

Cablefax Daily™

Thursday — May 28, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 103

Day One: HBO Max Wins More Content, Distribution at Launch

The streaming wars continued Wednesday with the launch of WarnerMedia's HBO Max. An early look at the Twitter chatter was mostly positive for the new kid on the block. The streamer, which touts more than 10K hours of content, houses nostalgic favorites like "Friends" as well as originals like Anna Kendrick's "Love Life." Some complained about the lack of 4K content as well as some confusion over how current HBO users would be able to gain access to HBO Max. And while the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the streamer from having a wide array of originals on day one, AT&T still had some surprises in store for HBO Max's early adopters. It announced Wednesday that all eight Harry Potter films were now calling HBO Max home. NBCUniversal had previously secured the rights to the Potter films through 2025, and no details have been released about how AT&T was able to re-negotiate that deal to bring some extra magic to its SVOD. But the biggest surprise of all came with the announcement of a last-minute distribution deal with Comcast that makes HBO Max available to Xfinity X1 and Flex customers. Effective immediately, existing Xfinity HBO customers will have access to HBO Max at no additional cost via the HBO Max app and website. The pair are working to integrate HBO Max into X1 and Flex as quickly as possible, and new customers will be able to purchase HBO Max directly through Xfinity in the coming days. The deal fills a major hole in HBO Max's distribution lineup, but there are still gaps left. Roku and Amazon still have not signed on to carry HBO Max, but incoming AT&T CEO John Stankey isn't terribly concerned about those missing pieces. "We must be doing something right if somebody believes we are now starting to be more in conflict with their business, so I don't necessarily take that as a bad sign," Stankey told CNBC in an interview on "Squawk Box" Wednesday. Amazon's hesitation to sign a deal seems to center around the process through which its customers would access HBO Max. Amazon Prime Video users that already subscribe to HBO through its Prime Video Channels would need to cancel that subscription and subscribe directly to HBO Max. The HBO Max app is also not yet available for download on any of Amazon's streaming hardware. "We believe that if you're paying for HBO, you're entitled to the new programming through the method you're already using. That's just good customer service and that's a priority for us," Amazon said in a statement. Together, Roku and Amazon's streaming platforms represent more than 80mIn TV households.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE HONOREES!



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Executives of the Year

- Digital Executive of the Year
- Engineer of the Year
- Innovator of the Year
- Marketing Executive of the Year
- PR Executive of the Year
- Sales Executive of the Year

Teams of the Year

- Digital Team of the Year
- Marketing Team of the Year
- PR Team of the Year
- Sales Team of the Year
- Social Media Dream Team of the Year
- R&D Team of the Year
- Tech Team of the Year

PR & Marketing

- Acquisition and upgrade marketing
- Affiliate marketing
- Brand Image and Positioning Campaign
- Content Marketing Campaign
- Community relations
- Corporate social responsibility campaign
- Digital Marketing Campaign
- Influencer Campaign
- Integrated Marketing Campaign
- Interactive Brand Content
- Internal communications campaign
- Marketing of a continuing series
- Marketing of a new series or show
- Marketing of a special or documentary
- Media event
- Media relations campaign
- Multicultural marketing
- Partnership marketing
- PR stunt
- Press kit
- Public affairs campaign
- Shoestring marketing
- Sponsored Content
- Trade show marketing/PR

Audience Engagement & Experience

- App for Smartphone
- App for Tablet
- Contest/Sweepstakes/Promo
- Editorial Excellence
- Fan Base Cultivation
- Graphics/UX Design
- Mobile Experience
- New Product or Launch
- Online Community
- Online Game/Gamification
- Overall Social Presence
- Social Good Campaign
- Social Media Campaign
- Tchotchke
- Use of Facebook
- Use of Instagram
- Use of Snapchat
- Use of Twitter
- Use of Video/Moving Image
- Use of YouTube
- Use of Other Social Platform
- Virtual reality/augmented reality marketing

Pandemic Response

- Audience Engagement
- Corporate Citizenship Hero
- Courage Award
- External Communications
- Internal Communications
- Social Media Campaign



Submit Your Entries by May 29!

