

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Golden Opportunity: Family-Friendly Nets See Double-Digit Growth

With the majority of the country stuck at home, linear networks across the board are seeing skyrocketing viewership numbers. Family-friendly channels are in a unique position to capitalize on these increased eyeballs, providing content that multiple generations can watch together. INSP's March 2020 primetime ratings were up 9.27% YOY, and ratings for weeks 3-5 in March were up 5.7% over the first two weeks. "We knew back in 2010 when we started to do some research there really was a demand for what I would call quality and compelling family programming," INSP COO Dale Ardizzone told CFX. "Families are confined together, so it's a great opportunity to do things together, including watching television. For us, a lot of it is making sure the content is still compelling." Charley Humbar, UP Entertainment founder/CEO, agrees. "There's no better time to be the most uplifting brands on TV," said Humbar. "You've got over 40mln kids at home right now, and families are looking for things that are family friendly. UPTv's target demos (W25-54 and W18-49) have increased by 40% since stay-at-home measures were put in place, and weekend ratings are up 100% in W18-49. Hallmark Channel's total audience increased 34% over the last two weeks of March vs the first two weeks, and a 12% increase YOY. "Our ratings results speak to the value and consistency of the Hallmark brand and to the real need for positive, feel-good programming in this environment," said Michelle Vicary, evp, programming & network publicity for Crown Media Family Networks. Over at Game Show Network, there's double-digit ratings growth in both prime and total day, gaining 127K and 87K viewers, respectively. Prime ratings increased 34% versus quarter-to-date, while total day ratings are up 30%. "We have viewers tell us all the time that they have our network playing all day and we want to make sure we contribute to their home life, especially now when many cannot leave their homes," said Fran Shea, evp, programming and marketing. "We strive to offer good clean fun and escapist programming for grandparents, parents and kids to enjoy together." It's no secret that content pipelines have closed down across the world, but these nets are continuing to roll out original content to keep viewers engaged. UPTv is set all the way through Q4 with original movies, and is stunting a lot of the shows it already had, such as a "Gilmore Girls" marathon Mother's Day weekend. INSP has upcoming shows in post-production that can be finished by employees working remotely, but Ardizzone said the impact of the stay-at-home orders

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will be more evident come fall. Hallmark Channel is getting creative with its programming lineup, including airing the “We Need a Little Christmas” holiday movie marathon for two consecutive weekends in March. But even though ratings are up, ad revenue is down, and the next challenge comes with monetizing these increased eyeballs. “There’s an amazing opportunity with viewership to get your product out there and get your name out there,” said Ardizzone. “You have such high concentrated levels night after night of viewership. What a golden opportunity to talk about your product and talk about your services. Waiting until people are out and about and doing things, the opportunity is lost.” UPtv is creating special advertising packages around different shows and movies, including original movie premieres every Sunday night. And with the Upfronts canceled, networks have pivoted to teleconferencing to get deals done. Hallmark Channel and INSP have both moved to using Zoom and are delivering personalized presentations to clients. For UPtv, nothing’s really changed as it’s previously held meetings virtually. “The good news is we were already a video based company, in that we’ve been Zooming for two years,” said Humbar. “The feedback we’re getting is lightyears ahead of the other networks in terms of the quality of our presentations. We haven’t missed a beat.”

**Opening the Gate to 6GHz:** The FCC unanimously adopted rules at its open meeting Thursday to make the 1200MHz of spectrum sitting in the 6GHz band available for unlicensed use. The 6GHz band is currently occupied by microwave services used to support wireless backhaul, utilities and public safety. The action will give WiFi 6 access to the spectrum it needs to reach its full potential and pave the way for greater growth in the Internet of Things. The action had everyone from cable providers like **Comcast** and **Charter** to consumer advocacy groups like **Public Knowledge** cheering. “Broadband and WiFi are enabling our economy and society to continue functioning during our current public health crisis, and cable networks are holding up very well to these demands,” **CableLabs** vp, technology policy *Rob Alderfer* wrote in a blog post. “This is an important time for the Commission to enable continued Wi-Fi progress.” Broadcasters, on the other hand, were irked by the order, which they claimed would cause harmful interference to electronic newsgathering. “Rather than require unlicensed proponents to prove they will not cause harmful interference, the Commission shockingly forgoes any independent analysis that interference won’t be too bad or happen too often,” **NAB** evp, communications *Dennis Wharton* said in a statement. “The record does not remotely justify why the full 1200MHz in the band is needed for unlicensed use in the near or long term.” The FCC can now move forward in looking at other bands that are candidates for unlicensed use. Commish *Michael O’Rielly* said in a press call following the meeting that he’s expecting action to be taken on opening the 5.9GHz band later this summer. The Commission also voted along party lines to adopt an NPRM seeking comment on establishing the 5G Fund for Rural America. The notice proposes distributing up to \$9bln through

