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What the Industry Reads First

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Here We Go: ATSC 3.0 Live Subscription Service Evoca Ready For Launch

As the FCC solicits comments on how to promote the deployment of broadcast internet services via the voluntary ATSC 3.0 standard, [one such service](#) is gearing up for liftoff. On Aug 31, **Evoca** will begin offering live TV in Boise, ID. An Evoca demo provided to **Cablefax** showed a subscription TV service that doesn't look much different than what other traditional pay TV operators are offering—complete with on demand, a range of live broadcast and cable networks, an electronic programming guide and HD video. What's different is how Evoca is delivering the service. Customers will need an internet connection to receive the video service, which Evoca is delivering via two ATSC 3.0 stations in Boise. "What we've done is to mix content that we're delivering via 3.0 broadcast using 3.0 protocols but delivering it over the broadband connection. And then what's available in the market in terms of existing 1.0 signals. You see a mix of what's available over the air and stuff we're bringing in," Evoca pres/CEO *Todd Achilles* told **CFX**. "You don't need a huge broadband connection because we're just using it as a supplement to the broadcast, rather than 100% of the streaming coming over that." Whether distributors view Evoca as a competitor or a means to exiting low-margin video to focus on internet remains to be seen. Evoca's normal price is \$49/month, but those who sign up early can get it for \$20/month through the end of 2020. And despite a lack of marketing and a pandemic to navigate, there's a waiting list, according to Achilles. After an article ran in the *Idaho Statesman* this spring, Evoca's site was hammered with sign-ups. "We're limiting the early access program to 200 people. We're starting a little bit of marketing now, but basically going to the folks who've already signed up," he said. "But as we scale up, we'll sort of do it the typical way—you can get this in a retail store, online, the typical consumer marketing you need to do to drive the business." Evoca provides customers with a small set-top that Achilles describes as "half an OTT streaming box and half a TV receiver." On demand content is cached on the storage in the box locally. It also features live linear content as well as apps and games. The apps section includes AVOD and SVOD, such as **AMC Networks' Acorn TV** and AVOD **Crackle**. The big streamers like **Netflix**, **Hulu** and **Disney+** aren't there, but talks continue. On the linear side, deals are in place with **A+E Networks**, **Crown Media Family Networks**, **RIDE TV**, **Entertainment Studios Networks** and more. Evoca also is carrying **CuriosityStream** on a linear basis, like **Altice USA**. "Given

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how we can highlight live, linear and VOD, the big cable nets and media companies are super interested. The conversations have been super positive,” Achilles said. No sports networks at this point, but the exec said to stay tuned. “We’ve got some coming with a focus on regional sports.” For now, Evoca’s attention is just on Boise, but next year it may look to expand in the Mountain West, which would mean working with a 3.0 station in those markets or acquiring a low-power station and turning 3.0 on. “Our focus is mid and small markets that are chronically underserved, and there are a whole lot of towns that meet that definition in this part of the world,” Achilles said.

Ready for RNC?: Charter’s commitment in Charlotte for the Republican National Convention is similar to its role last week in Milwaukee as the connectivity partner for the Democratic National Convention. The operator is investing \$1mln overall in connectivity and infrastructure. That includes adding to the infrastructure in Uptown Charlotte, including a high-capacity, fiber-based network that will offer multiple advanced. Charter is providing internet, video, voice and transport services to support virtual attendance, and two 10 Gbps circuits with DDOSS Protection to the RNC COA technology team. Along with 24x7 monitoring and support, the commitment reflects 2,500 Spectrum Enterprise staff hours. Unlike last week’s DNC, there was no virtual portion of the Charlotte convention with delegate statements delivered in person. President *Trump* and VP *Mike Pence* both spoke in Charlotte Monday afternoon, shortly after they were renominated. For primetime, the central convention location will be the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium in DC. The RNC production it’s getting some help from the world of TV. The *NY Times* reports that two producers of “The Apprentice” are involved in planning. While the news nets will all be covering, the RNC, like the DNC, also will be live streaming via **YouTube, Twitch, Amazon Prime Video** and **Twitter**.

S&P Upgrades Mediacom to Investment Grade Rating: With Mediacom’s debt-to-EBITDA metric falling to 2.4x as of the end of June, **S&P** has elevated the company’s corporate credit rating to “BBB” with a stable outlook. That’s two notches above the prior BB+ rating. “Importantly, the company’s controlling shareholder has publicly committed to maintaining debt to EBITDA of less than 3x, which provides us with greater clarity into Mediacom’s financial policy and potential for re-leveraging,” S&P analysts said. They noted the stable outlook reflects the company’s predictable earnings growth and cash generation that enable it to reduce its leverage by about 0.5x per year. “I take great pride in announcing this historic development, particularly in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic that has caused an avalanche of credit rating downgrades across a wide range of domestic and international debt issuers,” Mediacom founder/chmn/CEO *Rocco Commisso* said in a statement.