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No Cable-Tec Expo in Denver: SCTE-ISBE said it's giving "careful consideration to alternative arrangements" for **Cable-Tec Expo** after Colorado's governor issued an executive order extending the Colorado Convention Center's designation as a temporary medical facility through the remainder of the year. The show had been slated for Oct 13-16 at the convention center in Denver. "We are deeply disappointed Cable-Tec Expo 2020 cannot proceed in Denver as planned. SCTE-ISBE's senior leadership team is assessing the situation and giving careful consideration to alternative arrangements," SCTE-ISBE pres/CEO *Mark Dzuban* said in a statement. "Rest assured, SCTE-ISBE remains committed to supporting our members as the industry and the world grapples with COVID-19 and will honor all eligible requests for refunds." It's not clear if the cable tech event will move to a virtual format similar to the **NAB Show** or try to find a place for an in-person show, with more info promised in the days and weeks ahead. "We are encouraged by the unyielding support we have received despite this year's uncertainty, proving Cable-Tec Expo remains as relevant today as ever before. This is evidenced, in part, by a record-matching response to our recent Call for Papers," Dzuban said. The change-up also impacts the **Cable TV Pioneers**, which has held its banquet in conjunction with Expo the last few years. No word on how the organization plans to proceed. It has already extended the deadline for Class of 2020 applications to June 1.

Quibi Advertisers Want New Deal: A number of **Quibi's** major advertisers are looking to defer payments due to the short-form streamers' low viewership numbers and the COVID-19 pandemic, *WSJ* reports. Among those asking for changes include **PepsiCo** and **Taco Bell**. Quibi's original targets were to hit 7mln paid subscribers within its first year and grow to 16mln by the end of three years. As of last week, Quibi is reported to have been installed approximately 4.2mln times and 1.5mln users had signed up for the free 90-day trial.

Fox Wins First Amendment Suit Dismissal: A suit brought against **Fox News** by the **Washington League for Increased Transparency and Ethics** was dismissed by King County Superior Court judge *Brian McDonald* Wednesday. The suit took issue with information the network shared about the COVID-19 pandemic. McDonald wrote in his dismissal that while the group's commitment to ensuring information is credible was "laudable," its assertions did not hold up to scrutiny. "Using a false portrayal of Fox News Channel's commentary, WASHLITE attempted to silence a national news organization to settle a partisan grievance. This was not only wrong, but contemptuous of the foundation of free speech and we are both pleased the court dismissed this frivolous case and grateful to the First Amendment community that rallied to our side," a Fox News spokesperson said.

Soccer Returns to the US: The National Women's Soccer League will be the first team sport to return to the US. The league is kicking off a month-long, 25 game tournament in Utah on June 27. No fans will be allowed to attend

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.

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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? **Saravali 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 carriage will last.

Cablefax Daily™

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

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 airing live programming due to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and how to stay safe during the pandemic. Pledge signing will be 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 for 60 days. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications**, **Middle**

the games. Each match will air on **CBS All Access**, and the opener and final on July 26 will air on **CBS**. Fans outside the US and Canada will be able to stream the full tournament on **Twitch**. Additionally, **Verizon** and the NWSL announced a new, multi-year partnership. The 2020 regular season was originally slated to begin in April but was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Ratings: Fox News was the most-watched net in total day and primetime this past week, bringing in 1.707mln viewers in total day and 3.088mln in primetime. **MSNBC** followed in prime with 1.841mln, and **CNN** with 1.377mln. In total day, MSNBC brought in 1.087mln and CNN 907K. -- **A&E** finished the week No 1 in prime among all cable nets in the A25-54 demo, averaging 467K (Fox News was #1 in total day). It's the first time the net took the top spot since June 2019. A&E was boosted by its miniseries "Grant" and the premieres of "Live PD," with Friday's premiere pulling in 879K viewers in the demo and 897K on Saturday. -- **HGTV's** "Celebrity IOU" is now the highest-rated first year series in network history among P25-54, W25-54, M25-54, P2+ and households. The first season, which aired Monday nights at 9pm, the series attracted more than 25.7mln total viewers.

Bluprint Closing Down: NBCU-owned **Bluprint**, formerly **Craftsy**, is officially closing its doors over the next few months. A letter from CEO *John Levisay* said the company is "looking at various options" to allow those who purchased individual classes to receive a copy of their classes, and are planning to issue prorated refunds for paid subs based on the last day the service will be available. "Like so many customers, instructors, designers, and employees, I am devastated by this news," Levisay wrote. **Craftsy** was founded in 2010 and bought by NBCU in 2018.

