

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Curation Crisis: A+E Exec Throws Some Shade at Mega Streamers

With an increasing number of streaming options available, linear networks have to figure out where they fall in the TV ecosystem. From **A+E Networks** programming president's point of view, the ultimate goal is the same—produce great content that viewers want to consume more than what's competing for their attention.

"There is sort of a curation crisis going on in our business right now," A+E programming chief *Rob Sharenow* said at Realscreen Summit Tuesday. "On one end, there are these really deep-pocketed, huge players who are spending enormous amounts of money to stock their shelves with as much content as humanly possible... I'm not saying it's indiscriminate. Obviously, it's not. But there is this, 'who can get more mega than mega and how much can we aggregate under our roof as fast as humanly possible.'"

On the other end, there are more traditional buyers taking a much more conservative approach—choosing content that will super serve existing viewers, he said. "A real benefit and one of the things that gets lost in this moment when there's such a rush to fill the gas tanks of all these content engines [is that] viewers want curation. They want editing," Sharenow said, quipping that he's never once thought the director's cut of a movie was better. "I'm a huge *Martin Scorsese* fan, but was there anyone on the planet who thought 'The Irishman' was too short?"

Sharenow's advice for linear networks is to stay focused on the loyalty of your brand. "I'm very happy with the brands we have because they're so defined. In a world of mega stores, it's nice to have these Tiffany brands that really have meaning and value and resonance," he said. "Keep building on that and broadening the spectrum of who can come into the **History** tent, who can come into the **Lifetime** tent, and who can come into the **A+E** tent, but do not throw away the tent. The tent is very important and valuable."

As for the impact of the pandemic on A+E programming, Sharenow said it didn't affect the lineup that much. That's partly because many seasons had already been banked, but also due to so much of the programming being unscripted. He's especially proud of shows such as History's "Proof Is Out There" and A+E's "I Survived a Crime," which were both conceived and produced during the pandemic.

"There's a scrappiness and DIY attitude toward most of the unscripted community that's just impossible when you're making 'Game of Thrones.' The Game of Thrones guys couldn't go out and make Game of Thrones. They just couldn't. It was physically impossible," he said. "I feel like nonscripted has really taken centerstage during this time."

### T-MOBILE TO BUY SHENTEL WIRELESS FOR \$1.95 BLN

**T-Mobile** and **Shentel** have finally agreed on the value of the latter's wireless assets, setting the final purchase price at \$1.95 billion. Shentel, **Sprint's** largest affiliate, served approximately 1.1 million mobile customers across certain parts of Maryland,

**PEOPLE PUZZLER**  
Hosted by Leah Remini

**GAME SHOW NETWORK**

**TOP 20 NETWORK**

**With 3 consecutive years of ratings growth!**

Source: NPOWER, Ratings Analysis Time Period Report, Live + SD, 12/26/16 - 12/31/17, 1/1/18-12/30/18, 12/31/19 - 12/29/2019 & 12/30/19 - 12/27/20, Viewing Source - Ad Supported Cable Orig - ALL, M-SU 7P-12A, P2+, - ALL, M-SU 6A-6A, P2+, - ALL, M-SU 8P-11P, P2+, CVG RTG %.

North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Pennsylvania as of June 30, 2020. T-Mobile first announced its intention to exercise its option to buy Shentel's wireless business in August for 90% of the defined entire business value, subject to price adjustments, but the pair have been at odds about what that figure should be. They've spent the time since evaluating the purchase price through a process with three independent valuation providers in accordance with Shentel's original affiliate agreement with Sprint. They gave the business a \$2.1 billion price tag, according to an 8-K filed by T-Mobile Tuesday. "With Shentel's wireless operations producing \$217MM in EBITDA in its last year of full results, the assets were valued at 9.7x EBITDA, in line with past affiliate transactions which ranged from 9x-13x," **New Street Research** said in a note. The pair expect to enter into a definitive asset purchase agreement during 1Q21 and still expect the transaction to close during 2Q21. Shentel, which is based in Edinburg, Virginia, has been a Sprint affiliate for more than two decades and served as Sprint's only wireless provider through the Mid-Atlantic region. At the time of T-Mobile exercising its option, the business was generating \$400 million in revenue and counted approximately 400 employees across its service area. Shentel also offers cable and wireline services. The provider's management will offer more details on the deal, its plans for the deal's proceeds and the company's financial outlook for 2021 during a conference call Wednesday morning. The company's stock skyrocketed at news of the deal, closing up 6.53%.

