

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

One Space: Philo, Pluto Keep Viewers in TV Ecosystem

More streamers are popping up everyday, and while cord-cutting is continuing to accelerate, that doesn't mean everyone can't co-exist. At least to some extent. Folks at **Philo** and **Pluto TV** are hoping to keep more consumers engaged in the world of television overall.

"The majority of sign-ups to Philo aren't people who are switching from traditional TV," Philo CEO *Andrew McCollum* said at a **CES** panel Tuesday. "Part of our big thesis and our approach to the market is that we want to not just staunch the losses and slow the decline of television, but we want to grow the market and provide more options for people who weren't already getting television or cut the cord long ago because it wasn't working for them."

Pluto TV svp, programming *Scott Reich* said it is a huge priority from **ViacomCBS's** C-suite all the way down to find new ways for the AVOD to act as a partner to the programmer's linear networks. "We're constantly figuring out how we complement and work with our linear brothers and sisters as well as the subscription services," Reich said.

That includes everything from windowing opportunities to incorporating stunts that promote the newest season of "Yellowstone." Pluto TV launched a **Showtime** Selects channel in December with a sampling of content from the premium network that ViacomCBS hopes will help upsell into Showtime subscriptions.

And though ViacomCBS is focusing much of its energy on the transformation of **CBS All Access** into **Paramount+**, Reich said growing Pluto TV is still very much top of mind. "It's about creating a complementary ecosystem within all of it, and I think you're going to see us evolve over time," he said. "Pluto is the priority on the free service side of things, Paramount+ and Showtime are the priorities on the paid side."

Discovery+, the new SVOD on the scene, could be seen as a threat to Philo due to the similarities in the genre of content offered on each service. In order to maintain its \$20/month price, Philo focuses on carrying lifestyle and entertainment networks, including **Discovery Network**. But McCollum isn't too concerned about Philo users jumping ship. And it's worth noting Discovery is an investor in Philo.

"A lot of times, these services are bringing new original content as well as deeper access to library content that wasn't available before. In that respect, it could be a great complement to what you're getting through Philo," McCollum said. "I do wonder what the limit is where people feel like it's really overwhelming to have so many of these different SVOD services where you have different log-in credentials, different billing details, different user interfaces, different content available in each of them... people complain to us when they wish they didn't have to use two different apps to watch everything they want to watch."

Reich is more optimistic about a consumer's perseverance and desire to try new things, and said he thinks there's still room for services of all types and price points.

"There's been a lot of talk and conversation around how many SVODs can the consumer support and how many will they support. I think you're going to see more experimentation from the consumer side," Reich said. "Ultimately, they're the winners in all of this... ultimately, the consumer will decide what the new bundle is going to be based on your budget, your habits and what's important to you."

CURIOSITYSTREAM STANDS ALONE

We've seen plenty of streamers as part of larger companies—**discovery+**, **Peacock**, **CBS All Access** and so on. But **CuriosityStream** CEO *Clint Stinchcomb* thinks there's an advantage to his nonfiction SVOD being a standalone company. "If you look at the history of SVOD... it's perilous to be a niche or perilous to be part of a larger company. Look at what happened to Seeso

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[NBCU]. Look at what happened to FilmStruck [WarnerMedia]. Look at what happened to DramaFever [Warner Bros],” he said at a **Needham** investor conference Tuesday. “Those were SVOD services people thought had a pretty good shot and had some degree of success. For a variety of reasons, including the fact they were part of a bigger company, they’re gone. They’re toast. We don’t have any of that intramural nonsense to worry about.” In October, CuriosityStream and **Software Acquisition Group** closed their business combination and CuriosityStream began trading on the NASDAQ under the “CURI” symbol. With so much coming at them, many financial analysts haven’t had a chance yet to look at the service, Stinchcomb said. “What my shareholders have told me is that we just need to continue to share our story,” he said, encouraging Wall Street to check it out—and, notably, it’ll premiere a series this year on the history of Wall Street.