Pride Month: USA and **Syfy** are partnering with non-profit advocacy organization **GLAAD** for a multiplatform campaign aiming to spotlight positive representation all month long. The campaign will feature Pride-themed marathons, short-form videos, fan testimonials, podcast episodes and new editorial content.

ViacomCBS Raises Consideration in Cash Tender Offers: **ViacomCBS** announced it boosted consideration with its previously-announced cash tender offers for up to \$2bln for outstanding debt after early tender results. The company said that approximately \$1.59bln in combined aggregate principal amount of securities were validly tendered and not withdrawn by Tuesday's 5pm deadline. The company has also changed the fixed spread for all 3.875% senior notes due 2021 accepted for purchase to 30 basis points over yield to maturity.

SSIMWAVE Given Dolby Approval: **SSIMWAVE's** SSIMPLUS Viewer Experience monitoring product has been approved by **Dolby Laboratories** for its ability to decode Dolby Vision enabled content. SSIMPLUS, the first viewer experience solution to receive the approval, helps customers deliver HDR content by optimizing technology decisions across a delivery chain and constantly measuring the preservation of the content's quality via a viewer score.

Keep Vertical Integration Record Requirements: ACA Connects fired back at reply comments filed by **NCTA** over the utility or lack thereof of the **FCC's** vertical integration recordkeeping requirements, claiming that the requirements produce information that can, at times, be essential to program access complainants. The Commission began requiring that cable operators post information related to vertical integration online in November 2016. "ACA Connects does not dispute that in some cases, information about vertical integration can be found elsewhere. In other cases, however, the information can be difficult or even impossible to obtain," ACA Connects said. "It would be hard for a potential complainant to re-engineer the information about **Charter's** vertical integration contained in its systems' public files. And it could be impossible for a potential complainant to compile detailed information about a privately owned cable operator such as **Cox**."

On the (Virtual) Circuit: CTAM sent out a Save the Date to **TCA** critics for Aug 3-7. It plans to hold a virtual CTAM TCA press tour that will include **Amazon, AMC Networks, Apple TV+, Britbox, Discovery, EPIX, Hulu, Starz, ViacomCBS** and **Warner Media**.

Programming: Lifetime will present *Variety's* "Power of Women: Frontline Heroes" event honoring women in the face of the pandemic. On June 9 at 10pm on Lifetime and **Facebook**, "Good Morning America's" *Robin Roberts* will virtually host the special, simulcast on Lifetime and *Variety's* Facebook page. The event will look at ways women on the frontline are making a difference, and highlight the 2020 Power of Women honorees *Cate Blanchett, Patti LuPone* and *Janelle Monae*. -- **Science Channel** will premiere a new season of "Strange Evidence" on June 11 at 9pm. -- **BBC America** is launching a new virtual travel and culture hub, inspired by "Killing Eve." In partnership with **Culture Trip**, "Travel Vilain" explores the world of the show through content, artwork and display media.

Editor's Note: Friday is the final deadline to enter **The FAXIES**, **Cablefax's** annual PR and marketing awards. Categories include R&D Team of the Year, Media Relations Campaign and Social Media Dream Team of the Year.

THE WORK CULTURE LIST PROFILE:

ADVOCACY AWARD **Discovery, Inc.**

While many companies have philanthropic initiatives, few set aside an entire day to make a difference. Discovery's annual Impact Day originally started out as a celebration for the company's 25th anniversary in 2010. Now in its 10th year, more than 4,000 Discovery employees across 34 countries and five continents engaged in over 220 projects in 2019.

"It was really created around a celebration of the creativity and innovation that existed around the company, but also a desire to give back to the communities around where we live and work," says Alexa Verveer, group SVP, public policy & corporate/government affairs. "Discovery has always been a mission-driven company."

Impact Day is something all Discovery employees can participate in, from entry level execs to talent. Food Network's Trisha Yearwood has built homes in Tennessee along with President Jimmy Carter and wife Rosalynn Carter. Discovery's Miami office all supported the Mexican American Council, an organization that supports the migrant population of South Florida. The team gave a donated building a complete facelift, providing a space for after-school programs and educational resources.

"It's such a beautiful organization, and the beauty is we've been able to continue our relationship with them," says Mirelys McCloud, Discovery's director of people & culture. "It was a complete transformation, the employees were so moved. They were able to see the impact that they'd made in this community."

