

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Meteoric Rise: Disney DTC Numbers Continue to Impress

There's been a lot of hype around how **Disney+** beat its 2024 guidance in a year, but turns out all three of **Disney's** DTC platforms are pacing ahead of schedule. During an investor day on Thursday, Disney reported 86.8mln subs for Disney+ (30% of which come from Hotstar in India), 38.8mln **Hulu** subs and 11.5mln **ESPN+** subs.

"Due to this exceptional performance out of the gate, our aspirations have grown since we last met," said *Rebecca Campbell*, chmn, international operations and DTC. "Our performance against those goals has been spectacular." Disney now has 137mln subs across its DTC portfolio as of Dec 2. Disney+ last reported 73.7mln subs as of October 3. Disney+ launched in Latin America recently, but Campbell noted that the streamer has yet to reach Hong Kong, Eastern Europe and South Korea, and will in 2021.

The company is also ramping up original content, particularly when it comes to Disney+. The streamer's originals are going to have a special logo, and there's going to be a lot of them. Disney announced that "over the next few years" it will launch 10 new original Marvel series, 10 new original Star Wars series, 15 live-action, animation and Pixar series and 15 live action, Disney Animation, and Pixar features. Some of those features were originally slated for theatrical release. Additionally, the film "Raya and the Last Dragon" is coming to Disney+ Premier Access the same day as theaters in March 2021.

And for a lot of folks, it's going to get even easier to access Disney+. Disney and **Comcast** struck a deal that will fully integrate the Disney+ and ESPN+ experience on X1 and Flex, the same way Hulu already is. Disney+ and ESPN+ will launch on the X1 and Flex platforms in 1Q21. Existing subs will be able to login through the X1 and Flex platforms, while new customers will have a variety of ways to sign-up. "We've built early momentum by meeting customers wherever they are," said *Michael Paull*, the pres of ESPN+ and Disney+.

On the Hulu side, don't expect the SVOD to roll out internationally. Instead, Disney is launching the general entertainment service Star. It's launching in many markets Feb 23, 2021 as an integration to Disney+. To reflect that, the Disney+ price point is jumping to €8.99. In Latin America, Star will exist as the standalone offering Star+, driven largely by the strength of the sports offerings in the territory, with content coming from ESPN.

But back in the US, Hulu's subscribers have rapidly accelerated. "It's that unprecedented level of choice and flexibility that differentiates Hulu," said Campbell. The streamer's live offering surpassed 4mln subs, making it the No 1 digital MVPD and a top five Pay TV provider overall. The SVOD itself will launch more exclusive original films, with more news coming in the upcoming months. Over at ESPN+, Paull reported that the streamer has already passed the midpoint of the 2024 subscriber guidance for ESPN+, and delivered over 10K live sports events despite the coronavirus. And in a further push to integrate the DTC products, beginning next year ESPN+ will be directly available through Hulu.

WE'RE BACK IN PRODUCTION AND CREATING MORE ORIGINAL CONTENT



ACROSS:

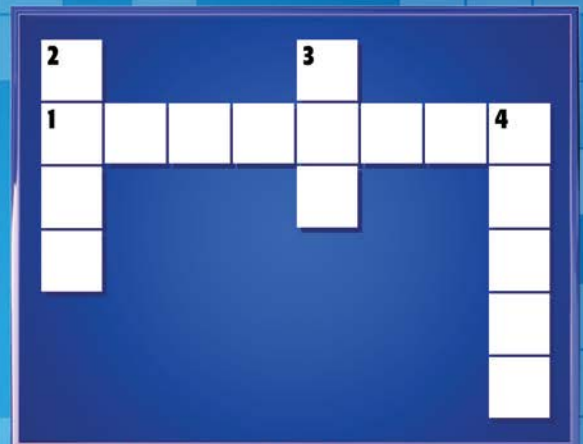
1. 260 NEW _____

DOWN:

2. PEOPLE PUZZLER EMMY® WINNING HOST _____ REMINI

3. GAME SHOW NETWORK IS A _____ 20 NETWORK*

4. MORE EPISODES OF YOUR FAVORITE _____



*TOTAL DAY and PRIME: NPOWER, Ratings Analysis Time Period Report, Live + SD, 12/30/19 - 11/29/20, Viewing Source - Ad Supported Cable Orig - All, M-SU 6A-6A, P2+, CVG RTG%; All, M-SU 8P-11P, P2+, CVG RTG%