Blue Ribbon Ratings for Yellowstone: Paramount Network’s “Yellowstone” ended Season 3 Sunday as cable’s

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biggest telecast of the year. The finale drew in 5.2mln viewers, 1mln more than any other episode in the series' history. The season is up 75% in P25-54 and 66% in P18-49 YOY.

Warner Works to Bridge Homework Gap: Sen Mark Warner (D-VA) sent letters to major tech companies including **Dell**, **Apple**, **Samsung** and **Google** asking the companies to do what they can to help bridge the "homework gap." He's asking companies to contribute to an effort to contain the economic and societal impact of COVID-19 by ensuring students in VA can properly participate in distance learning. "I urge you take immediate action to help close this new education gap created by the health crisis as the school year commences," he wrote. He cited a variety of actions, including product discounts, providing free or donated computers and the provision of refurbished or returned products for school districts.

Fidelity Expands in MO: **Fidelity Communications**, part of the **Cable One** family, is bringing fiber-to-the-home technology to Owensville, MO, enabling speeds of up to 1 Gbps. The company said that construction is underway and is scheduled for completion in Dec.

Crunchyroll Launches New Tiers: Anime streamer **Crunchyroll** introduced a series of new membership tiers. It will continue to offer a free AVOD option, with new episodes available a week after premiere. Its "Fan" comes in at \$7.99/month and offers an ad-free experience and one stream. The "Mega Fan" option costs \$9.99/month and includes offline viewing, four streams and access to benefits at the Crunchyroll store coming in at \$15 off a purchase of \$100 every three months. The "Ultimate Fan" tier costs \$14.99/month and includes access to six streams, an annual swag bag, \$25 off a purchase of \$100 every three months and access to exclusive Ultimate Fan merchandise.

ESPN Debuts New Studio: **ESPN** and **Caesars Entertainment** revealed a new studio at the LINQ Hotel in Las Vegas. It debuted Monday, beginning with produced segments for "SportsCenter" and digital platforms. ESPN will use the new studio to expand its Vegas-exclusive sports betting and entertainment news, starting with moving "Daily Wager" to the new studio beginning Sept 8 and launching a sports-betting themed digital show this fall.

365 Days of Streaming: Reviews.org put together a new streaming project that found consumers can stream 365 days of free content across 39 platforms using just free trials. The group put together a streaming calendar that includes popular platforms like **Netflix** and **Hulu**, alongside niche services like **Shudder**. If you signed up for a year of all 39 streaming services on the list, it'd cost \$5,765. Reviews.org figured it out for free, advising when to sign up and cancel.

Awards Update: **Telemundo** and **Billboard** are teaming up for the 2020 Billboard Latin Music Awards, taking place live on Oct 21 at 7pm at the BB&T Center in Sunrise, FL, a new venue for the show. The event was originally supposed to take place in April in Las Vegas, but was postponed due to coronavirus. -- **AARP's** annual Movies For Grownups Awards has been moved to March 4, 2021, due to the pandemic. The event is also expanding its television categories, adding Best Television Series For Grownups, Best Movie Made for Television or Limited Series for Grownups, Best Actress, Television and Best Actor, Television.

Programming: "The News with Shepard Smith" will premiere on **CNBC** on Sept 30 at 7pm. The one-hour program will be broadcast each weeknight, and comes after Smith left **Fox News** after 23 years. -- **Shaquille O'Neal** and **Turner Sports** reached a multi-year extension that will expand his responsibilities with **WarnerMedia**. He'll continue his role as a studio analyst for **TNT**, expand his "Shaqtin-a-Fool" franchise, executive produce a number of projects for **Bleacher Report**, distribute his podcast "Audio Shaq" through the WarnerMedia Podcast Network and more. -- **ESPN** and Little League International reached an eight-year media rights deal extension. The new, multi-platform deal is in place from 2023-2030. -- **HBO** will premiere the two-part doc "Agents of Chaos" Sept 23 at 9pm. The doc dives into Russian interference in the 2016 election. -- **Tennis Channel's** US Open coverage gets underway Aug 31 with a live daily show and more than 115 hours of encore matches. Programming begins at 10am. -- **Peacock's** new drama series "Naughts and Crosses" debuts on the streamer Sept 4. The six-episode series follows a forbidden love story in an alternate world. -- **MTV** is premiering new limited series "16 and Recovering" on Sept 1 at 9pm. The series follows the tradition of "16 and Pregnant," this time following students at Northshore Recovery High School grappling with addiction against the backdrop of the opioid epidemic -- Horror comedy film "Corporate Animals" will be available exclusively for free on AVOD service **Crackle** beginning Sept 1.

People: **Jonathan Beane** was named svp, chief diversity and inclusion officer for the **NFL**, effective Sept 8. He has held senior diversity roles at **Roche**, **21st Century Fox** and **Time Warner**, among others. Beane will be based in NY and report to evp, CAO **Dasha Smith**.