

# Cablefax Daily™

Wednesday — October 28, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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## Cable in Crosshairs: T-Mobile Launches Cheap 'TVision' Streaming Option

T-Mobile certainly has cable on its mind. Tuesday's announcement unveiling its TVision internet video streaming packages included 27 references to cable, including phrases such as "Cableopoly BS," "Un-Cable" and "Big Cable."

Some cable operators have added their own OTT streaming services over the years, such as Charter's \$15/month Spectrum TV Essentials that features more than 60 live channels. Plus, there are all those virtual MVPDs, like fuboTV, Philo, YouTube TV, AT&T TV Now and Sling. What sets T-Mobile's TVision apart, at least initially, is its price tag starting at \$10. The question is how long will those prices hold, as we've seen pretty much all the virtual MVPDs up their prices over time to cover the costs of programming.

"We focused this launch on our T-Mobile customers, and we're really committed to giving them a great value," T-Mobile entertainment svp Robert Gary told CFX. "The phenomena of launching this at a massive loss and then raising it in multiples, that's certainly not in our plan... In terms of total price when you look out over time, we don't control the content costs that the programmers use, so that will be a constant balance and management for us as we renew and negotiate and/or change the lineup."

The smallest T-Mobile package, TVision Vibe, is \$10/month with 30+ channels, including HGTV, Hallmark Channel, AMC and BET. TVision Live TV is \$40 and includes ABC, NBC and Fox (no CBS) as well as ESPN, FS1, FS2, NBC Sports and CNN and Fox News. An additional \$10/month gets you RSNs such as Big Ten and the ones owned by NBC Sports. Notably the Sinclair-owned Fox RSNs aren't on TVision. Hulu dropped the Sinclair RSNs last week, following drops by YouTube TV, fuboTV and Sling. TVision Live Zone at \$60 gets you a few more channels, including NFL Redzone and MAVtv. Sign-ups this year receive a free year of Apple TV+.

The packages will be available to T-Mobile customers starting Sunday and will launch to legacy Sprint subs later this month. T-Mobile plans to launch to pre-paid customers as well as non-customers next year. The idea is to let wireless customers add the service to their plan—and easily turn it on and off (ie, they could nix the subscription when football season ends, etc).

Of course, you can't mention T-Mobile without talking about 5G and that's the other thing to watch here—particu-

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larly given that cable's much more enthusiastic over its broadband margins. "Remember, the Cableopoly aren't just the country's biggest TV providers. They're also the country's biggest home internet providers. And their ISP customers aren't much happier than their TV customers," CEO Mike Sievert said in Tuesday's announcement, promising that 5G Home internet is coming soon.

TVision is available across Amazon TV, iOS, Android, Apple TV (pretty much everything but Roku). T-Mobile also is selling a \$50 Android TV dongle with a Google Assistant powered voice remote for a more integrated experience.

What about Layer3, the Denver-based IPTV service it acquired in 2018 and relaunched as TVision Home? "That's a product we continue to sell. Our plan going forward is to really refocus all our efforts into TVision Live as our primary TV service for consumers. We'll continue to support those customers, but our focus as a business will be to move towards TVision Live product," Gary said.

**FCC Tees Up 5.9GHz Rules:** Cable is celebrating the FCC's plans to vote at its November meeting on a proposal to open up the 5.9GHz band for unlicensed uses, like WiFi. FCC chmn Ajit Pai circulated new rules that would make the lower 45Mhz of the 5.9GHz band available for unlicensed use, creating a 160Mhz wide WiFi channel. In a blog, Pai said the new rules would also transition the upper 30MHz of this band away from DSRC to enable a different automotive communications technology called Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything, or C-V2X. C-V2X provides communications between vehicles and everything, from other vehicles to light poles and pedestrians. "With the right rules in place, we will be able to leverage the 5GHz Wi-Fi ecosystem already in place to deploy use of the new band very quickly," said Craig Cowden, Charter svp, wireless technology. NCTA pres/CEO Michael Powell piled on: "After more than 20 years of spectrum underutilization in 5.9GHz, and a seven-year Commission proceeding, the Chairman's compromise proposal is the right way to bring this band online, creating a new wide WiFi channel that will support more data at much faster speeds and that can be activated by early next year, while also reserving sufficient spectrum for future automotive safety innovations."

**Program Carriage Rule Change:** Among the items on the proposed FCC November meeting agenda is a report and order that would change the rules governing the resolution of program carriage disputes between programmers and MVPDs. It's something that outgoing FCC commish Mike O'Rielly has long been lobbying for, but that independent programmers, including AMC Networks and AXS TV, have raised concerns about. Under current rules, the clock for filing a complaint is tied to the complainant notifying an MVPD of their intent to file with the FCC—not when the offending action occurred. The draft order would clarify that the one-year period under this prong begins to run when

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 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 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 they will have to wait.