SEC GAMES MOVE TO ESPN/ABC

A year ago, *Sports Business Journal's* John Ourand broke the news that **CBS** wouldn't renew its deal with the SEC when its contract ends after the 2023 season, identifying ESPN/ABC as the likely new rightsholder. Thursday, the scoop became a reality with ESPN and the conference announcing a 10-year agreement that starts with the 2024-2025 season. SBJ quotes unnamed sources as putting the deal in the low \$300m range annually—or more than 6 times CBS' current annual fee. The agreement makes ESPN and ABC home to every SEC football and men's basketball game, including the SEC Football Championship that will air on ABC. Starting next season, **ESPN+** will have the right to stream one non-conference football game and two non-conference men's basketball games per SEC school each season. In total, ESPN+ will carry up to 14 non-conference football games and up to 20 non-conference men's basketball games annually. The deal will be co-terminus with the separate, existing 20-year agreement between ESPN and the SEC that also runs through the 2033-34 season.

O'RIELLY SIGNS OFF

With talk that Republicans may try to keep the **FCC** deadlocked at 2-2, one Republican leaving the agency declined to speculate on whether that could be a good thing. "That's for the Congress to decide and the president to make nominations. I have to defer to them," *Mike O'Rielly* said at a press conference Thursday after his last open meeting as a commissioner. "I've been at the Commission at different points when we've had different makeups, and work can still be done. Important things can still be done, no matter what the formulation of

the Commission is." Asked whether the agency is becoming too political, the Republican said he's been blamed for some of that, but disagreed with the assessment. He does think the job has changed over the seven years since he joined, pointing a finger at social media. "My Twitter account is pretty much just straight up what I think about Commission issues or what's happening as it relates to the Commission," O'Rielly said. "I don't tell you what I had for breakfast or all the other things. I think that's changed—become more of a personality. I haven't worried about the number of likes... I've just tried to use it as a medium to share information instead of trying to build a following for whatever purpose." He predicts all of his colleagues will be more aggressive now on social media and it may influence how the FCC operates—though he added the social media rancor may ebb and flow (we're still on the lookout for a Twitter account for his replacement, *Nathan Simington*). Speaking of social media, we can't bid adieu to the commissioner without touching on the subject that arguably resulted in *Trump* withdrawing his re-nomination to the agency. O'Rielly said it would be premature to say much on Section 230 until he sees what, if anything, is presented by the FCC. But he added, "I don't think my mind has changed. I'm skeptical of the Commission's authority, and I'm worried and I want to know the implications for decisions as they reflect on the First Amendment. A lot of things people are talking about today that they want to see changed under 230 are protected by the First Amendment." O'Rielly didn't offer any details on what may be next, though he made it clear after 27 years in public service he is ready to explore the private sector.

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MEDIACOM SUES WEST DES MOINES

Mediacom filed a lawsuit against the City of West Des Moines Thursday, alleging that it improperly used taxpayer-backed financing bonds intended to remedy urban blight and poverty to build a \$50mln city-wide conduit network for the exclusive use of **Google Fiber**. The city responded with the following statement: “Reducing barriers to competition is not always supported by existing industry. Reliable and affordable internet access was identified in our Citizen Survey as the number one improvement needed in our neighborhoods, and that’s especially true today with so many working and learning from home. Local government can and should play a role in addressing this need for our residents.” Mediacom’s complaint alleges the City Council secretly negotiated a deal with Google Fiber and that the city falsely claimed the network would be open and accessible to all ISPs in the city. Other allegations in the suit include that Google’s primary statewide lobbyist was a member of the Council when the agreement was approved and that the Council failed to solicit competitive bids for parts of the construction process that Google Fiber is performing. “We aren’t asking for any special treatment, just a fair and balanced regulatory environment that allows us to expand our network and compete for the business of West Des Moines consumers,” said *Tom Larsen*, Mediacom svp, govt and public relations.

