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What the Industry Reads First

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NAB Day 2: Next Level Streaming in a COVID World

It's no secret that content and streaming consumption has increased as the world adapts to the new normal during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the question has now become "where do we go from here?" At **NAB Show Express**, the event managed to avoid technical difficulties by making over 150 sessions available on demand, including several sessions on streaming video, co-hosted by the **Streaming Video Alliance** and *Light Reading*. Panelists identified trends that have emerged in the space during the pandemic and pointed to direction the industry may be headed in. "The combination of free content, promotional offers, extended free trials and early access to blockbuster theatrical releases will undoubtedly drive up OTT viewer consumption and engagement to unprecedented levels," said *Steve Nason*, the director of research at **Parks Associates**. "The critical question remains: will this unparalleled level of consumption engagement lead to paid subscriptions?" Many streamers and providers have offered extended free trials or dramatically reduced prices, with **CuriosityStream** slashing its year prices nearly by half, and short-form mobile streamer **Quibi** offering a 90-day free trial, significantly longer than a traditional seven or 30 day offering. Parks Associates found that the percentage of consumers who are trialing an OTT service jumped YOY from one in three US broadband households to over 40%. Additionally, users are signing up for more services than ever before. The percentage of consumers trialing four or more services increased to 8%. "We're seeing an uptick in subscriptions during the early phases of the pandemic. In order to convert viewers to subscribers, OTT services must continually engage these new users, understand their unique viewing patterns and reach out to them proactively to understand drivers and triggers to retain them," said Nason. **Nielsen** stats show that OTT is growing three times faster than linear, and **Roku** is seeing 3.6 hours of usage per active account per day. "From a user standpoint this is really a watershed moment for two reasons," said *Rob Holmes*, Roku's programming vp. "You've got all this shelter at home time, so people are really just engaging and finding out how much they love streaming. But two, unfortunately, I think we're headed into a recession here with all the economic impact. If you look at 2008 and what happened to cable in 2008, a lot of people turned off their cable subscription. We're already in a very different world where you've got a lot of cord cutting, I think this just accelerates that. We just believe streaming is so well-positioned coming out of this circumstance to continue to grow and grow even faster than it would've otherwise." The pandemic has arguably been beneficial

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for streamers overall, with an upswing in Net Promoter Scores for all of the larger subscription services. **HBO Now** saw nearly 6x increase from Q319 to Q120 and **Hulu** saw a nearly 20 point jump. "This is encouraging news for services that are attempting to acquire and engage new customers while trying to engage and retain current ones so they do not churn to other services," said Nason. And all panelists agreed that the big winner is **Disney+**, with Nason predicting the offering might bump Hulu out of the so-called "Big Three" (**Netflix**, Hulu and **Amazon Prime**). "Which is obviously interesting because the Disney+, Hulu, **ESPN+** bundle has done wonders for all three services. But I think Disney+, just the brand, the library of content that they have dating back 80 years, would be considered the primary service of those three, even though they're under the same company," said Nason. Those that are likely going to struggle? The MVPDs, particularly virtual ones. **Sony's** pay-TV service **PlayStation Vue** had already folded before the pandemic, and **Sling TV** is experiencing rapid subscriber loss, recording its first loss in 4Q19 and dropping 281K in 1Q20. "As consumer purse strings continue to tighten during COVID-19, the MVPD services may continue to find difficult footing in the short and near term, especially against lower cost standalone OTT services," said Nason.

At the Commission: Since **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* extended the Keep Americans Connected pledge from May 12 to June 30, the number of companies covered by the promise has actually increased, with more signing onto the pledge for the first time. The FCC said Thursday that 774 broadband and phone providers have committed to maintain service, waive late fees and keep WiFi hotspots open through June 30. -- The **House Communications** subcmte has planned a teleconference forum next week Pai to discuss consumer protection, broadband and spectrum issues related to COVID-19. "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant issues that fall under the purview of the FCC, including the lack of affordable high-speed broadband in too many cities, towns, and rural communities across the country, dangerous robo-call scams, the allocation of our nation's airwaves, expanding access to telehealth and more," chmn *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) and ranking member *Bob Latta* (R-OH) said in a statement. -- **Consumer Reports** and **Access Now** are filing petitions at the **FCC** signed by more than 63K people calling for an expansion of the Lifeline program that provides a discount for broadband internet to qualifying low-income consumers. "The current crisis has painfully laid bare the haves and the have-nots on either side of the digital divide," the groups wrote in Thursday's letter.