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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 doing a live stream during each hour of live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content. Pledge during the hour due to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form, and how to stay safe. 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 during the pandemic. Some notable names taking the pledge include Hotwire Communications, Midco

an MVPD rejects or fails to acknowledge a request for program carriage or request to negotiate for program carriage. Programming networks have said it's virtually impossible to ascertain a date when an MVPD declines carriage.

**Monthly News Ratings:** Fox News, MSNBC and CNN all wrapped October with ratings records. Fox News was the most-watched cable net in both total day and primetime, with its highest-rated October on record in primetime, earning 4.9mIn total viewers. In prime, MSNBC followed with 2.7mIn and CNN with 2.462mIn. The month was CNN's highest prime ratings in both full week and weekday among total viewers, and MSNBC's highest-rated month in the net's 25-year history in both prime and total day. In the A 25-54 demo, Fox News had 971K, and CNN beat MSNBC with 709K to 475K. In total day, Fox News saw 2.278mIn viewers, followed by MSNBC with 1.467mIn and CNN with 1.378mIn.

**FCC's Never-ending Net Neutrality Story:** You knew what was going to happen before the video call for Tuesday's open meeting even started. The FCC's three Republican commissioners voted to approve an order that essentially said the 2017 Restoring Internet Freedom order was just fine, the two Dems heavily objected and Title II advocates like **Public Knowledge** and Sen *Ed Markey* (D-MA) vowed to never stop fighting. "Without net neutrality protections, it's just a matter of time before big broadband providers start raising prices, slowing down internet speeds, and making it harder for families, small business, and students to access the opportunities to recover and rebuild from this pandemic. I will not rest until net neutrality is back on the books," Markey said. Last fall, the DC Circuit affirmed the FCC's Restoring Internet Freedom order that reclassified broadband as an information service, but told the agency to look at how the regulations might impact public safety, pole attachment regulations, and the inclusion of broadband in the universal service Lifeline program. The order the FCC approved Tuesday essentially said that after reviewing the record, there are no problems and no reason to alter the Restoring Internet Freedom order. Now, we wait to see if it survives potential challenges. "I think whatever challenge might ensue, we are on very strong legal foundation," FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* told reporters. "And I would hope that those for whom generating heat rather than light on this issue has been such a cause celeb over the last several years, they would focus on the issues that really matter to the American consumer instead—namely closing the digital divide, advancing accessibility to all Americans..."

**IPTV for MCTV:** MCTV has selected **MobiTV** to deliver IPTV video service, branded MCTV Stream, to subs throughout Ohio. It will allow MCTV to cap and replace end-of-life legacy tech and offer more advanced IP-based video streaming apps. MCTV launched the service in select markets and will continue to deploy it to new and existing customers in its service areas across the coming months.

**Distribution:** **fuboTV** is adding **AT&T SportsNet**, the Pittsburgh Pirates and Penguins RSN. Subs in the region will have access to the net ahead of the start of the 2020/2021 NHL season.

**Ratings:** Season 1 of **TLC's** "Darcey & Stacey," the latest in the "90 Day Fiance" franchise, wrapped up as cable's highest-rated freshman series to date in 2020. The season ended on Oct 18 and averaged 2.5mIn P2+ viewers per episode.

**Programming:** **Showtime** will air an original "Couples Therapy: The COVID Special" episode on Dec 13 at 8pm. The one-hour show docuseries will return for a second season in 2021. -- **WE tv** will begin production for two of its original series this month. Season 6 of "Growing Up Hip Hop" and Season 5 of "Mama June: From Not to Hot" will both consist of 10 episodes premiering in 2021. -- Showtime will debut "Macho: The Hector Camacho Story" on Dec 4 at 9pm. The documentary will look at the life, career and unsolved murder of one of boxing's greatest showmen. -- **ViacomCBS** International Studios teamed up with **Dynamo** and **Netflix** for action series "Dale Gas," an action series premiering on Netflix at the beginning of 2021. -- **Starz's** international streaming service **Starzplay** acquired three series for select territories. Titles include "We Are Who We Are," "No Man's Land" and "The Attaché."

**Doing Good:** **Charter** met its commitment to make 50K homes safer and healthier by the end of the year through its philanthropic initiative Spectrum Housing Assist. Employee volunteers working with nonprofit partner Homefront reached the goal on Oct 24 by repairing two homes in Stamford, CT, and completing exterior improvements at the local Boys & Girls Club. In all, more than 8.6K employees and community members in 33 states participated.

**People:** **Urban One** elevated *Michelle Rice* to pres of **TV One** and **CLEO TV**. She's served as gm since February 2018 and spearheaded the launch of CLEO in 2019. -- **CBS Studios** and the **NAACP** named *Sheila Duckworth* pres of the new CBS/NAACP production partnership. Beginning Nov 9, she will supervise development and production of scripted, unscripted and documentary content for linear television networks and streaming platforms. She most recently served as head of scripted television and production for **Will Packer Media**.