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the USF for the deployment of wireless 5G. The fund would use a competitive reverse auction format to award funding. The notice seeks comment on two different options: holding an auction in 2021 and defining eligible areas based on mapping data the Commission already has or delaying the auction until at least 2023, when the Commission will have been able to gather and sort through the improved data it will receive through the Digital Opportunity Data Collection. Many are scratching their heads on why the first option is even being considered, given the many inaccuracies that have been found with the FCC's current maps. "It's unclear why the FCC insists it can't generate maps with accurate data by 2023, when Congress requires the FCC to update the form it uses to collect broadband development data from carriers no later—and preferably earlier—than March of 2021," Public Knowledge senior policy counsel *Jenna Leventoff* said in a statement. "The FCC must adhere to its Congressional mandates, which means focusing on collecting accurate data in a timely manner." FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* said during a press call that Congress is to blame for the roadblock. When the Broadband DATA Act was passed, Congress did not allocate funding to the FCC to be used to transform the way it gathers and processes data from ISPs. "We need money before maps," Pai said.

***Pai to Providers—Keep Your Pledge:*** FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* said Thursday more than 700 providers small and large have agreed to his Keeping Americans Connected pledge thus far. And the Commission is paying attention to any customer complaints that could show that providers aren't living up to the pledge's promises that include not terminating service to residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay bills during the coronavirus pandemic. The FCC Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Pai have been working together since the pledge was announced to keep track of any activity that would be a breach of those commitments. "We want to make sure that the pledge is meaningful for Americans across the country who rely on connectivity more than ever before," Pai said. He added that the FCC is more than willing to partner with the **FTC** to take any action it can against those carriers that fail to live up to the pledge.

***Vyve Broadband Makes SC Acquisition:*** **Vyve Broadband** is purchasing **FamilyView Cablevision** in South Carolina. FamilyView operates in Pickens and Anderson counties and will add to Vyve's existing SC footprint. Upon close, FamilyView's system will be upgraded to deliver broadband speeds of up to 1Gig.

***Distribution:*** **TV One**-owned **CLEO TV** and **Cox** struck a carriage deal, bringing the net to Cox subscribers. CLEO is also available on **Comcast**, **Charter**, **Philo** and other providers. -- **Discovery's Eurosport** signed a content deal with **Torque Esports** for its All-Stars esports racing championship. The event will now be carried by Eurosport in more than 150 countries and territories across cable, satellite, IPTV and simulcast over the internet and mobile. The deal follows a recent agreement between Torque and **ESPN**.

***Programming:*** **Bravo** is pushing the premiere of Season 5 of "The Real Housewives of Potomac" to Summer 2020. The series was originally set to premiere May 3. -- "Black Monday" will return to **Showtime** with the final four episodes of Season 2 on June 28 at 8pm. The series aired the first six episodes before pausing due to COVID-19 related production issues. -- **WE tv** will premiere a talent-filmed series later this year in its "Love After Lockup: Life After Lockup" franchise. The new miniseries will be made up of four one-hour episodes with self-shot footage from iPhones, GoPros, Osmos, Skype video and more. -- AVOD streamer **Crackle** teamed up with the **Ad Council** to debut the "Homeschool Channel" to help parents educate young kids stuck at home. Each series will begin with a PSA from the Ad Council around healthy habits during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. -- **HBO's** "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" is returning on Tuesday at 10pm. The sports journalism program is celebrating its 25th anniversary this season. -- The No 1 show on TV, **Fox's** "The Masked Singer," is now available to stream on **Tubi**, following the company's acquisition of the streamer. The first two seasons are available as 8pm Thursday evening, and Season 3 will be available in the weeks following their air on Fox.

***Marketing:*** Pay-as-you-go satellite offering **Orby TV** is rolling out its cheapest promo yet for customers. Starting Friday and running through Sunday, new customers can get a full Orby TV system with one standard receiver and basic professional installation. Normally, it's \$250 for the receiver and install.

***People:*** **Pluto TV** named *Shampa Banerjee* its new chief product officer. She comes over from Eros Digital at **Eros International**, where she held the CPO title. The company also named *Scott Reich* as svp, programming. He was previously gm at **Fullscreen Media**. -- **Charter's** ad sales division **Spectrum Reach** named *Michael Guth* svp, marketing. Guth most recently served as gm, account management and marketing partnerships for **MSG**.

