

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — October 23, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 206

Milestones: AT&T Surpasses 38 Million HBO Max Subscribers

AT&T reported 8.6mln HBO Max customer activations during its 3Q20 earnings call. That's more than double the 4.1mln activations the company reported in the previous quarter. As of Sept 30, AT&T counted 38mln customers that were subscribed to both HBO and HBO Max. That number rises to 57mln subscribers when international customers are included. AT&T CEO John Stankey said aside from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the May launch of HBO Max went largely as AT&T expected it to. "We know we probably could have done better if we had the right kind of lineup of robust originals that we had originally slated, and that will now start to ease as production picks up," Stankey said. "There's some usability issues on the platform that we'd like to improve on the user interface... but that's just part of maturing and scaling a product, and I feel good about the ramp."

AT&T's revenue fell 5% YOY to \$42.3bln, and the company attributed the losses to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And while the company is gearing up and preparing theatrical releases, there are still plenty of questions surrounding what the exhibition looks like. "That's still one of the things we don't have great visibility on... I can't tell you that we walked away from the 'Tenet' experience saying it was a home run," Stankey said. "The holiday season is going to be the next big checkpoint to see what occurs and whether or not we can actually move some content back into the theatrical exhibition and we're going to have to make a game time decision on that," Stankey said. "We are not optimistic... not expecting a huge recovery in theatrical moving into the early part of next year." More opportunities will also open for HBO Max, Stankey said, when its ad-supported business launches in 2021.

Looking at the pay TV side of the business, AT&T lost 590K subscribers across its cable and satellite products. That's a major loss, but it's still a huge improvement from the 1.2mln it lost in during the same period last year. The company said that gains at AT&T TV helped offset premium TV losses. Stankey told analysts that he doesn't see the traditional bundle existing in its current form far into the future.

"I think there will be a number of channels in the bundle that probably fall away over time and it gets a little bit thinner," Stankey said. "But from my point of view, the reason we're doing HBO Max and one of the reasons that we expected walking in as we want to be where the customers want to be, and we're focused on building a platform that's relevant

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,
amaclean@accessintel.com or 301.354.1760

The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?: With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become the norm? **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 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 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 service to their customers.

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. **Pledge** is airing its "Pledge to School Closures" due to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and more. Scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Partners 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**, **Midwest**

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NOVEMBER 1

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for the next decade.”

On the broadband side, AT&T added 357K **AT&T Fiber** customers, more than offsetting a 157K loss in **U-verse** and other broadband subs. The company lost an additional 29K DSL subscribers, but that was much better than the expected loss of 73K.

And we couldn't forget about wireless. AT&T added more than 1mln post-paid subscribers, including reconnects of subscribers that took advantage of the **FCC's** Keep Americans Connected pledge. Pre-paid net additions hit 245K, easily beating the expected gain of 75K. It's all good news, but **MoffettNathanson** still has questions as to how long AT&T can remain competitive with its current spectrum holdings. “T-Mobile has a much better mid-band spectrum position than either AT&T or Verizon. Both will need to spend money to keep up,” MoffettNathanson said in a note. “Verizon is in a position to do so. AT&T is not.” AT&T stock rose 5.84% by market close.

Hulu Dropping Sinclair RSNs: Hulu is the latest streaming service set to drop all 21 **Sinclair-owned Fox** RSNs from its live-TV offering, including **YES Network** and **Marquee Sports Network**. Beginning Friday, Hulu said it “will no longer have the rights to distribute a number of Regional Sports Networks (RSNs) that were previously included in our Live TV plans.” Hulu assured customers that they will still have access to other sports channels including ESPN, FS1 and FS2. The move comes after **YouTube TV** dropped the 19 Fox RSNs last month. **fuboTV** dropped them in January, and **DISH** dropped them from satellite and **Sling TV** lineups last year. Sinclair pres, distribution and network relations **Barry Faber** said in a statement that the broadcaster offered Hulu a deal consistent with terms agreed to by other distributors. “It is unfortunate that Hulu has chosen to take away some of the most popular programming on TV from millions of subscribers, particularly given that Hulu has promised its subscribers that it has live sports,” Faber said.