Chapter 11 for Intelsat: **Intelsat** announced late Wednesday it is filing for bankruptcy protection under Chapter 11 as a way to restructure its balance sheet to participate in the clearing of C-band spectrum. "To meet the **FCC's** accelerated clearing deadlines and ultimately be eligible to receive \$4.87 billion of accelerated relocation payments, Intelsat needs to spend more than \$1 billion on clearing activities," the company said. "These clearing activities must start immediately, long before costs begin to be reimbursed. The company is also managing the economic slowdown impacting several of its end markets caused by the COVID-19 global health crisis." The FCC order puts accelerated relocation deadlines of September 2021 and 2023 for C-band satellite operators to clear spectrum to receive payments. Last month, Intelsat opted into a 30-day grace period on an interest payment due April 15. When asked about possible bankruptcy and the grace period in an [interview](#) with sister pub *Via Satellite* last month, CEO *Steve Spengler* said Intelsat was in a "transition period."

Advertising in a Pandemic: Advertising is down, but not out, with most buyers believing that it's important to keep advertising during COVID-19 if the money is there. A **Comcast Advertising** study, featuring mostly local media

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planning and buying respondents, found that flexibility is a key priority right now (50% cited it). Another 30% were focused on price, while 20% said their priority was more efficient use of data and targeting. Looking ahead to 2021, local and regional agency buyers were asked if they expect the events of COVID19 to impact 2021 plans. While 60% said it's too early to tell, 33% were certain the impacts would continue through next year. As far as what might change, 30% say they will actively look for advertising efficiencies for 2021, 25% are expecting to explore new channels, 20% will look into new ways of using data, and 16% expect to change their approach to targeting. The survey respondents were all users of **FreeWheel's** Strata platform.

Retrans Complaint Department: **AT&T** wants the **FCC** to deny broadcasters' petition to review a November Media Bureau decision that upheld an AT&T complaint against nine station groups for failing to negotiate retransmission consent in good faith. One of those broadcasters, **Howard Stirk Holdings**, has since admitted to violating the good faith requirement and agreed to pay a \$100K civil penalty. AT&T told the FCC last week that Howard Stirk's settlement provides good reason to deny the review. "The eight remaining Station Groups engaged in identical conduct, using the same agent, to the group that now admits it committed good faith violations, and the order drew no distinction between any of them," AT&T said. The broadcast owners collectively were represented by **Max Retrans' Duane Lammers** during the retrans negotiations. They unsuccessfully argued that because they were jointly represented, there were in effect in constant negotiations. AT&T sued Lammers in federal court, but that case was thrown out. Howard Stirk is the only one of the nine named in AT&T's FCC complaint to reach a settlement thus far. The other eight broadcasters are: **Deerfield Media, GoCom Media of Illinois, Mercury Broadcasting, MPS Media, Nashville License Holdings, Roberts Media, Second Generation of Iowa** and **Waitt Broadcasting**.

NAD on Verizon: The **National Advertising Division** recommended that **Verizon** discontinue claims that it is delivering "the most powerful 5G experience for America" in two TV commercials touting Verizon's rollout of 5G coverage to sports venues. The claims were challenged by **AT&T**. NAD said the commercials communicate messages about the consumer experience of using 5G mobile service that was not supported by evidence on the record. NAD also recommended that Verizon modify the advertising to ensure disclosures regarding 5G coverage both inside and outside sports venues are clear and conspicuous. Verizon said it will appeal the finding to the National Advertising Review Board.

Revry Launching LGBTQ Cable Destination: LGBTQ-focused streaming network **Revry** is partnering with **Brightcove** to launch a cable TV platform in response to the widespread cancellations of major Pride events and LGBTQ+ film festivals. Users of the Revry apps will be able to watch movies, shows, originals and more on four free live TV channels, including global news channel Revry Now. The app will also offer full access to Revry's on-demand library for those with a Revry Premium subscription and limited access for free users with ads.

Doing Good: **Verizon** is launching a virtual commencement series for the Class of 2020 with the hashtag, "Ready for Anything." Leaders, including former president *Bill Clinton*, **Verizon** CEO *Hans Vestberg* and 49ers assistant coach *Katie Sowers*, are among the speakers offering guidance to graduating seniors. The four-part series will be featured on LinkedIn and Yahoo on Fridays, beginning May 22. -- **Xfinity Communities** partnered with Denver-based real estate investment trust **Aimco** in order to donate apartments with TV and internet service to medical workers at four nearby hospitals for a minimum of 60 days. -- **DISH** teamed with **NBC, Discovery, A&E, Asurion** and **Assurant** to donate \$60K to **Good360**, a nonprofit that delivers critical supplies to healthcare providers and those adversely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. DISH has also launched an offer for workers in the health-care industry. Qualifying new and existing customers can have their equipment upgraded to Hopper with Sling, receive a free on-demand movie rental each month and gain access to DISH's Heartland Pack, which includes channels like **Hallmark Channel, OWN, Game Show Network** and **Discovery Family**. -- **Technicolor** is making available 30K broadband CPE devices to **Charter** to support broadband delivery across the latter's footprint. Those devices will be used to support Charter's pandemic response initiatives, including its decision to offer Spectrum internet with in-home WiFi at no cost for 60 days to subscribers with school-aged children.