FRONTIER REFUTES GRAY COMPLAINT

Frontier told the **FCC** that it should deny a retransmission consent good faith complaint that **Gray TV** filed against it last month. “The simple fact is that Frontier and Gray disagree over the value of Gray’s stations. After 25 days of negotiation and three offers put forth by Frontier, any of which Gray could have accepted, Gray now cries foul because Frontier did not agree with the financial terms that Gray wanted to force on Frontier and its customers,” Frontier said in its response. Gray filed its complaint after the two couldn’t reach a renewal for stations in Sarasota, FL; Charleston, SC; and Myrtle Beach, SC, by a Dec 18 deadline. Gray alleges Frontier failed to negotiate in good faith and didn’t meet an obligation to notify customers “as soon as possible” that the stations would be removed. Frontier said it notified subscribers in the “most expedient methods available,” including a channel slate on the vacant channels, a set-top box message, email, social media and through an updated channel guide on Frontier’s website.

AT&T TV NOW NO MORE

Can’t figure out the difference between **AT&T**’s OTT offerings **AT&T TV** and **AT&T TV NOW**? Now you won’t have to, with AT&T merging the two into one experience. *TV Answerman* was the first to notice

that AT&T TV Now (previously DirecTV Now) is no longer available to new customers. AT&T TV has eliminated its two-year contract requirement and adjusted prices on its main packages. For example, AT&T TV’s 65-channel entertainment plan is now \$69.99/month with no contract vs \$59.99/month for the first year and \$93/month in year two. AT&T noted the Entertainment package on AT&T TV has 20 more channels (such as **Discovery**, **History** and **Lifetime**) than the old entry level package on AT&T TV NOW. AT&T will continue to support AT&T TV NOW for existing customers.

FUBO BETS ON VICTORY

Virtual MVPD **fuboTV** is further leaning in to its sports roots, announcing its intent to acquire sports betting and interactive gaming company **Victory**. It expects to launch a sportsbook before year-end, offering a frictionless betting experience for fubo customers. This follows last month’s acquisition of **Balto Sports**, which fubo plans to use to launch a free-to-play gaming experience this summer to customers and non-customers. No financials were released for the Victory deal, which is expected to close in 1Q21. Victory founder *Sam Rattner* will join fuboTV’s gaming division as COO. His co-CEO at Victory, *Scott Butera*, will serve as president of the fubo division.

CES NOTEBOOK

Verizon kicked off **CES** Monday with a keynote centered on the expansion in the availability of its 5G network. “It’s more than just another tech innovation,” CEO *Hans Vestberg* said during the address. “It’s a platform that makes other innovations possible.” Verizon has teamed up with the **NFL** to bring its 5G Ultra Wideband network to 28 football stadiums by the end of the year with expanded coverage in select stadiums, and the company is working to bring it to entertainment venues in hopes of supporting better livestream concerts. It is also expanding its relationship with the **Smithsonian**, and will provide high fidelity scanning of collections and artifacts while also assisting with the creation of new virtual experiences. Verizon and the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** launched one such experience Monday. Called “The Met Unframed,” the virtual art and gaming experience features more than a dozen galleries and nearly 50 works of art. Additionally, **Skyward**,

Mark Your Calendars!

Cablefax Award Submission Deadlines:

The FAXIES Awards	Entry Deadline: March 19 Final Deadline: March 26
Cablefax 100 Nominations	April 9
Top Ops Nominations	April 23
The Diversity List Nominations	July 16
Most Powerful Women Nominations	September 10
Program Awards	Entry Deadline: Nov. 19 Final Deadline: Dec. 3



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a Verizon company, is teaming up with **UPS** Flight Forward in hopes that the collaboration will see retail products delivered via drones connected to Verizon's 4G LTE network. The pair are testing the 5G network for eventual delivery integration. – **Nielsen** is launching a Theatrical Video On-Demand measurement service meant to capture viewing of movie releases that are available directly to consumers for rent or purchase on demand through streaming and MVPD platforms. The service will also offer demographic and behavioral information that goes beyond typical box office metrics to hopefully inform decisions tied to licensing and promotion.

CNN TAKES THE PRIZE

Fox News may have been the big winner in 2020 ratings, but so far 2021 is going to **CNN**. The first full week of January saw CNN take the #1 spot in prime and total day, with 4.176 million viewers and 2.772 million, respectively, per **Nielsen**. **MSNBC** followed (3.782 million prime/2.286 million total day), with Fox News taking third (3.188 million prime/1.68 million total day). Fox News may not have claimed the crown, but it was still its highest-rated week since the November 2020 election. Finishing the week in 4th and 5th in both dayparts, respectively, were **HGTV** and **TNT**. Notable: **Newsmax** ranked 24th in prime with 444K viewers.