FCC Details T-Mobile Outage Causes: The **FCC** released a staff report Thursday detailing the causes and impact of a nationwide **T-Mobile** outage that occurred June 15. The outage lasted over 12 hours, disrupting calling and texting services nationwide, including 911 service, as well as access to data service in some areas. The FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau said in the report that 41% of all calls on T-Mobile's network failed during the outage, including over 23K to 911. “T-Mobile's outage was a failure,” FCC chmn **Ajit Pai** said in a statement. “Our staff investigation found that the company did not follow several established network reliability best practices that could have either prevented the outage or at least mitigated its impact. All telecommunications providers must ensure they are adhering to relevant industry best practices, and I encourage network reliability standards bodies to apply their expertise to the issues identified in this report for further study.” The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau plans to release a

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BRESNAN AWARD RECIPIENT: TED TURNER

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public notice reminding companies of industry-accepted best practices, and will contact major transport providers to discuss their practices.

Bipartisan Bill to Stop Pres from Shutting Down Internet: Reps *Anna Eshoo* (D-CA) and *Morgan Griffith* (R-VA) announced the Preventing Unwarranted Communications Shutdowns Act, a bipartisan bill aiming to limit presidential powers to control or shut down communications networks, including the internet. The Communications Act currently authorizes the president to take control of communications facilities or equipment in certain circumstances, and has the possibility for a presidential order that leads to Americans not being able to access the internet. The proposed bill limits the president's authorities; requires the president to notify Congress and senior Executive Branch officials within 12 hours of any shutdown, and requires approval within 48 hours from three-fifths of both the House and the Senate (including one-quarter of the minority party in each chamber). "The internet occupies a central place in American life and provides a venue to exercise many of our freedoms. Our Constitution and laws place checks on arbitrary and expansive executive power in other spheres, and the internet deserves the same protections," said Rep Griffith in a statement. "This bill would create guardrails so that any internet shutdown would require the consent of the people through their elected representatives."

Nexstar Media Group Realigning: **Nexstar Media Group** will combine its two primary operating subsidiaries, beginning Nov 1. Nexstar Digital and Nexstar Broadcasting will merge into a single operating subsidiary. The company said the new structure will align the company's national leadership in local content and maximize the value of Nexstar's content, national reach and consumer digital reach across multiple platforms. It expects a mid-seven figure expense savings in 2021 as a result of the realignment. Nexstar Media Group's three primary businesses – broadcasting, networks and digital – will now be operating divisions under the Nexstar Inc. umbrella. *Karen Brophy* will lead the digital business unit, taking the title of pres, digital. *Tim Busch* will serve as pres, broadcasting, and *Sean Compton* will serve as pres, networks, overseeing **WGN America**, **AntennaTV** and **WGN Radio**.

OpenVault, Tele Columbus Sign Deal: **OpenVault** and its European subsidiary made a major step forward in its European market expansion with a long-term agreement with **Tele Columbus AG**, Germany's second-largest cable operator. Tele Columbus will integrate OpenVault's solutions into networks to service 2.4mln IP-capable households.

Ratings: **WE tv's** "Love After Lockup" followed its most successful premiere ever with the highest rated episode since Season 2, drawing in more than 1.3mln total viewers for the Oct 16 episode.

Doing Good: **Comcast NBCU**, **Bank of America** and the **Lenfest Foundation** teamed up to invest nearly \$1mln to launch the OnE Philadelphia initiative. It helps provide the foundation needed for nonprofit Coded By Kids to begin to address diversity and inclusion in tech and innovation with long term solutions designed to deliver sustainable career opportunities for communities of color in Philadelphia.

Distribution: **Vizio** added the **Facebook Watch TV** app to its SmartCast platform in the US and Canada. Facebook reported last month that Watch is now reaching 1.25bln viewers a month.

On the Circuit: **SCTE-ISBE's** Tuck Executive Leadership Program will have some special guest speakers on Oct 26 and 27. *Phil McKinney*, pres/CEO of **CableLabs**, will kick off the back-to-back appearances on Oct 26 discussing innovation, the 10G platform and the industry's technology vision. *Stephanie Mitchko-Beale*, evp and CTO of **Charter**, will address the Class of 2020 on Oct 27. She'll be the first SCTE-ISBE-Tuck alum to deliver a leadership conversation at the program.

Programming: **ESPN's** Bristol, CT studios are set to host the virtual 2020 NBA Draft next month. On Nov 18 at 7pm, the event will air live on ESPN as the first NBA Draft to be held at the studios. -- **Showtime** will premiere "Your Honor" on Dec 6 at 10pm. -- **TBS** ordered a new season of anthology series "Miracle Workers." -- **Nickelodeon's** "Avatar: The Last Airbender" and "The Legend of Korra" will stream on **Twitch** for the first time. From Oct 26-29, users will be able to co-stream the two series on the social TV platform in Latin America. As part of the deal, **ViacomCBS'** channels in the region, **Nick** and **MTV Latin America**, will promote the airings across their platforms. -- **Disney Junior** will debut the musical animated short "Everybody Gets a Vote" on Sunday on Disney Junior's **YouTube** channel and DisneyNOW. The short will air on Nov 1 on the linear channel as part of the channel's "Read for Preschool" series.

