

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — April 3, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 065

Something Different: Edge Networks to Use ATSC 3.0 for Pay TV Package

When broadcasters talk about ATSC 3.0, it's usually in terms of what it can do for addressable advertising, enhanced emergency alerts, cars on the go and 4K content. But **Edge Networks**, which received **FCC** permission to launch two ATSC 3.0 channels in Boise, Idaho, plans to use the NextGen standard to offer a package of 80+ news, sports, local and live channels for less than \$50/month in Boise, beginning this summer. It's dubbed **Evoca** and will feature HD and 4K picture quality. Cable operators who've been complaining that video isn't profitable may be scratching their heads, but Edge Networks pres/CEO **Todd Achilles** believes there's a business case. "Our focus is on second and third tier markets. We see that's where we see the biggest need is. These old business models are really beginning to strain under the changes in content costs and technology and everything else," he said. "Because of 3.0's efficiency over the air... it's super-efficient. Not only is the pipe you put on the air really big, but you can put more channels on that pipe. Our system operates at about 20x the capacity of today's broadcasters." He's also not ruling out the idea of partnering with cable operators that are looking to move away from video. "Boise is an interesting market. It's kind of a TV desert. You've got **CenturyLink** on one side—they pulled the plug on their IPTV service and are reselling **DirectTV**. You've got **Cable ONE** on the other side. They are the least interested of the big cable operators of being a TV provider," Achilles said. **CFX** wasn't able to find any programmers who said they have deals with Evoca (some said they hadn't heard of it). Edge Networks isn't revealing its partnerships yet, though Achilles confirmed Evoca will have nationally known cable networks in its lineup. "We've got a couple already. We obviously can't announce anything, but as we get closer to launch, we'll have an announcement about who are content partners are," he said. "We tend to compete with the cable and satellite package." One of Evoca's selling points is that by using ATSC 3.0, its signal doesn't affect and isn't affected by internet bandwidth in the home, unlike an OTT vMVPD like **Sling** or **Philo**. It uses a TV antenna and proprietary receiver. Since Edge Networks never had an ATSC 1.0 signal out, it doesn't have to dedicate any of its bandwidth to maintaining that legacy signal during its 3.0 transmission.

Quibi Launch Threatened By Injunction Attempt: Less than a week before **Quibi's** launch, a tech company is seeking a preliminary injunction that would force the platform to stop using the tech that powers its vertical video experi-

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.

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The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?: With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become a thing? **Sal 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 for the US.

Tuesday — March 17, 2020 What the Industry Reads First Volume 31 / No. 062

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. **Pledge** is airing its "Pledge to School Closures" due to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and more. Scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Par's 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**, **Midco** and **Verizon**.

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ence. **Eko**, the company behind efforts to throw a wrench into Quibi's April 6 launch, claims that the short-form streamer misappropriated its proprietary technology for mobile device optimized "Real Time Switching." At question is what Quibi has called its platform's Turnstyle functionality, which allows viewers to easily switch between watching programs in a vertical or horizontal fashion. Viewers may also see different parts of a scene based on which view they choose to watch from. "This trade secret technology, which is a critical part of Eko's technology platform, had been shared with Quibi employees under multiple non-disclosure agreements," said the filing made on behalf of Eko. "In fact, when Quibi showed Eko a simulation that appeared to use Eko's technology, Eko warned the Quibi employees that Eko's technology platform, including its mobile device optimized RTS technology, was proprietary to Eko and could not be used without Eko's authorization." The claim states that Eko was not made aware of Quibi's Turnstyle technology until the latter's **CES** presentation in January. It also accused Quibi of exploiting the coronavirus pandemic as a marketing tool "to encourage people to sign up for its Turnstyle platform based on the misappropriated Eko technology." Quibi has said that the claims have no merit and "we will vigorously defend ourselves against them in court." Quibi is offering a 90-day free trial to those who sign up on its website this week. Monthly pricing is set at \$4.99 with ads or \$7.99 without ads. In other news, **T-Mobile**, a major backer of the platform, officially announced its exclusive partnership with Quibi Thursday. The service will be available for free for a year to T-Mobile customers on unlimited wireless family plans.

On the Frontlines: Altice USA introduced premium pay Wednesday for customer-interfacing field service and retail employees. This increased pay program provides a 20% premium on hours worked, effective immediately and retroactive for the week starting March 28. With most of the company working remotely, Altice has increased the complimentary internet data speed offering it provides to employees to 200Mbps. Others are also increasing pay for techs, retail employees and other customer-facing workers. **Comcast** began offering additional compensation about two weeks ago for customers who interact with employees. **Verizon** said it has a "significantly enhanced compensation plan" for its employees deemed essential and unable to work remotely. It has closed 70% of its corporate stores nationwide during the pandemic, with the company preparing to re-train and re-deploy thousands of its retail employees to work-from-home functions. More than a third of Verizon's installation and maintenance technicians are keeping their work vehicles at their homes to support social distancing. **AT&T** said last week it would pay a 20% bonus above the regular hourly base rate to our front-line union employees. **Cable ONE** has been paying its techs "Purpose Pay" (same as hazard pay) "because they're fulfilling our purpose of keeping our communities connected," a rep said.

