

Cablefax Daily™

Thursday — July 9, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 131

New Frontier: Is PVID the Future for Film Releases?

COVID-19 complicated every aspect of the world, including the movie business. However, it did create the opportunity for premium video on-demand to accelerate as a new business model. Speaking at **NATPE's** first event in a virtual series on Wednesday, **Whip Media** sales vp *Alex von Krogh* said he believes that PVID “will open up a new market and new audiences.” A report from **Hub Entertainment Research** found that 67% of 18-34-year-olds said they would “definitely/probably” pay \$15 to stream a movie that was being released at the same time it was being screened in theaters. In 4Q19, the average US movie ticket price was \$9.37. A surprising 57% claimed they would pay for movies streamed at a price of \$50. So far, those markets seem to dominate in the children and family space. In research conducted by Whip Media through its TV Time app, the company found that 20% of respondents had purchased a PVID movie. However, 26% came from households with children, versus 16% with no kids. While that 20% may seem small, data suggests that trend will accelerate. The same study found that if people were on the fence about seeing a movie, 55% said they were more likely to purchase in-home than seeing it in a theater. Right now, studios are struggling with the decision to shift titles into PVID or SVOD. **Universal's** “Trolls” moved to PVID, and brought in nearly \$100mln in revenue in its first three weeks. **NBCU** CEO *Jeff Shell* said that when theaters reopen, the company will release on both formats, causing **AMC Entertainment** to announce that it won't screen any Universal films in any of its theaters. **Disney** had announced in February that “Hamilton” would hit theaters in Oct 2021. Instead, it released the Broadway smash hit on the streaming platform **Disney+** on July 3, driving app downloads up 74% in its first weekend. **ViacomCBS** is moving its upcoming “The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run” to both PVID and **CBS All Access** in early 2021. Studios have also sold off titles to third-party SVOD platforms such as **Netflix**, **Amazon** and **Apple** (Paramount's “Lovebirds,” Universal/Blumhouse's “Run Sweetheart Run” and Sony's “Greyhound”). Studios also continue to push their big budget film releases later into 2020, such as Disney's “Mulan” to Aug 21. **Warner Bros'** \$200mln feature “Tenet,” from *Christopher Nolan*, was originally slated to be released July 17. It has been pushed back multiple times, most recently to Aug 21. The question becomes if theaters will open and whether people will attend? The folks at Whip Media think they will show up. “You don't have that

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same theatrical word of mouth that helps movie titles take off more. You don't necessarily have that yet on streaming platforms. You have to figure out a way to optimize customer acquisition the same way theaters do," said **Joey Barnett**, media research lead. Whip's study found that only 7% of people said they would never return to a movie theater. Of respondents who identified as a "frequent" attendee, 54% said they would return to movie theaters now if proper safety measures (social distancing required and seating six feet apart) were enforced. Others believe that the majority of folks will not be attending theaters, even if they're reopened. Analysts at **Lightshed** don't think that studios should be releasing films in 2020. "We simply cannot understand why studios are not delaying their titles until at least early 2021, if not mid-2021. The risks appear to far outweigh the benefits," they wrote. "We doubt Warner Bros actually wants to release any major movies this summer. However, they are under extreme pressure from Tenet producer, director and writer Christopher Nolan." The analysts believe that pushing films out too early could cause a lack of performance at the box office and would benefit PVD and SVOD. "We believe it will further increase talent's interest in creating movies directly for streaming services. To make matters worse, if studios do get spooked by films underperforming in theaters, streamers such as Netflix will be even more advantaged as they have a global distribution footprint that does not require consumers to be comfortable sitting in movie theaters with masks," they wrote.

fuboTV Releases 1Q Numbers: fuboTV saw 1Q revenues of \$51mln, a 78% increase YOY, according to a shareholder letter released Wednesday. Subscription revenue rose 74% YOY to \$46.4mln, while ad revenue rose 120% YOY to \$4.1mln. Monthly active users watched 120 hours/month on average during the quarter, and paid subscribers came in at more than 287K, a 37% increase YOY. But that's almost a 28.5K loss from the numbers fuboTV reported at the end of 2019. "We believe fuboTV is at the forefront of the streaming revolution and has a significant advantage not only over peers in the vMVPD space but also over traditional cable television," fuboTV CEO **David Gandler** said in the letter. Gandler is still optimistic that the sports-centric streamer will gain more subscribers in the future, even with the lack of live sports due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "While we expect that the COVID-19 pandemic will have lasting effects on consumer behavior and live television viewing, vMVPDs are also a more affordable alternative to pay TV, which, we believe, in this current economic climate, further accelerates adoption," he said.

