no additional fee. It's also leveraging its own distribution platforms for free streaming of the networks. **CNN** is allowing distribution partners to make it available to all subs, regardless of tier, for a limited time. It also dropped authentication for its three recent "Coronavirus: Facts and Fears" Town Halls. If the arts are more your thing, that's covered as well. "We have made **Ovation** available as a free preview to all our affiliate partners. In addition to that, on March 30, Ovation will launch an 'Art House' destination

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within its Ovation NOW app,” said *John Malkin*, evp, content distribution. “Art House” will be filled with arts-focused series, specials and documentaries for all viewers to enjoy for free—anytime, anywhere. All they have to do is download the Ovation NOW app, and access the ‘Art House’ folder.” The premium nets are also in the mix, with **Starz** running a free preview now through April 2 with **AT&T** and **DirecTV**. Comcast, **Mediacom**, **Verizon**, **Atlantic Broadband**, **Cincinnati Bell** and others will be running Starz previews in the coming weeks. **Showtime** and **EPIX** have freeviews in place that various providers, including **Sling**, Verizon, **fuboTV** and **Charter**, are taking advantage of. AT&T has an **HBO** preview slated for April 17-20. **Altice USA** announced that it’s making content available from **Hallmark Channel**, **Hallmark Drama**, **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries**, **Cooking Channel**, **DIY Network**, **Science Channel**, and **Discovery Family** now through April 22 at no additional cost. **AMC Networks** has several free previews lined up, including offering **AMC**, **IFC**, **SundanceTV**, **WE TV** and **BBC America** free on Verizon later this month, while DirecTV has a preview of IFC running now. DISH will begin a free preview of BBC America on April 2 and of SundanceTV on April 6.

Altice Has Free Student WiFi: In addition to its free 60-day offer of the Altice Advantage program for households with students, **Altice USA’s Optimum** is teaming with school districts in its tri-state service area to offer Student WiFi at no cost for 60 days. The program provides students who have school-issued devices the ability to use the Optimum WiFi Hot Spot Network to access their school’s network and resources from home if they do not have dedicated Internet access. Optimum currently has more than 189K student devices connected for free as part of this program.

From the Commission: The **FCC** issued a temporary waiver of its access arbitrage rules to telecom company **Inteliquent**, which carries traffic for conference call providers **Zoom Video Communications** and **Cisco WebEx**. Both services have seen a massive increase in conference calls due to the rise in telework and distance learning as a result of the coronavirus. Usually, the increase in traffic would result in Inteliquent being deemed an access-stimulating carrier under the FCC’s rules, resulting in significant cost increases for the company. The temporary waiver will expire on June 1. Inteliquent may seek renewal of the waiver if necessary. -- The **FCC’s** Wireless Telecom Bureau granted temporary spectrum access to 33 wireless ISPs in 29 states to help them serve rural communities during the pandemic. The special temporary authority allows those companies to use the lower 45MHz of the 5.9GHz band for 60 days.

Doing Good: **Comcast** CEO *Brian Roberts* and his wife *Aileen Roberts* have donated \$5mln for laptops to help Philly students start online classes by mid-April. The gift will help support the purchase of 50K Chromebooks for students in 220 public schools across the city. “When we heard that many Philadelphia students weren’t going to be able to learn from home without laptops, we quickly decided we wanted to help and provide these teachers, parents and students with the

We are so proud of our industry and the many ways companies are responding to the pandemic. Free internet, fresh content, employee safety and much more.

The Cablefax Editorial Team is reporting on vital industry updates every day. We want to hear from you so please reach out to share your news and stories.

Content. Community. Daily.

Amy Maclean, Editorial Director,
amaclean@accessintel.com or 301.354.1760

The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?: With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become a thing? **Universal Pictures** is the first out of the gate, announcing “Trolls World Tour” will be available April 10 for a rental. Other in-release movie titles are set to be available as soon as this Friday. The movies will be available on **Comcast**, **Sky** and a “broad range of on-demand partners.” Titles to be made available include “The Man” and “Emma” with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 in the US.

Tuesday — March 17, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First* Volume 31 / No. 050

For Now: Providers Set Aside Disputes During Coronavirus Outbreak

As they face the common enemy that is the coronavirus pandemic, **Cox Media Group** and **DISH** have set aside their retrans dispute for now so that DISH can resume its carriage of 10 CMG stations in New York, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Louisiana, California, Mississippi and Idaho. No word on how long the truce will last.

