

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Not Today: Altice Abandoning Cogeco

Altice USA is throwing in the towel on its \$8.4bn quest to acquire **Cogeco** following the expiration of its most-recent offer. That offer would have allowed Altice USA to acquire **Atlantic Broadband** and sell the Cogeco assets to Canadian operator **Rogers Communications**. Rogers even went a step further, announcing its intention to invest \$3bn CDN in Quebec's networks if the bid was successful.

"We're disappointed that we didn't get the ability to engage with either the Audet family or the Cogeco boards on what is a terrific offer, a highly valued offer," Rogers CEO **Joe Natale** said Wednesday during an investor conference.

Altice USA CEO **Dexter Goei** said during a separate investor conference Thursday that he does not intend to extend the offer. He still believes M&A is the best use of his company's capital, followed by stock buybacks. Altice is continuing to look at a "handful" of other small- and medium-sized opportunities.

With that offer turned to dust, Goei's focus is back on how Altice USA can capitalize on the opportunity the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home orders gave broadband operators in 2020. Altice USA added 26K residential broadband customers in 3Q20, up from the 15K it reported in 3Q19.

Importantly, Goei doesn't believe that the success of this year means that every operator is going to report zero movement in the broadband market on next year's earnings calls. "It's not a pull-forward," Goei said. He predicted that next year's broadband adds will be higher than in previous years, "prob-

ably not as good as this year, but somewhere in between."

A huge area of focus for Goei is on enabling customer self-installs. Altice USA is currently spending \$800-900m in a year on customer care, and he's looking to cut that cost down. Self-install was not a major part of the company's technology roadmap before the pandemic, but he hopes to bring it to HFC customers in the near future. The process gets trickier when it comes to fiber-to-the-home self-installs, so Goei doesn't expect that to be widely available for some time.

Goei said the company expects to finish its FTTH project in 3-4 years. Delays in permitting and other complications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have set Altice USA back by at least a year. Still, he's certain Altice will have the entire **Verizon Fios** footprint covered by 2022.

"Today, we're in a ping pong match with Fios," Goei said, with folks jumping from one operator to the other based on promotions and poor experiences. He hopes that bringing in what he believes to be a superior product will turn the tide in Altice's favor.

Turning to **Altice Mobile**, Goei said the team is pivoting away from the volume strategy it had at launch. "We made a lot of noise," Goei said, referencing the company's initial plan to offer one unlimited plan for \$20/month to **Optimum** and **Suddenlink** customers. Unfortunately, Altice doesn't have the scale of a **Charter** or **Comcast** to rely on volume any longer.

Instead, it is focusing on reaching a breakeven point on its wireless product as quickly as possible. That may not be

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Countdown
to Christmas

Top Row L-R: Candace Cameron Bure and Warren Christie (If I Only Had Christmas), Jonathan Bennett, Robert Buckley, and Ana Ayora (The Christmas House), Rochelle Aytes and Mark Taylor (A Christmas Tree Grows in Colorado)
Middle Row L-R: Tamera Mowry-Housley and Michael Xavier (Christmas Comes Twice), Lacey Chabert and Will Kemp (Christmas Waltz), Holly Robinson Peete and Colin Lawrence (Christmas in Evergreen: Bells are Ringing)
Bottom Row L-R: Julie Gonzalo and Ronnie Rowe Jr. (Jingle Bell Bride), Mia Kirshner, Ben Savage, and Marilu Henner (Love, Lights, Hanukkah!), Debbie Matenopoulos, Cameron Mathison and Ken Wingard (Home & Family)

possible in 2021, but Goei feels confident it will be by the end of 2022.

On the political landscape, Goei isn't concerned that the change of administration will mean major changes for his company or other operators, at least not in the immediate future. He reflected on the choices made by the Obama administration when Joe Biden was serving as vice president, and said that the industry wasn't significantly impacted by its policies, even when ISPs were reclassified under Title II.

Goei also reminded the audience that it can often take years for anything meaningful to get done in Washington. "Time will tell," he quipped.