AMPHENOL BUYING SENSOR COMPANY

Amphenol will acquire **MTS**, a supplier of advanced test systems, motion simulators and precision sensors, for approx \$1.7bln, including the assumption of outstanding debt and liabilities. The deal, expected to close by the middle of 2021, allows Amphenol to continue expanding its sensor-based business. MTS’ other business unit is test and simulation, which Amphenol plans to undertake a strategic review of. **Center-view Partners** was the financial adviser to **Amphenol**, while **JP Morgan Securities** and **Evercore** advised MTS.

AT&T SELLING CRUNCHYROLL

AT&T is selling its anime **Crunchyroll** business to **Funimation Global Group**, a jv between **Sony** Pictures Entertainment and Sony Music Entertainment (Japan). The DTC service has more than 3mln SVOD subs and serves 90mln registered users. The \$1.175bln cash deal is subject to customary closing conditions.

BEST ISPS FOR GAMING

Once again, it was smaller providers who rose to the top in *PC Mag*’s annual list of best ISPs for gaming. **Cedar Falls Utilities** took the No 1 spot with a Gaming Quality Index of 9.1. The index is jitter plus latency, thus a lower number is better. It was followed closely by **Empire Access** (9.2), **Hotwire Communications** (11.4), **MetroNet** (11.8) and **FairlawnGig** (11.9). **Google Fiber** took sixth place at 14.1. **Verizon Fios** once again topped *PC Mag*’s list of top major ISPs for gaming, notching a score of 19.7. That makes it number 12 overall, with the publication concluding that “real gamers should stick with the localized, hyper-responsive broadband providers whenever possible.” **Altice USA**’s Optimum took second among major ISPs with a score of 25.1, followed by **Cox** (28) **Comcast** (28.1) and **RCN** (31). Check out the full

article for methodology and a breakout of the best ISPs by region.

NBCU ONE PLATFORM EXPANDS TO LOCAL

NBCUniversal is expanding its available digital inventory, addressable products and advanced targeting by scaling its NBC Spot On across One Platform, bringing the capabilities to local marketers. NBC Spot On was launched in February and was designed to give local, regional CTV and OTT access to brand-safe video inventory from NBCU’s own portfolio as well as certain video partners. Now the opportunities are open across Peacock, YouTube and Apple News to local marketers.

ON THE CIRCUIT

The 2021 **NAB** Show is reporting strong early exhibit sales, with more than 540 companies contracted to exhibit. The show is set to take place Oct 9-13 in person in Las Vegas.

PROGRAMMING

CNN Films and **BBC** jointly commissioned a feature doc film following the global journey to COVID-19 vaccines. “Race for the Vaccine” in the US on CNN and “Vaccine: The Inside Story” on BBC Two in the UK will debut spring 2021. – A new season of “Monster Garage” will debut on **discovery+** on Jan 4. – **HBO** renewed drama series “Industry” for Season 2. The first season debuted Nov 9. – **WE tv** acquired two original series from SVOD **Zeus Network**. “The Real Black Chyna” and “Joseline’s Cabaret” will premiere in 2021 on linear TV for the first time on Jan 7 at 10pm and later in 2021, respectively. – Holiday series “12 Dates of Christmas” premieres on **HBO Max** Dec 17. – **Peacock** ordered 10 more eps of late-night series “The Amber Ruffin Show,” with new episodes dropping every Friday beginning Jan 8. – A new season of “Master Distiller” hits **Discovery** on Dec 29 at 9pm. – **NBC Sports** announced its 2021 Nascar telecast schedule, kicking off June 19-20 and culminating with the Championship at Phoenix Raceway on Nov 6-7. – **Charter** launched its **Spectrum News 1** to all its video and internet customers across the NC mountain region, including Asheville, Marion, Tryon and Burnsville. Spectrum News 1 is now available to customers across the state.

UP’S CHRISTMAS TOGETHER ANTHEM

UPTv turned to *Diana Dixon* (**DixonCo**) and spoken word artist *IN-Q* to help with its new spot, “Christmas Together Anthem,” which encourages people to be their best selves. “UPTv wanted people to know that the true hope in this Christmas was bigger than just being physically together. The spirit of this special holiday is in belief in each other and uplifting one another in tough times,” the net said. The ad declares, “The biggest gift we have to give this season is our love.”

