

Cablefax Daily™

Monday — August 31, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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Press Play: VENN Ready to Serve as Gaming's New Home

With many facets of the entertainment industry forced to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more folks picked up a controller, turned on **Twitch** and tried their hands at the world of video games. The situation has put a spotlight on a new world of digital superstars, and new net **VENN** is ready to help them grow. The channel, which debuted earlier this month, is dedicated to giving its audience access to gaming creators easily, around-the-clock and on as many platforms as possible. "Our goal is to celebrate these creators and to give them a bright and powerful spotlight with all the resources and benefits of a studio audience and a digital and linear audience excited to follow their content through their channel of choice," VENN co-founder/co-CEO *Ariel Horn* said. The network is currently distributed on Twitch, **YouTube**, **Twitter**, **Facebook Gaming**, via **VIZIO** and **Samsung TVs** and on **Xumo** and **STIRR**. "We anticipate signing distribution partnerships with traditional cable operators as well in the coming months," Horn said. VENN's primary audience is the streaming generation, young millennials and Gen Z, who see gaming and entertainment as intermixed. It is an audience that Horn and co-founder *Ben Kusin* believe has been neglected by traditional media networks. "We swapped notes on our vision for how gaming and digital entertainment fans deserved a broadcast network that truly catered to them, rather than just paying lip service, and we found that we shared a common goal," Horn said. That was two years ago, and the initial plans for the net quickly followed. In designing the programming lineup, VENN wanted to offer information on the hyper-specific gaming issues of the day, but also deliver content for more casual fans. "We wanted to cast a wide net in terms of original shows and content, done to make sure VENN is an inclusive network made by gamers, for gamers," Horn said. Early in the run up to VENN's beta launch, the network decided to switch its primary broadcast studio from NY to LA. VENN now films at Vista Studios in Playa Vista, which features a central stage with over 1000 square feet of space. It has implemented a number of health precautions to protect crew members. "All employees follow social distancing guidelines and are tested early and often. We've created a private entrance for all talent which allows them to stay in a 'bubble,' limiting their interactions with other people," Horn said. "While adapting to the pandemic has been challenging,

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The hour-long roundtable will take place during the general session, Monday October 12, 2020, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm ET. It will feature discussions on the industry's response to COVID-19 and the evolution to a next-gen 10G platform, as well as the potential for life-changing applications that 10G will enable.

The panel will feature perspectives from:



Mike Fries
CEO and Vice Chairman
Liberty Global



Tom Rutledge
Chairman and CEO
Charter Communications



Dave Watson
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Moderator

Phil McKinney
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we're proud that VENN's proven resilient to these unprecedented times." The network has managed to navigate the difficulties of launching in a pandemic, but it may be facing new competition in 2021. On July 24, a Twitter account for former cable net **G4** surfaced with a video announcing its planned return next year. More information will be rolling out over the next few months about what the new G4 will look like. G4 was launched in 2002 by **Comcast** and stayed on the air for 12 years, ceasing all operations in late 2014.

DirecTV For Sale?: The *WSJ* reported late Friday that **AT&T** and its advisers at **Goldman Sachs** have been in talks with private-equity for a possible **DirecTV** deal. Potential suitors include **Apollo Global Management** and **Platinum Equity**, according to unnamed sources in the article. There was the caveat that talks are in the early stage and its not clear if there will even be a deal or if AT&T would retain a stake. AT&T paid \$49bln for DirecTV in 2015, but there's been pressure to part with it as the satellite service has suffered millions in sub losses. Sources in the *WSJ* piece suggested a deal could value DirecTV under \$20bln.

Hurricane Laura: The **FCC's** status report as of noon ET Thursday had cable and wireline companies reporting 192,915 outages in areas affected by Hurricane Laura, up from 19,687 the day before. Outages could include phone, TV and/or internet. Three broadcast stations were reported being out of service—**Wilderness Communications'** KBCA and KLWB along with **Legacy Broadcasting's** KMLU. **Altice USA** is continuing to assess the damage to **Suddenlink** systems in coastal Louisiana and southeast Texas following Hurricane Laura's landfall as a category 4 storm. "While we are still waiting to gain access to many of the hardest hit areas, we know that hurricane-force winds have caused extreme damage and there will likely be a long road of recovery ahead for many of the communities we serve," Altice USA CEO *Dexter Goei* said in a letter to employees. A spokesperson all employees are safe and accounted for. The Altice USA Employee Disaster Relief Fund is available to provide financial assistance to employees who have been impacted by natural disasters. The program is funded by employee contributions, which are matched by Altice USA up to \$50K annually.