FUSE MEDIA BOUGHT

A Latino-led management group helmed by Fuse Media CEO Mike Roggero acquired a majority, controlling interest in Fuse Media. Roggero will lead the new management and ownership team of the company, which went through Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year. Roggero will be joined by Judi Lopez, head of content distribution, Fernando Romero, head of ad sales, and senior members Marc Leonard, Mark McIntire and Patrick Courtney, who oversee programming, marketing and digital, respectively. Fuse's new board includes pres of MARCA Tony Nieves and Emeli Colletta, the former head of marketing for Univision Interactive. "Ownership matters, especially in media, which must do a better job of realistically reflecting communities of color. Ownership means control and the best way to determine one's fate," said Roggero. "And today, we are taking our destinies, and those of our community, into our own hands." Members of Congress are applauding the deal. "In

a complex and diverse society, media plays an important role in amplifying authentic storytelling and Fuse Media does the work to ensure Latino representation in front of and behind the camera. I'd like to congratulate them on their transition from Latino-led to Latino-owned. Minority-owned businesses like Fuse Media are the heartbeat of our nation and the backbone of our economy," said Rep Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY).

AT&T UPPING DIRECTV, U-VERSE PRICES AGAIN

AT&T is raising prices by as much as \$9/month for its DirecTV and U-verse video customers. The increases will go into effect on Jan 17. "Due to increased programming costs, we're adjusting the price of our video packages," AT&T said in a notice on its website. "Periodically, TV network owners increase the fees they charge DirecTV for the right to broadcast their movies, shows, and sporting events." Customers will also begin seeing a Federal Cost Recovery Fee on their monthly bills, starting in January. The fee used to be charged once a year. "It covers regulatory fee expenses that DirecTV pays to the Federal Communications Commission. Plus, the fee may include outstanding regulatory costs incurred in prior years that are not yet fully recovered," AT&T said. "The fee isn't a tax or surcharge that the government requires DirecTV to collect if you have a DirecTV account." On the flip side, DirecTV is lowering the price of certain a la carte premium programming services. The monthly cost of Starz, Cinemax and Showtime will decrease by \$3 each. It will no longer offer premium and Sports Pack programming bundle discounts, so customers on those packages will also see price adjustments in January.

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T-MOBILE LOOKS TO BROADBAND

T-Mobile has been busy piloting home internet on its LTE network, and is preparing to launch 5G home internet across the country. *Matt Staneff*, evp and CMO, said the company is very excited about the potential that broadband brings. “That’s not a today opportunity, we’re still in the pilot phase as we’re getting going, it’s going to follow the network buildout,” he said during an investor conference Thursday. He pointed to the value proposition for customers who can only get DSL today, noting T-Mobile can bring 100Mbps speeds at a price point of \$50, including the hardware. “It practically sells itself,” he said. “It’s a very attractive business for us. There’s no additional cost to turn it on, so this is a highly incremental business to us when you look at what we can do.” Staneff also described the newly announced live TV offering TVision as an “enabling product” to move T-Mobile’s home internet business forward and to accelerate growth.

FCC DENIES ACA CONNECTS REVIEW

The **FCC** has denied **ACA Connects**’ application for review of the final cost catalog for lump sum payments to be paid to earth station operators affected by the C-band transition. **ACA Connects** sought the review after the Commission’s **Wireless Telecommunications Bureau** published the catalog without including the costs of integrated receiver/decoders. **ACA Connects** also argued that the Bureau’s determination process was arbitrary and violated notice-and-comment requirements. “ACA has failed to provide any evidence that the Commission’s approach for providing such reimbursement—as fleshed out by the Bureau in the challenged Final Cost Catalog Public Notice—will not result in the payment of these reasonable costs, or that this approach does not function as an integral part of the overall process that the Commission designed to ensure a smooth transition that would make this valuable spectrum resource available to the public as quickly as possible,” the Commission said in a Thursday memorandum opinion and order.

BUZZFEED, VERIZON MEDIA STRIKE DEAL

BuzzFeed plans to acquire **HuffPost** as a part of an all-stock deal with **Verizon Media**. Verizon Media bought HuffPost as part of a deal with **AOL** in 2015, and will now have a minority stake in BuzzFeed. It’s a bit of a full circle moment, as BuzzFeed CEO *Jonah Peretti* co-founded HuffPo in 2005.