While Impact Day doesn't necessarily have a single theme, the 2019 iteration largely focused on the company's RISE initiative (Reducing Inequality, Supporting Empowerment). "It's about trying to promote social mobility through ensuring that people around the globe have access to basic human needs," says Verveer. RISE-affiliated projects included partnerships with No Kid Hungry and Feed the Children.



"By really trying to drive some additional attention and support for causes that are related to our people and planet initiatives, we think we can fulfill the goal of not just having an impact but an exponential impact," says Verveer.

Discovery's commitment to bettering the world extends beyond its one day of philanthropic service. In partnership with No Kid Hungry, the US-focused campaign "Turn Up: Fight Hunger" is working to provide one billion meals for kids living with hunger in the US over the next five years. Project CAT (Conserving Acres for Tigers) works alongside with World Wildlife Fund to support a global effort to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022. The efforts extend to programming as well. Documentary "TIGERLAND" premiered in March and is now available on Discovery GO.

Discovery also has an online digital wallet accessible to each employee, and on certain days employees can donate funds placed in by Discovery to thousands of non-profit organizations across the globe. "We're making sure we're supporting these corporate initiatives, but simultaneously recognizing that our employees have their own passions and causes that are important to them individually," says Verveer.

Planning for 2020's Impact Day is underway, with organizers expecting it to be bigger and better than ever. "One of our guiding principles is to be purposeful, particularly as our industry evolves in the rapid way that it is," says Verveer. "We win with purpose, and Discovery recognizes that winning isn't about forgoing philanthropy, but it's embracing it. We're moving the needle in terms of making an impact, but what we're also doing with these initiatives is attracting and retaining talent, and fulfilling the expectations of our viewers and our customers."

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Think about that for a minute...

Auto Opt-Out

Commentary by Steve Effros

OK, I know the marketers among you aren't going to like this one, but I think it's the right thing to do. We should have a required system where all "auto-pay" subscription services must notify their customers once a year that their service will terminate automatically unless "re-upped." In other words, "opt" back in.

Netflix triggered this idea the other day when it announced it was going to automatically cancel the subscriptions of anyone who had not actually used the service recently, but was still listed as a subscriber, and was still paying a monthly fee. They are going to send email notices, and also in-app notifications to let those subscribers who have not used the service for "multiple years," (I don't know exactly what that means yet) that their subscription will be terminated unless they notify Netflix that they want to continue. Wisely, the company also says that it will retain that subscriber's preferences, watch list, etc., for ten months after the termination to make it really easy to "re-up." The company expects to lose several hundred thousand subscribers, but that's not a lot given their total base. They have almost 183 million paid subscribers.

So, yes, it's true when you are the really big provider you can decide to do things that smaller competitors may find cause a lot more corporate pain. But, sorry, it's the right thing to do. All you have to consider is your own credit card bill or bank account. When was the last time you really scanned it thoroughly and identified all the "auto pay" dings that eat a little bit here and a little bit there?

I know, you intended to take the "free trial" and then binge on the stuff you wanted to see and then drop the service before the bill inevitably started to come due.



And sure, that "deal" and just a few bucks a month was too good to pass up, but you forgot that after four months that few bucks jumped up by a factor of three! It's just way too easy to miss those things, and my bet is that a whole lot of folks are paying for stuff that they haven't really considered, with regard to the value they perceive, had they focused on the question.

And that's what a required yearly "re-opt-in" would do. It would force consumers to reevaluate their spending habits. As I said, I know, the marketers are now in the process of burning this column's author in effigy. But it's the right thing to do, and in the long run you'll have customers who are both happier with you and more likely to be retained as a subscriber if you treat them with this sort of respect.

Without veering too far into a political rant, I can say that "respect" and "integrity" and "honesty" and dealing fairly with those around us are in short supply these days, particularly in the public marketplace. We are all becoming hardened, wary and disgusted with both the political and corporate personas we are engaged with constantly. That's not good. It's corrosive in the long run and downright dangerous.

It's not easy to do something about today's politics. Voting seems to be the only recourse, and even that is being threatened. But in the business world, there are lots of things that can be done to show we understand and care about our customers, their needs, and to the degree possible, we will protect their interests, and thereby, I think, our own.

Steve

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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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