***Obituary:*** Our condolences to *Brian Roberts* and the entire Roberts family on the passing of *Suzanne Roberts*. She died Monday at age 98. Suzanne Roberts was married to the late **Comcast** co-founder *Ralph Roberts* and was an actress, philanthropist and host of "Seeking Solutions with Suzanne," which aired on **CN8** and **Headline News** for many years.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Dreadful Divisions...

Despite an all-hands-on-deck pandemic that should be bringing us all together, America seems more divided than ever. And of course, those divisions aren't new. Evil voices have always whispered in our ears hoping to drown out our better angels. In **Showtime's** "Penny Dreadful: City of Angels" premiering on Sunday, those whispers come from a shape-shifting demon named Magda (*Natalie Dormer*), who tricks unwitting humans by tapping into their racial fears, and then letting nature take its course. All the while, Santa Muerte (*Lorenza Izzo*), a Mexican folk saint of death, hovers in the shadows unsure whether she should ignore or hinder Magda's evil plan to pit race against race until they're all gone (After all, world wars aren't bad for the death business). "By adding the supernatural element to it, you have this catalyst, you have this metaphor that can lift the story in that way that illustrates [showrunner John Logan's] themes even more emphatically," Dormer told critics in January at **TCA**. Despite the fantasy element that comes with anything Penny Dreadful, Logan said he was surprised to discover during his research just how much the Nazis infiltrated L.A. in the 1930s, noting that New York City's Mayor *LaGuardia* "was half Jewish, so he wasn't letting Germans in. There was a real iron wall around New York, but California—particularly Los Angeles—was like the wild west, and the aircraft factories were centered here, the armament factories, the film studios—so it became really rife for sabotage and for clandestine activity of the Third Reich." At the same time, the Santa Muerte element gives us a peek at LA's rich Hispanic culture that was growing stronger even as highway projects bulldozed through its communities. The disdain with which many white Angelenos treated Latinx citizens in 1938 doesn't seem out of place when you consider that Nazi sympathizers were still parading through L.A. parks—and getting a chillingly warm reception. We can only hope that Magda's influence has waned since then. But we can't be sure. — *Michael Grebb*

**Reviews:** "Celebrity IOU," 9pm, Monday, **HGTV**. We need all kinds of entertainment at this moment: comedy, mystery, reality, sports (OK, classic games), food and DIY. This is a pretty good time to spend 40-some-odd minutes smiling. That's how we reacted to this week's "Celebrity IOU." *Viola Davis* surprises *Michelle*, a Minneapolis mother of two, who also was her school friend of 30 years. They roomed in Brooklyn and studied at Julliard. They've been besties since, seeing each other through bad relationships and breast cancer. Davis describes Michelle as a "giver...who takes care of everyone." Now it's time for *Viola* to take care of *Michelle*. Davis joins *Drew and Jonathan Scott* to renovate *Michelle's* home, which isn't bad, though it's boxy. When it's done, the transformation provides a tremendous and tearful reveal. As we said, 40 minutes of smiles. Enjoy. -- "Homeland," series finale, 9pm, Sunday, **Showtime**. Few series are as consistently strong over a long period as "Homeland" has been. A tribute to show-runners *Alex Gansa* and *Howard Gordon* is that this final season has been one of the series' best. It's also pulled off the feat of having history imitate its plot. Props also to stars *Claire Danes* and *Mandy Patinkin*. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (04/13/20-04/19/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	1.246	3,828
MSNBC	0.681	2,094
CNN	0.632	1,942
HGTV	0.447	1,374
TLC	0.380	1,169
DISC	0.342	1,050
HIST	0.338	1,040
TBSC	0.336	1,032
A&E	0.327	1,004
HALL	0.320	982
ESPN	0.316	970
FOOD	0.314	966
USA	0.251	770
ID	0.221	680
BRAVO	0.218	670
INSP	0.204	628
TNT	0.193	593
FX	0.192	589
GSN	0.191	586
NICK	0.184	566
LIFE	0.173	532
HMM	0.171	524
TVLAND	0.170	523
ADSM	0.158	486
NAN	0.155	477
AMC	0.143	440
WETV	0.142	438
FRFM	0.138	425
VH1	0.137	421
SYFY	0.135	415
NKJR	0.132	406
APL	0.131	404
NATGEO	0.128	395
MTV	0.126	386
TRAVEL	0.115	353
PARA	0.111	342
DSNY	0.110	339
E!	0.109	335
COM	0.108	333
DSJR	0.108	332
HBO	0.103	318

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

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