Conde Making a More Diverse Newsroom: NBCU News group chmn **Cesar Conde** has pledged to make the division more diverse, aiming to make the staff 50% female and 50% people of color. In a memo to staff, Conde said they've nearly reached their goal on female representation, but only 26.5% are people of color. Of that number, 8% are Black, 8% are Hispanic, another 8% are Asian, 2% are multiracial and under 1% are Native American. "We want

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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Amy Maclean, Editorial Director,
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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 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

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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

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 during school closures. Topic: how rainbows form. Pledge: **From the Commission:** Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Pa's 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**, **Mild**

to increase diversity and inclusion both in front of and behind the camera and earn the trust of every community in America that relies on us for exceptional journalism,” Conde said in a video accompanying the memo. “We understand this is a challenging time to start this effort but there are always reasons to say, ‘Not now.’ To get there tomorrow, we have to start today.”

At the Commission: FCC commish *Geoffrey Starks* will virtually host a panel on mental health in the Black community Monday at noon ET. Free to the public, “Thriving While Black: The Role of the Media and Communications Technology in Addressing Black Mental Health,” panelists will present current research on Black mental health and discuss policy solutions for offering reliable and affordable broadband that assists marginalized groups in accessing telehealth services. -- The FCC is no longer accepting hand-carried documents at its DC headquarters. “This change is for security measures, and in anticipation of our upcoming FCC headquarters move,” the Commission said in a public notice. The FCC will be moving to its new home at 45 L Street NE soon, but hand-carried filings will also not be welcome there. Paper filings will now need to be delivered to 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. The hours for filing run from 8am-4pm. -- The Wireline Competition Bureau approved the final 25 funding applications totaling \$10.73mln from the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Since the beginning of the Commission’s program, it has approved 539 funding applications in 47 states plus Washington, DC, and Guam, for a total of \$200mln in funding. The money was provided by Congress through the CARES Act.

Shep Lands at CNBC: Former **Fox News** anchor *Shepard Smith* is joining **CNBC**, anchoring a new one-hour evening news program “The News with Shepard Smith,” airing weekdays at 7pm. The newscast is launching in the fall, and he’ll also assume the new roles of chief general news anchor and chief breaking general news anchor. Smith resigned from Fox News last October.

Back to Normal: The **Wireless Internet Service Providers Association** is planning to hold its annual WISPALOOZA convention in person from Oct 19-22 in Las Vegas. WISPA hopes to bring together over 2500 attendees and 190 exhibitors at the Caesars Forum. WISPA had to cancel its WISPAMERICA 2020 conference in Dallas earlier in March because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding the Facts on Social Media: House Commerce Democrats led by chmn *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) sent letters to **Facebook** CEO *Mark Zuckerberg*, **Google** CEO *Sundar Pichai* and **Twitter** CEO *Jack Dorsey* requesting monthly reports on their companies’ response to disinformation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. “This disinformation has ranged from false statements about certain groups being immune from contracting the virus to unsubstantiated assertions about masks and vaccines,” the Democrats wrote. “This type of disinformation is dangerous and can affect the health and well-being of people who use this false information to make critical health decisions during this pandemic.” The Democrats requested briefings to discuss the information the companies intend to produce in those reports and efforts currently underway to combat disinformation on those platforms.

Ratings: **Fox News** was the most-watched network in all of cable across total day and primetime last week, earning 3.44mln viewers and 1.713mln viewers respectively. In prime, **MSNBC** came in second with 1.977mln, followed by **CNN** with 1.585mln viewers. In total day, MSNBC edged out CNN for the number two slot with 1.19mln viewers to 1.022mln.

Programming: **Peacock** will celebrate its July 15 launch with free access to all of **NBC Sports’** Premier League coverage. Four live matches will be available for free, kicking off at 1pm. -- **HBO** will host an exclusive special honoring the 2020 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Inductees in lieu of the annual live induction ceremony. The program will be available on HBO and **HBO Max** on Nov 7 at 8pm, replacing the ceremony that was originally scheduled for May 2. -- “Sex and the City” creator *Darren Star* inked a multi-year deal with **ViacomCBS’** entertainment & youth groups. -- “Tyler Perry’s *Madea’s Farewell Play*” will launch exclusively on **BET+** on August 27.