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Friday — March 13, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First* Volume 31 / No. 050

New Normal: Companies Roll Out Contingency Plans in Face of Covid-19

With a growing number of students and employees working from home, it’s mission critical for the nation’s broadband providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Operators big and small are up-ending their day-to-day operations to ensure service to their customers.

Wednesday — March 18, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First*

Covering Covid-19: Content Companies Step Up Efforts

Programmers are shuffling schedules to respond to the coronavirus crisis. **The Weather Channel** is airing live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content. **Netflix** is offering free access to its library of educational content. **Netflix** is offering free access to its library of educational content. **Netflix** is offering free access to its library of educational content. Pledge during the Covid-19 pandemic. Topics include why the truce happens, how rainbows form and how to stay safe. Scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Keep Americans Connected Pledge**, agreeing to take specific steps to keep Americans connected during the coronavirus pandemic. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications**, **Middle**

technology they need to begin learning online within just a few weeks. In good times or bad, now all of our Philadelphia students will have access to technology to help them succeed," Aileen and Brian Roberts said. -- **Fox News' Dana Perino** has been hosting "Story Time with Dana," a public service in reading to children across the country. She is providing this service every day at 3:30 PM/ET on FOXNews.com, YouTube, Facebook Live and on demand on **Fox Nation**. -- **Nexstar's** charitable foundation is donating \$25K to Feeding Illinois as part of a public service initiative by the Illinois Broadcasters Association. The four-week long "Illinois Broadcasters Unite to Fight Hunger Campaign" hopes to raise \$500K.

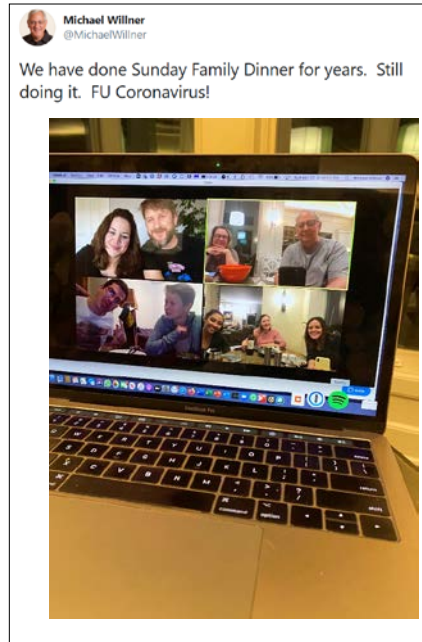
Moody's Reviewing Diamond RSNs: **Moody's** placed the credit ratings for Sinclair indirect subsidiary **Diamond Sports Group** under review for downgrade due to the increasing risk on the RSNs' performance from the suspensions of the **NBA** and **NHL** games, as well as the **MLB** postponement.

Programming: In a world where premieres are getting pushed left and right, **AMC Networks** moved the Season 3 premiere of "Killing Eve" up two weeks. The show will be simulcast across **BBC America** and **AMC** on April 12 at 9pm.

People: Well-known distribution exec **Brad Samuels** joined **Newsy** as head of distribution. Samuels' previous stints have included **Comedy Central**, **TV One**, **Ovation** and **Bloomberg**.

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Quotable

"I think you can get paralyzed by looking at all the risks. Particularly for women, when starting in their career, they may hesitate because they don't want to fail. But failure is not a negative. You learn the most by failing. It's worse not to try than it is to try and fail. Sometimes, it takes a few go-arounds to make it work... I didn't start out with the intention to be in technology. I owned restaurants and came into the business with a customer service mentality after selling the restaurants to join the family business. I really felt that's what was missing: I have brilliant people who design the network, but it's the way you approach customers that I'm bringing to the table."

– **Hotwire Communications CEO Kristin Johnson** in an executive profile for the *South Florida Business Journal*

Research

Since March 11:

- The US has experienced a 65.93% growth in the use of business VPNs.
- Working hours have increased by an average of three hours per day from eight to 11 hours.
- Mass remote working has contributed towards a rise of desktop (94.09%) and mobile (0.39%) app usage among Americans.

(Source: [NordVPN](#))

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