People: **Synamedia** named *Paul Segre* its new CEO, effective immediately. He comes over from software firm **Genesys**. Departing CEO *Yves Padrines* led the company for its first two years, and will be pursuing other opportunities. -- **BritBox** promoted *Emily Powers* to evp, and head of BritBox North America. She currently oversees much of the business operations for the launch of BritBox in Australia.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'Equal' Shows LGBT History Before Stonewall

HBO Max's four-part docuseries "Equal" came just in time for the conclusion of LGBT History Month. The series arrived on the streamer on Thursday, and celebrates the trailblazers and activists leading up to the Stonewall uprising in 1969. The show is made up of archival footage and depictions of real-life events, and much of the cast and team behind the film identifies as LGBT. "In me being trans, I also have a deeper desire to make sure that the stories that we're telling about trans and queer people are told with a lot of dignity and respect and love and care," said *Ava Benjamin Shorr*, the show's director of photography. "When I see the show now, I'm very happy with the way we treated the material." Each of the four chapters marks a different chapter in history. Part 1 looks at early organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis and The Mattachine Society, part 2 the 20th century trans experience, part 3 specifically looks at the Black contributions to the LGBTQ civil rights movement, and part 4 ties together the decades long struggles that culminated in the Stonewall uprising. And while Equal doesn't diminish Stonewall's importance in LGBT history, it wants you to know there was a movement long before the protests. Narrated by Emmy, Tony and Grammy winner *Billy Porter*, the cast also features talent such as *Samira Wiley*, *Cheyenne Jackson* and *Anthony Rapp*. "The issues of representation go so deep for queer and trans people that I think that just having these beautifully told stories of people who lived their lives truthfully in a way they wanted, I think that can little by little help queer and trans people feel less alone," said Shorr. "I think it's really important to teach this history and to share it, because really that's the only way that queer and trans people have been able to know about each other." – *Mollie Cahillane*

Reviews: "NOVA: Can We Cool the Planet?" 9pm ET, Wednesday, **PBS**. Few science specials educate and entertain. This excellent primer about ridding the planet of CO2 does both and more. And the issue is not just carbon the planet's current occupants produce daily. An equally large question is what to do with the CO2 emitted since the Industrial Revolution began? It continues to reside in Earth's atmosphere. The start of the show sets out the problem with good storytelling and apposite graphics. (Who knew if all the globe's cement producers were a country, they'd be the 3rd largest carbon emitter, behind the US and China?) The good news is that the technology to get to zero carbon emissions exists. We can meet much of the Earth's energy needs with wind, solar and even nuclear power. "We will get to [Net Zero Day] ... [and] there will be global celebrations," says Harvard scientist *David Keith*. However, the climate problem is not solved on that day. "We've simply stopped making it worse," he adds. It's possible to pull CO2 from the atmosphere. We can literally suck it out of the air. Though this and other technologies are expensive and not scalable. Another issue is what to do with the carbon once you've captured it. There's plenty to ponder in this excellent special. – *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings*
(10/12/20-10/18/20)

Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	1.380	4,252
ESPN	0.967	2,979
MSNBC	0.754	2,321
TBSC	0.602	1,853
CNN	0.585	1,802
FS1	0.499	1,536
HGTV	0.388	1,196
TLC	0.326	1,004
HALL	0.319	982
FOOD	0.247	762
USA	0.244	751
INSP	0.210	646
HIST	0.209	642
HMM	0.206	634
ID	0.201	620
DISC	0.199	612
TVLAND	0.191	588
FX	0.190	586
LIFE	0.188	578
TNT	0.186	572
FRFM	0.181	557
A&E	0.166	511
ADSM	0.166	510
AMC	0.163	501
BRAVO	0.143	441
APL	0.138	426
NAN	0.137	422
WETV	0.136	420
BET	0.127	390
SYFY	0.126	387
GSN	0.122	376
NATGEO	0.112	346
NICK	0.112	346
COM	0.109	336
TRAVEL	0.105	324
E!	0.101	311
OXY	0.096	295
DSNY	0.091	280
MTV	0.089	275
NKJR	0.083	256
CRN	0.083	256

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

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