FOOTBALL DELIVERS

It seems like green slime is just what the **NFL** needed. Sunday's Bears-Saints game on **CBS** and **Nickelodeon** delivered more viewers than any CBS Sunday Wild Card game in seven years, averaging 30.653 million viewers. The telecast was Nick's most-watched program among total viewers in nearly four years, delivering 2.051 million (+245% vs comparable window a year ago), and it notched more than 2 billion potential impressions on social media Sunday. – **ESPN's** MegaCast on Sunday for the Ravens-Titans game delivered 24.8 million viewers. It's 1.587 million viewers shy (-6%) of 2019's Wild Card game between Buffalo and Houston (only the second playoff game in 20 seasons for the Bills), but it's a 9% improvement over the 2018 Wild Card Game audience and a 12% gain over 2017's.

CHICAGO SATELLITE LAW VIOLATES FCC RULES

The **FCC** Media Bureau found that an ordinance by the city of Chicago restricting satellite dishes is prohibited by the agency's Over-the-Air Reception Devices Rule. The city had claimed that the ordinance solely expressed a placement preference for the purpose of maintaining "minimal aesthetic standards" by limiting the visibility of satellite dishes from adjacent streets. But the Bureau said it also imposes requirements regarding certification, screening and removal of satellite dish antennas. **DirectTV**, **DISH** and the **Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association** petitioned the FCC to address the Chicago ordinance.

NEW MONTHLY 2TB HIGH

OpenVault reports the percentage of subscribers using at least 2TB reached 2.16% in December—a 184% increase over December 2019 and new monthly high for 2TB users. The previous high was 1.32% in April. Average broadband usage remains much less than that, with OpenVault putting it at

483GB in North America for December.

CHARTER BY THE NUMBERS

A few interesting stats in a recent **Charter** blog post with EVP & CTO **Stephanie Mitchko-Beale**: Charter connected 2.3 million customers in the last 12 months; nearly 450,000 students, teachers and families have been connected through Charter's free internet offer (which remains available); approximately 700,000 customers were kept connected when COVID impacted their finances; and more than 80% of new customers are choosing self-installs, up from about 50% in 4Q19. "Over the last five years we invested \$40 billion in new technology and network upgrades, which have enabled us to offer gigabit connections across virtually our entire network," Mitchko-Beale said.

ROBOCALL BLOCKING

Charter launched Call Guard, a feature for Spectrum Voice and Spectrum Business customers that automatically blocks malicious robocalls and sends caller ID alerts for other suspicious telemarketing calls. It's being made available automatically to all customers. Customers can access Call Guard through their voice portal at Spectrum.net or Spectrumbusiness.net in order to personalize their experience.

MTV BOOKS RETURNS

MTV Entertainment Group has relaunched **MTV Books** in a move to expediate the book-to-TV/film pipeline. Publishing vet **Christian Trimmer** is heading the unit, a partnership with **Simon & Schuster**, and will report to MTV Entertainment content president/chief creative officer **Nina Diaz**.

PROGRAMMING

Lifetime's "Ripped from the Headlines" true crime movie slate will run every Saturday night from February 13-March 13 and includes titles such as "The Long Island Serial Killer: A Mother's Hunt for Justice" and "A House on Fire." – **Charter** is celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day with an on demand collection of movies highlighting African Americans in cinema, including **Chadwick Boseman** in "42" and "Marshall." The movies will be available in the Spectrum On Demand portal under the category "MLK Day." The portal also includes docs such as "John Lewis: Good Trouble."

PEOPLE

Jason Klarman was tapped as president of **Fox News Media's** SVOD service **Fox Nation**. He'll retain his role as evp, marketing for Fox News and continue to report to CEO **Suzanne Scott**. In October, Klarman launched Fox News Media's seventh platform, Fox News Books. – **Ezequiel Fonseca Zás**, most recently gm, streaming platforms and svp, mobile partnerships for **ViacomCBS International**, joins **NBCUniversal Telemundo** in the newly created role of svp, revenue strategy and distribution. **Malu Carmona-Botana** is joining the team from **A+E Networks** in the new position of vp, content monetization. – **INSP** elevated **Tara Brown** to senior director of media relations. She's been with the programmer for nine years, and she's funny. **Seriously**. She's the 2020 winner of comedian **Jeanne Robertson's** Comedy with Class Humor Contest and a 2019 resident at the Broadway Comedy Club in NYC.