People: **Sinclair** named *Steve Rosenberg* pres, local sports. He will oversee the company’s RSNs, digital and internet sports channel Stadium and its high school sports division. He will join the company July 20 and take the pres title on Sept 1, upon *Jeff Krolík’s* retirement. Rosenberg spent 20 years at **Universal Studios**, eventually holding the title of pres, Universal Television and worldwide distribution. -- *Johannes Larcher* is joining **WarnerMedia** in August as head of **HBO Max** International. He will lead the international rollout of HBO Max, starting with its Latin America launch in 2021. -- **Lindsay Broadband** promoted *Jonathan Haight* to svp, worldwide business development. He was previously the company’s vp, US sales & business development.

Editor’s Note: Don’t forget! This Friday is the [deadline](#) to get your nominations in for **Cablefax: The Magazine’s** upcoming Diversity List!



Telehealth in the Virtual Age

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In this online virtual event, Cablefax will assemble panels of experts to assess key opportunities for the cable & broadband sector as advances in telehealth intersect with changing patient behavior. What in-home products and services will consumers demand—and what new business relationships will emerge as the multi-billion-dollar healthcare sector looks for partners with strong relationships with customers in their homes? How will the next generation of broadband services improve connections between patients and doctors amid this more socially distanced and safety-conscious world? And where are the major opportunities for revenue growth and new lines of business?

Recent Cablefax Daily Telehealth Coverage

Cablefax Daily™

Monday — April 13, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 071

Connected Care: Interest High in Federal Telehealth Dollars

It's only been a week since the **FCC** approved plans to dole out \$200m in telehealth funding allocated through the CARES Act, but the requests to spend the money are already flowing in. The agency said it will open a portal for appli-

Monday — May 18, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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5 Questions: Talking Telehealth with the GM of Cox's Trapollo

When Cox Communications purchased connected health firm Trapollo in 2017, it knew there was a future for remote health monitoring. What it couldn't have predicted was how the COVID-19 pandemic would accelerate adoption of these virtual medical services that take place over the internet. "The technical capabilities have enabled for a number of years. But for a host of other reasons, telehealth wasn't fully accepted. Now with COVID-19, we've condensed what we thought would take five more years of development and it's now happening in five weeks."

Wednesday — May 27, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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New Path: Startup Brings Telehealth Directly to the TV

You likely have encountered a shortage on toilet paper and disinfectant wipes during the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps less noticed has been a shortage in laptops, Chromebooks and tablets as much of the world moves to work (and school) from home status. **Google** was struggling recently to find enough laptops and devices for new employees, **CNBC** reported. Schools have reported similar issues as they move to online learning. "Here's a big aha that many don't understand. As soon as the schools closed, school systems or parents essentially went out and bought laptops and tablets."

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THE WORK CULTURE LIST PROFILE:

EMPLOYEE SPIRIT HERO **Kaitlyn Webb, Bob Gold & Associates**

There's just something about Kaitlyn Webb.

That's what her colleagues at boutique PR and marketing firm Bob Gold & Associates quickly realized. Webb joined the team as an account coordinator during a busy period, limiting the amount of hands-on training she could receive. But she rose to the occa-

sion, working with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council to support their largest conference promoting US businesses in Hong Kong and Asia—an especially hectic task given a US-China trade war and a short time-frame for pulling an event together.

"I came on just as that account was taking off. It was probably one of the busiest times here, at least in recent years. That was definitely all hands on deck at all times," Webb says. "I really do appreciate that experience. I didn't start off here twiddling my thumbs. It really set everything in motion. Now with any account, I'm confident because of that."

Despite the challenges and her rookie status, Webb managed the ever-evolving media list covering 10+ verticals, media inquiries, case study placements, the social media calendar and more. The Trade Development Council was pleased to have received more interviews and media placements than contracted, exceeding goals by 69% and 35% respectively. On site, Webb jumped in on registration at the trade show and even helped guide an even newer employee who had joined the team weeks before the event.