TOP 10 SVOD PROGRAMS

“Schitt’s Creek” on **Netflix** is back in the No 1 spot of **Nielsen’s** Top 10 streaming program, taking the top of the list three out of the last four weeks. For the week of Oct 19-25, Netflix’s “The Queen’s Gambit” entered the list for the first time at No 10, with over 550mln minutes streamed in just seven episodes. **Amazon’s** “Borat” sequel joined the fray at No 8, with 570mln minutes streamed.

‘WONDER WOMAN’ TO DEBUT THEATERS, HBO MAX

“Wonder Woman 1984” will open both in theaters and on **HBO Max** on Christmas Day. The film will have limited theatrical release in the US and wider release internationally, and will

come at no extra cost to HBO Max subscribers. The move comes after a lackluster box office performance from “Tenet,” and **Disney’s** decision to have “Mulan” skip theaters. Back in July, **AMC Entertainment** and **Universal** had reached a deal that ended a feud and allowed the studio’s films to premiere on PVDOD within three weeks of their theatrical debut. While **Warner Bros.** does not have the same deal, AMC Entertainment CEO *Adam Aron* acknowledged the unusual situation and said the company would still screen the film. “Given that atypical circumstances call for atypical economic relationships between studios and theatres, and atypical windows and releasing strategies,” Aron said, “AMC is fully onboard for Warner Brothers’ announcement.”

VERIZON OFFERING BUSINESS 5G TRADE-INS

Apple and **Verizon** are teaming to make it easier for business partners to transition to 5G devices. The program, called Fleet Swap, will allow enterprise customers to trade in their entire fleet of smartphones to the 5G-enabled iPhone 12 with no upfront cost.

LATIN GRAMMYS

Univision and The Latin Recording Academy announced the official lineup of sponsors for the 21st annual Latin Grammy Awards. *Bulova*, *Ford*, *Google Pixel 5*, *McDonald’s* and *Walmart* are joined by first-time partner *Frontera Wines* and digital sponsor *U.S. Army*. The awards will air on Univision Thursday at 8pm.

DOING GOOD

Ovation TV released a new series of PSAs on its channels meant to bring attention to the arts industry’s current financial crisis. The PSAs are part of the company’s \$1mln investment during 2020 to push Congress to prioritize the struggling arts sector in a second stimulus package due to COVID-19.

DISTRIBUTION

Crown Media Family Networks’ SVOD service **Hallmark Movies Now** launched on **YouTube TV**. It costs \$5.99/month after a seven-day free trial. – **Pac-12 Networks’** new streaming channel **Pac-12 Insider** launched on **The Roku Channel**, making it the fifth partner. – OTT channel **Whistle TV** is coming to **Roku** in partnership with **Cinedigm**. The sports lifestyle and entertainment AVOD designs programming for the A14-25 range.

PROGRAMMING

TLC is launching “90 Day Fiance: The Podcast” on Dec 1. Each episode will have exclusive content and interviews from the cast, alongside special guests. – **Nickelodeon** renewed the syndication rights for “Friends” for its Nick at Night programming block. The agreement was part of a larger **ViacomCBS/Warner Bros. Television** deal that also included the off-network cable premiere rights to “Young Sheldon.”

PEOPLE

After more than 20 years at **Discovery, Inc.**, PR maven *Catherine Frymark* is trading sharks and 90-day fiancés for Barbie and Hot Wheels. She starts as evp, corporate communications at **Mattel** next month, reporting to CEO *Ynon Kreiz*. – **Cox Media Group** named *J.P. Hannan* as evp & CFO. He comes over from **AutoWeb**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