RNC Ratings Wrap: **Fox News** delivered its highest-rated primetime convention average in cable news history, with the net averaging 7.823mln viewers the final night of the Republican National Convention (8-11pm), according to early **Nielsen** research. That's the highest-rated primetime average among total viewers during any convention in cable news history. **MSNBC** pushed past **CNN** with 1.961mln viewers vs 1.829mln for the three hours. Fox News also earned bragging rights for securing the largest convention audience in all of TV during 10-11:45pm, with 9.2mln viewers.

SVODs Get Stickier: Some 78% of US households have an SVOD service from **Netflix**, **Amazon Prime** and/or **Hulu**,

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up from 69% in 2018 and from 52% in 2015, according to a new report from **Leichtman Research** based on a survey of approx 1990 households nationwide. In addition, 55% of US households now have more than one of these SVOD services, an increase from 43% in 2018, and 20% in 2015. Folks are making good use of the streaming services, with 40% of adults reporting that they stream from SVODs daily, up from 30% in 2018 and 16% in 2015. Netflix has the most password sharing, with 30% reporting they share their subscription outside their household, compared to 23% with Hulu and 20% with Amazon.

Google Fiber Says Hello to Philo: Google Fiber, which stopped offering a traditional TV subscription service to new customers back in February, has added **Philo** as a new streaming partner. The \$20/month vMVPD joins **YouTube TV** and **fuboTV** as official Google Fiber streaming options.

Programing: Showtime is making four-part docuseries “Love Fraud” available free for online sampling via YouTube and SHO.com ahead of Sunday’s premiere. -- **HBO Max** picked up **Selena Gomez’s** “Selena + Chef” for Season 2. The final four episodes of the cooking show premiered Thursday. -- **TLC** is bringing back “The Family Chantel,” Oct 12 at 10pm.

People: Diana Anderson was named vp, customer experience for **Comcast’s** Greater Chicago Region. She previously served as regional director for the internal **Comcast University**.

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Matthew M. Polka @MATtoACA

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Americans continue to connect more wireless devices. There are 442.8M U.S. wireless subscriptions and last year, 174.8M data-only devices—like connected cars and smartwatches—were connected. Topline highlights of our 2020 Annual Survey: ctia.it/3gthpMK

Category	Value
Total wireless subscriptions	442.5 million
Data-only devices	174.8 million
Wireless-enabled vehicles and devices	52.6 million

Up Ahead

- Sept 14-17: [NATPE Streaming Plus](#)
- Sept 22: [Cablefax's FAXIES Awards Celebration, Also Honoring the Cablefax 100, Top Ops and Work Culture List](#)
- Sept 29-Oct 1: [NCTC's Independent Show](#)
- Oct 5: [WICT Leadership Conference](#)
- Oct 6-9: [NAMIC's 34th Annual Conference](#)

Research

- > 73% of US consumers say they would prefer to watch their favorite TV show for free with ads rather than pay for an ad-free experience.
- > 64% of consumers in the US plan to reduce the amount they pay for TV services. 44% plan to do so by reducing paid subscriptions and 42% plan to cancel cable TV.

(Source: [Unruly](#))

Quotable

“I do not believe any large media company put in a bid, and I think that’s really what’s sad. It’s that they had an opportunity to pivot to the future... every single media company had the opportunity to be a part of this and none of them were. Yes, their business is under pressure, the TV ad market is under pressure, cord-cutting is accelerating. So I understand the existential challenges that they’re all facing right now, but this was theoretically a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity... it’s just sad when you think about the fact that none of the companies that should have wanted this... this was the next evolution to mobile content.”

– **Lightshed Partners analyst Rich Greenfield** talking the bidding for TikTok on **CNBC’s “Squawk Box”**

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