Programming: **NBCU** revealed what original content will be available to stream on **Peacock** when it launches nationally on July 15. Peacock Premium customers will be able to stream all first season episodes of "Brave New World," "The Capture," "Intelligence" and "Lost Speedways," along with sports documentary "In Deep with Ryan Lochte" and the film "Psych 2: Lassie Come Home." Additionally, Peacock Kids will house new episodes of "Curious George."

People: **Lifetime** vet *Meghan Hooper White* is headed to **ViacomCBS's** Entertainment & Youth Group to head a new unit for original movies and limited series. Hooper White most recently served as svp, original movies, co-productions and acquisitions for Lifetime Networks. -- *Sri Solur* joined AI and robotics firm **Berkshire Grey** as svp, gm of a new business unit where he'll lead strategy, product development and sales. Solur was the svp, product and engineering at **Comcast** for its internet and IOT businesses leading security and automation. Most recently, he was evp/GM of **Shark Robotics**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Life After Being 'Married At First Sight'

Stay-at-home orders have slammed production on most shows and movies to a halt, but **Lifetime** is embracing this unique time with "Married at First Sight: Couples' Cam." The six-episode spinoff, premiering Wednesday at 8pm, will feature self-recorded footage from couples that have stayed together since their time on the main series, adding another layer of intimacy to the reality program. "Over the course of the past seasons of Married at First Sight, the participants have self shot diary cam moments and those have always added a heightened emotional vulnerability to the show," said *Eric Detwiler*, the executive producer in charge of programming for production company **Kinetic Content**. "Building an entire series made of these moments has allowed us to create something special." When the couples who are still together after being married at first sight were approached about the idea, Detwiler said they were excited to share their stories again and have a creative outlet to focus on during their quarantines. And due to the unique nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, audiences will be able to identify with the couples on the show more than ever. While not everyone has married their spouse upon first look, everyone now understands the experience of being forced to stay inside and spend all hours of the day with those you love the most. "We're all in this together, going through the same relatable experiences. How can we remain positive in times of crisis? What does the future hold for our family life, and also who is holding up their end of the bargain when it comes to chores around the house?" Detwiler said. "It can be hard to imagine what life would be like to marry a stranger on your wedding day, but everyone knows what it feels like to live in close proximity with family and loved ones." — *Sara Winegardner*

Reviews: "Frontline: Inside Italy's COVID War," 10pm, Tuesday, **PBS**. It's a chancy decision for "Frontline" to show this excellent short film now. With the US still in the pandemic's clutches, how many viewers will want to confront this story? Those who do will find it engaging and heartbreaking. The film's words consist entirely of the voices of its northern Italian subjects: a doctor and two patients, 18 and 30 years old, respectively. As the title promises, it's as inside as you can get. -- Notable: "The Last Dance," final eps, 9pm, Sunday, **ESPN**. One of the few nice things that have emerged during the pandemic is the focus on ESPN's film prowess. For years, we've praised the sports leader's "30 for 30" series of short docs. They're ability to educate and entertain, even if you're not a sports fan, is impressive. With a home-bound audience and no live sports, ESPN heaved up a desperation three-pointer: its 10-part series about *Michael Jordan*. To say it's been a hit is an understatement. Hoping to maintain the momentum, ESPN moves up a trio of 30 for 30 films after The Last Dance's last dance. Sunday (May 24) ESPN offers part one of "Lance," about Armstrong. June 7 it's "Be Water," about *Bruce Lee*, with a baseball film, "Long Gone Summer," June 14. Can't wait. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings*

(05/04/20-05/10/20)

Mon-Sun	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	1.114	3,424
MSNBC	0.585	1,799
CNN	0.479	1,472
HGTV	0.417	1,282
TLC	0.408	1,254
TBSC	0.326	1,002
A&E	0.322	990
FOOD	0.290	893
ESPN	0.287	882
HIST	0.287	881
HALL	0.271	834
DISC	0.271	834
USA	0.241	740
INSP	0.230	706
BRAVO	0.203	623
ID	0.199	611
TVLAND	0.191	588
HMM	0.190	585
AMC	0.186	570
ADSM	0.179	551
TNT	0.177	543
GSN	0.169	519
NICK	0.147	451
NAN	0.140	429
WETV	0.137	422
PARA	0.137	420
SYFY	0.135	416
LIFE	0.134	412
APL	0.134	411
FRFM	0.133	410
FX	0.130	398
MTV	0.126	387
NKJR	0.124	382
DSJR	0.121	372
TRAVEL	0.119	365
VH1	0.118	364
OXY	0.115	354
BET	0.114	350
NATGEO	0.111	342
DSNY	0.110	337
E!	0.104	319

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

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