HGTV BRINGS HOLIDAY CHEER

The holiday season looks a little different this year, but **HGTV** is hoping to give folks who can't see friends and family a festive escape. "We wanted to off our viewers as many changes to escape the stresses of the world as possible, so we decided to launch Festive Fridays, jam-packed with light-hearted, inventive and celebratory holiday programs," HGTV group svp, programming and development *Loren Ruch* told **CFX**. "We think it will be the perfect solution to settling in for the night and weekend with a dose of holiday cheer." The network's slate of programming kicks off Friday at 9pm with two-hour special "Holiday Crafters Gone Wild." Hosted by TV personality *Jay Manuel*, the competition series sees crafting kings and queens battling to create the most over-the-top Christmas decor. "I can honestly say that if this show doesn't get you into the holiday spirit, you are a scrooge," Ruch said. Seeing the set for the first time brought back a lot of the nostalgia Ruch craves during the winter months, and the talented contestants and Manuel are the ones that bring the magic. "Watching Jay enter set for the first time from an underground glass elevator masked as a snow globe gave almost everyone involved in this production a childlike sense of holiday joy," Ruch said. HGTV's run of programming will end on Dec 25 at 9pm with "Surprising Santa Claus (wt)." The special will see "Good Morning America" contributor *Lara Spencer* and a team of designers, contractors and volunteers give two surprise home renovations and a town square makeover to residents of Santa Claus, Indiana. Ruch hopes that when that final program airs, viewers are able to walk away with a little less stress and some wonderful ideas for projects and makeovers they could also do at home. "To me, the biggest joy would be to hear friends and family say that HGTV brought them a sense of joy that they haven't felt for a while," Ruch said. – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

"Lockdown," streaming on **YouTube Originals** for Kids & Family channel. It's not difficult to see why this series, shot entirely on mobile phones and webcams, has garnered awards for youth programming. Since it occurs during the pandemic, and one of its goals is to encourage young people to stay home, action occurs using simulations of Zoom calls, messaging and mobile video apps. It's not an easy assignment for the mostly teen cast of "Lockdown" to create art on a small screen, but they do it well. And plots include ripped-from-the-headlines issues, including #BlackLivesMatter and the LGBTQ+ experience. – "Nova: Saving Notre Dame," 9pm ET, Wednesday, **PBS**. We know Notre Dame as a massive cathedral that nearly perished in an April 2019 fire. Fortunately, "Nova" gives us much more context. It begins with a fabulous 3-D graphic of the 850-year-old gothic wonder. As the 3D shell is filled in, we get statistics: it can hold 9,000 worshippers, its 100-foot walls contain 32,000 square feet of stained glass, the wooden roof weighs 550 tons. And then there are the 28 flying buttresses. Then we're told its architects and builders essentially learned on the job. We also learn Victor Hugo's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1831) spurred a much-needed renovation. After some excellent footage of the fire, the show explores the restoration. It's fascinating. – *Seth Arenstein*

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|---------------------|-------|-------|
| P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* | | |
| (11/09/20-11/15/20) | | |
| MON-SUN | MC | MC |
| | US | US AA |
| | AA% | (000) |
| FNC | 1.091 | 3,359 |
| CNN | 0.755 | 2,326 |
| MSNBC | 0.720 | 2,219 |
| ESPN | 0.642 | 1,976 |
| HALL | 0.491 | 1,512 |
| HGTV | 0.339 | 1,043 |
| HIST | 0.303 | 934 |
| FOOD | 0.290 | 893 |
| TLC | 0.279 | 859 |
| TBSC | 0.271 | 835 |
| DISC | 0.239 | 737 |
| USA | 0.238 | 732 |
| HMM | 0.227 | 699 |
| FRFM | 0.227 | 699 |
| INSP | 0.211 | 649 |
| LIFE | 0.210 | 645 |
| ID | 0.209 | 644 |
| TVLAND | 0.178 | 548 |
| AMC | 0.168 | 516 |
| TNT | 0.164 | 506 |
| BRAVO | 0.163 | 502 |
| ADSM | 0.159 | 491 |
| A&E | 0.159 | 489 |
| NFL | 0.140 | 433 |
| WETV | 0.138 | 424 |
| FX | 0.132 | 407 |
| NWSMX | 0.131 | 403 |
| COM | 0.123 | 378 |
| GSN | 0.119 | 368 |
| NATGEO | 0.117 | 360 |
| APL | 0.110 | 339 |
| SYFY | 0.110 | 339 |
| E! | 0.109 | 336 |
| TRAVEL | 0.105 | 324 |
| BET | 0.105 | 322 |
| NAN | 0.103 | 318 |
| PARA | 0.102 | 315 |
| MTV | 0.092 | 284 |
| HBO | 0.089 | 273 |
| CRN | 0.088 | 271 |
| DSJR | 0.087 | 267 |

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



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