FCC Votes on Telehealth: The **FCC** adopted an order that put into place the \$200m in telehealth funding the

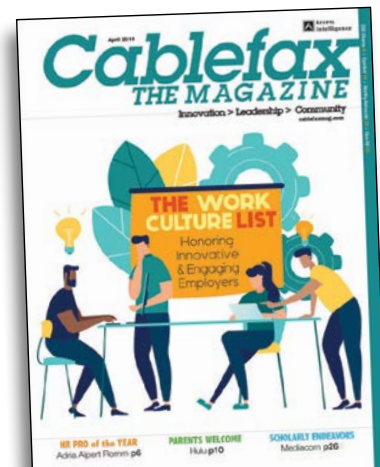
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agency has appropriated through the CARES Act. Funding applications from healthcare providers will be processed on a rolling basis. They can seek funding for broadband connectivity, telehealth devices and telecommunications. The FCC also adopted final rules for the separate, three-year Connected Care Pilot Program that will offer \$100mln of support from USF to defray healthcare providers' costs in providing connected care. Commissioner *Mike O'Rielly* dissented in part, taking issue with the pilot program. He wrote that it "seems to have been half-cooked and rushed out the door to take advantage of the current crisis, even though there's barely anything about it that's expedited or related to COVID-19." Rather than approve of the pilot program, Democrat *Jessica Rosenworcel* concurred with pilot, expressing disappointment in its lack of performance metrics.

fuboTV, FaceBank Close: fuboTV and entertainment company **FaceBank** closed their previously announced merger Thursday. The joined company will bear the fuboTV name and CEO *David Gandler* will continue in that position. Additional announcements regarding the company's management structure and board will be coming soon.

From the Commission: FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* assured the public Thursday that while internet traffic may be up during the coronavirus pandemic, US networks are well equipped to handle it. In conversations with broadband and telephone service providers and trade association leaders, Pai heard that network usage has risen about 20-35% for fixed networks and 10-20% for cellular networks in recent weeks with increased demand in suburban and residential areas and during daytime hours. That is also consistent with what Pai heard in a similar call led by President *Trump* on Tuesday. -- The FCC has proposed a \$6mln fine against **TracFone** for violations of the Commission's Lifeline program rules. TracFone apparently claimed federal Lifeline funding for customers who were not actually determined to be eligible for the program. The fine is based on 5738 apparent improper claims for funding TracFone made in June 2018 and an upward adjustment in light of the company's apparent conduct.

Another Call for E-Rate Funding: In a letter to House and Senate leadership, 35 senators asked for robust funding for all K-12 students to have adequate home connectivity if their schools close due to the ongoing pandemic. That funding was left out of the first coronavirus stimulus bill, the CARES Act. The lawmakers are now urging both chambers of Congress to support \$2bln in E-Rate funding to be included in the next COVID-19 relief package. "Congress must address this issue by providing financial support specifically dedicated to expanding home internet access in the next emergency relief package so that no child falls behind in their education," the letters read.

Doing Good: A number of **Comcast's** senior executives including CEO *Brian Roberts*, Comcast Cable CEO *Dave Watson* and **NBCU** CEO *Jeff Shell* are donating 100% of their salaries to charities to support coronavirus relief efforts. "None of us has ever experienced anything like this before, and while it is easy to get mired in the many challenges we are all facing, I think that in uncertain times like these it is incumbent upon us to remain optimistic and look for the good, even if it can be elusive," Roberts said in an email to staff. -- **NCTA** member companies committed to over \$100mln in public service advertising through June to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and educate consumers about the impact of the pandemic. The contributions will be based on the collective value of on-air advertising time dedicated to PSAs, and the use of public service material on digital and social media properties. -- **Sinclair** is teaming with the **Salvation Army** for the "Sinclair Cares: Your Neighbor Needs You" initiative to help those financially impacted by the pandemic. All Sinclair-owned outlets will engage in on-air, digital and social media efforts to support this effort, and the company will match donations up to \$100K.

Distribution: **Acorn TV** will launch in the UK on April 29. The service will be available in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. After a free trial, the service will be available for £4.99/month or £49.99/year. -- **Starz's** streaming service **StarzPlay** is now available on **Roku TV** models in the UK and Mexico, with consumers offered a 7-day free trial before committing to a 4.99£ monthly subscription in the UK and \$3.99 in Mexico.