PEOPLE

ViacomCBS named *Raffaele Anecchino* pres/CEO, ViacomCBS Networks International. He’s been with the company for 23 years, most recently as pres of ViacomCBS Networks EMEA. Anecchino is succeeding *David Lynn*, who is stepping down and will depart the company following a transition period.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Lifetime Welcomes All This Holiday Season

'Tis the season! And though many things look different this year, folks can still count on old and new holiday films celebrating the most wonderful time of the year. **Lifetime** has already kicked off its holiday programming slate and will premiere original "The Christmas Setup" Saturday at 8pm ET. The film is Lifetime's first Christmas movie with a LGBTQ holiday romance as its lead storyline, and Lifetime senior director, movies *Sapna Vyas* said the net is making a conscious effort to diversify its plots to include people from all walks of life. "We feel this film is incredibly special and important, and the opportunity to tell stories that reflect more of our culture goes a long way to normalizing what is already normal," Vyas told **CFX**. "Being inclusive and reflective of all people, all families, all traditions is how we embrace storytelling throughout, so providing a variety of films in order to do that has been something we are truly mindful of when working with our writers and producers." The film was the last of the net's "It's a Wonderful Lifetime" movie slate to go into production, going into prep in mid-August and beginning shooting by mid-September. That led to a number of new safety protocols and measures to protect the cast and crew, but Lifetime struck gold with its lead actors *Ben Lewis* and *Blake Lee*. The pair are married and were able to quarantine together and comfortably be in close contact with each other. "But their personal connection created a unique directing challenge—working with them to dial back their own familiarity and comfortability in order to play Hugo and Patrick who are just getting to know each other," Vyas said. "Ben and Blake have been in love for years, while their characters are just experiencing their first romantic spark—with all the giddy, sometimes awkward, excitement and anticipation that comes with that." – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

"Trafficked with Marian van Zeller: Steroids," 9pm, Wednesday, **Nat Geo**. It's not difficult to see why this new series about all sorts of things illegal, and mostly underground—including drugs, prostitution and gun running—already is renewed for a sophomore season. The stories are compelling, but other than a slightly histrionic sound track, the hype that viewers often associate with exposé-type documentaries is, thankfully, missing. Certainly, there's little hype from host *Marian van Zeller*. She's as badass a journalist as any. That comes with telling stories about the underworld. One of her first assignments as a journalist was covering war in Iraq. Instead of taking the odd ride out to the front and reporting mostly from her hotel, van Zeller moved to Syria to get close to the action. Small and thin, van Zeller doesn't look or sound the part. Inside her, though, is a thirst for storytelling that refuses to acknowledge danger. Importantly, she never takes no for answer. In next week's "Trafficked," she exposes the sub-culture of anabolic steroid users, interviewing body builders, but also housewives who want to look better, fast. Her conduit is *Dr. Tony Huge*, a former lawyer and major influencer. While Huge acknowledge that his activities are illegal, she barely passes judgement. She's a journalist telling stories. We're (pun intended) hooked. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(11/30/20-12/06/20)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.879	2,706
ESPN	0.831	2,558
MSNBC	0.731	2,251
CNN	0.622	1,915
HALL	0.505	1,556
FRFM	0.370	1,139
HGTV	0.335	1,030
DISC	0.310	953
HIST	0.309	952
TBSC	0.279	859
HMM	0.279	859
FOOD	0.269	827
TLC	0.263	811
USA	0.253	779
TNT	0.225	692
INSP	0.215	662
ID	0.213	655
LIFE	0.207	637
AMC	0.196	604
A&E	0.184	568
BRAVO	0.182	560
TVLAND	0.172	531
ADSM	0.156	480
WETV	0.142	437
FX	0.136	420
NAN	0.130	402
BET	0.118	364
GSN	0.116	358
APL	0.114	352
NWSMX	0.114	350
TRAVEL	0.114	350
COM	0.108	332
NICK	0.105	323
NATGEO	0.104	320
TUDN	0.097	299
MTV	0.096	295
SYFY	0.095	292
NFL	0.091	279
OXY	0.090	278
CRN	0.090	277
PARA	0.088	270

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



RECOGNIZING OUTSTANDING NICHE CONTENT ON EVERY PLATFORM

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 Live Virtual Event
 Awards Local Late Night Game Show
 News Children's Animated
 PSA Documentary
 Family-Friendly Home Instructional Competition
 Horror/Suspense
 LGBTQ+ Focused Religious
 Travel Educational Reality Limited Series