"She never complains about anything. Any random task that comes up, she's game to try and experience," says Roxanne Leone, BG&A's director of marketing & communications. She adds that Webb is a constant learner,

seeking out webinars and other resources—whether they are related to a specific client or to the PR industry as a whole.

"Anytime there's a PRSA L.A. event to go to, I'll try my best to schedule that in," Webb says. "And any of these webinars that are relevant to any of our clients, I'm in. I just want to learn more." And in true employee spirit hero fashion, she makes sure to recap interesting findings for the rest of the team. "I just always want to keep a positive attitude. Everyone has a heavy workload, so I try to help out anyone any way I can."

A typical day at BG&A starts with founder and firm President and CEO Bob Gold leading the team on a walk to a nearby coffee shop for a cup of joe. "Everyone's talking. It really sets the mood for the day," Webb says. "I'm surprised I was nominated as spirit hero because everyone has a really great personality here. Everyone's very talented, and it's a very team-oriented environment."

When Webb applied to BG&A, she had a cousin working at the agency. But she was adamant her relative not mention their connection. "I was pretty confident based off my resume and experience that I had a good chance," Webb says. "They told me I was the number one candidate after meeting me. It wasn't until after that they learned about it. Being so independent, I wanted this on my own."

Webb's cooperative spirit extends outside BG&A. When she sees emails come through to the firm from college students interested in PR, she will jump in to share her perspective. "A lot of people when they're graduating or about to start their career, they don't really know what they want to do. I think talking to them on a really personable level ... helps them see the light at the end of the tunnel. They will learn a lot and still succeed."

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Cablefax's Work Culture List Digital Issue!

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Think about that for a minute...

Lewis Carroll Time

Commentary by Steve Effros

It's getting to be that time again. Major changes may be in the works. The once-every-four-year political season is upon us. The press and pundits are going crazy (or they just don't have anything else to write about) trying to figure out what might happen if....!



Well, we know what the "if" is; a major change of administration in Washington. What happens if Trump is gone, Biden is President, the Senate is/is not controlled by the Democrats, and so it goes. Or, maybe, what if the current administration continues its course for the next four years?

It reminds me of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." There are just too many wonderful quotes in that story that could be used in a column! The one I immediately thought of in the "what if" context was the caterpillar explaining to Alice that if she ate one side of the mushroom it would make her taller, but the other side would make her small. The problem for Alice, of course, is he didn't tell her which side was which!

That's sort of where we are with all of the telecommunications issues in Washington. If everything stays the same, well, we wind up with broadband companies adhering to the "net neutrality" that they have always essentially adhered to, but it wouldn't be part of regulations or law. It would be because it has always made good business sense. If we have major administration changes it's likely there would be either administrative or statutory requirements to do what we've been doing anyway!

So just like Alice, on that issue at least, you might be "small" or "tall" but you're still the same! Now it gets a little more complicated on issues like rate regulation of broadband, the last piece of the "Title I, Title II" debate.

That's really the underlying disagreement regarding the bumper-sticker phrase of "net neutrality." That would be a major battle, but even then whether the regulators were made "tall" or "short," with the ability (or not) to regulate rates, there is little indication they would be jumping into that morass quickly. Remember that the last time they tried, with cable rates, the regulations wound up enabling higher rates, not lower rates! Reality strikes even in Wonderland. If cable revenue goes down, the cross subsidy for building broadband infrastructure takes a direct hit. Then the price of broadband goes up, no matter which side of the mushroom you eat!

As I have been saying for some time, the real issue that will be contested will be whether the major internet "edge" providers, Facebook, Google, et.al., will continue to get protection from liability for the things that are put on their platforms. This is the "Section 230" debate, and ironically it really doesn't matter which scenario you paint for the elections. Both conservatives and liberals agree that there are major issues with what has happened with unfettered, unedited, irresponsible, dangerous speech. It still is illegal to yell "fire" in a crowded theatre even with the First Amendment. Should we start imposing some restraint on the internet? Who? How? That's going to be the biggest issue going forward.

Whichever way the election goes, hopefully there will be a serious, extended discussion of what we should do about the adverse effects we now recognize social media have wrought. It's a very difficult issue. Unfortunately, as Alice heard from the Queen, we're likely to have to battle the political tendency toward saying "...no, no, sentence first, verdict afterwards!"

Steve

T:202-630-2099
steve@effros.com

(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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