Honors: **NAMIC** announced the nominees for its 2020 Vision Awards, which recognizes programming that reflects the lives, spirit and contributions of people of color. NAMIC said it's aiming to announce winners on May 6 via a press release with short video clips. **HBO** leads the 2020 nominations at 17, followed by **NBC** at 10 and **BET** at 8.

Programming: **TLC** is checking in on the couples and individuals that have been featured in "90 Day Fiancé" since the series launched. In special "90 Day Fiancé: Self-Quarantined" episodes kicking off on April 20 at 9pm, viewers will get a peek into how couples and former couples are navigating being together during the coronavirus pandemic.

People: *Alden Budill* was named head, global partnerships and content strategy for **Crunchyroll**. She most recently served as svp, head of distribution and partner marketing for **Pac-12 Networks**. The anime streamer also promoted *Terry Li* to head of 360 and gm of games.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Check in to Camp Nostalgia

As many of us turn to video entertainment to escape these harrowing times, **Bravo's** upcoming new reality series couldn't have picked a better name: "Camp Getaway." It turns out that plenty of adults like the idea of returning to the cabins, canoes and color wars of their summer camp days. Camp (with adult beverages and fun) is so popular that a 300-acre sleepaway camp in the Berkshire Mountain of Kent, CT, turns the weekends over to adults, with Bravo recording the fun for the series (premieres May 4, 10pm). "As a kid, summer is the time of year when you're absolutely carefree. Whether you went to summer camp or not, you're just focused on having a good time and making new friends," said *Sezin Cavusoglu*, Bravo's vp, current production. "I think as we get older we get further and further away from that concept. Most of us don't get to enjoy a summer vacation anymore. When you remember your time at camp, you're feeling nostalgic for being carefree, [and that] friendship and camaraderie." In typical Bravo fashion, Camp Getaway focuses more on the camp's staffers, especially its social coordinators, who are tasked with making sure the grown-ups have a great time. "In the vein of other great Bravo shows, such as 'Vanderpump Rules' and the 'Below Deck' franchise, we know that there is an appetite for the classic upstairs-downstairs style show on our air. Our audience is just as interested in watching the dynamic of the staff with all their ups and downs as much as they're interested in seeing the aspirational lifestyles of the guests," said Cavusoglu. Given the sprawling nature of the camp, production had to be strategic in using crews and cameras to cover all the action. "We learned after the first weekend that we needed more around the clock coverage because we saw that there was a lot of action going on—even as late as 3am," Cavusoglu said. Ah, sounds just like how we remember camp. — *Amy Maclean*

Reviews: "Atlanta's Missing and Murdered: The Lost Children," series premiere, 8pm, Sunday, **HBO**. Will audiences be interested in turning from the awful news surrounding us and watching this comprehensive, 5-part doc? Perhaps. The series recounts the events around the murders and disappearances of some 30 African-American children in Atlanta in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two of the murders were pinned on a young black man named *Wayne Williams*, 23 at the time. The rest were never brought to court. Williams was implicated, though never charged. Of course, HBO's slate was set months ago, well before coronavirus became part of our existence. Still, we're hoping some viewers will find this excellent series an edifying escape. Certainly true-crime fans will. — "Better Things," 10pm, Thursday, **FX**. "Seinfeld" is often referred to as a sitcom about nothing. While "Better Things" is nothing like Seinfeld, it, too, barely has a storyline running through it. Still, it works most of the time. In next Thursday's ep, Sam (*Pamela Adlon*), a divorced mother of three, visits her brother's (*Kevin Pollock*) lavish, new home. Before returning to her modest digs, she visits a marijuana dispensary and buys a lavish stash. Her resulting high prevents Sam from being a responsible mother, yet it makes for some good comedy. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (03/23/20-03/29/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	1.377	4,233
MSNBC	0.757	2,326
CNN	0.702	2,159
HGTV	0.409	1,255
TBSC	0.372	1,144
TLC	0.364	1,118
HIST	0.354	1,088
HALL	0.352	1,081
DISC	0.306	940
FOOD	0.304	934
A&E	0.289	888
USA	0.277	851
INSP	0.263	807
TNT	0.258	794
ID	0.216	664
AMC	0.210	645
TVLAND	0.196	603
HMM	0.186	571
ADSM	0.176	541
GSN	0.176	540
FX	0.173	531
BRAVO	0.168	515
NAN	0.167	514
LIFE	0.165	508
ESPN	0.165	508
NICK	0.159	487
VH1	0.151	464
WETV	0.141	435
MTV	0.140	430
NKJR	0.139	427
TRAVEL	0.136	419
SYFY	0.134	413
FRFM	0.130	401
COM	0.128	392
DSNY	0.127	389
PARA	0.126	388
OXY	0.120	370
DSJR	0.118	363
BET	0.112	344
E!	0.110	338
NATGEO	0.109	335

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

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