**COX MEDIA STATIONS DARK ON AT&T**

The latest, major retransmission consent impasse came in the early hours of Tuesday morning as **AT&T/DirectTV** lost 26 **Cox**

**Media Group** stations. This one's interesting in that CMG's president and CEO is *Dan York*—AT&T and DirecTV's former chief negotiator. It's not either company's first retrans rodeo, with Cox Media stations dark on **Suddenlink** for 20 days last month. And **DISH** and Cox Media had a months-long blackout last year. AT&T's most recent dust-up saw it without **TEGNA** stations for nearly three weeks in late 2020. Speaking of TEGNA, its stations are still dark on **Mediacom**. That blackout began at 5pm ET on Dec 31. With the Super Bowl looming this weekend, Mediacom has updated customers missing their local **CBS** affiliate to inform them of CBS' expanded, free streaming options for Super Bowl LV. The big question is will the Big Game bring enough pressure for any of these outstanding spats to be resolved before Sunday—or has streaming become an acceptable substitute? AT&T/DirecTV's blackout with CMG includes 5 CBS stations. Mediacom has lost 3 CBS stations owned by TEGNA, including in New Orleans. Stay tuned...

**FOX NEWS WINS WEEK, CNN TAKES MONTH**

**Fox News** was back on top of the primetime pyramid last week, taking first place among ad-supported cable nets with 2.622 million viewers compared to runner-up **MSNBC** 2.302 million. MSNBC did eek out first place in total day with 1.381 million viewers compared to Fox News' 1.323 million. **CNN** tumbled to third in both prime (1.814 million) and total day (1.287 million). The week's top non-news nets in prime were **HGTV** (1.316 million), **History** (1.041 million), **Discovery** (948,000) and **Hallmark** (937,000). Despite last week's third place finish, CNN ended January as the #1 cable new net in total day, primetime and dayside in total viewers and adults 25-54, with January ranking

# Mark Your Calendars!

## Cablefax Award Submission Deadlines:

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| <b>The FAXIES Awards</b>               | Entry Deadline: March 19<br>Final Deadline: March 26      |
| <b>Cablefax 100 Nominations</b>        | April 9   |
| <b>Top Ops Nominations</b>             | April 23  |
| <b>The Diversity List Nominations</b>  | July 16   |
| <b>Most Powerful Women Nominations</b> | September 10  |
| <b>Program Awards</b>                  | Entry Deadline: November 19<br>Final Deadline: December 3 |



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as CNN's most-watched month on record across total day and dayside. Fox News found itself in third-place in cable news for total day for P2+ the month, a place it hasn't been since April 2000. It similarly fell to third in prime for the first time since July 1999. Still, Fox News was the clear winner for 2020. With January now over and **Nielsen** ratings year running January 2020 to January 2021, Fox News can lay claim to its 19th consecutive year as the #1 cable news network in total day and primetime.

#### NTCA OUTLINES POSSIBLE RDOF PROBLEMS

Fixed wireless will face "difficult, if not insurmountable, challenges" to provide RDOF Gigabit services in very select circumstances," concludes a white paper submitted to the FCC from **NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association**. The paper also casts doubt on using mid-band spectrum to provide Gigabit-level service to customers in rural areas. "The only band with possibly enough spectrum would be the 5.8 GHz and proposed 6 GHz bands which are expected to have 1,525 MHz available. But even if these bands might offer enough capacity to deliver RDOF Gigabit-level services to a confined number of customers, they present other challenges," the paper said, pointing to the band's unlicensed status and thus no interference protections. As for using mmWave bands, NTCA argued that there are unique challenges to using mmW in rural areas—such as customers needing to be within 500 feet of the specific serving tower/antenna and all customers needing to have clear line-of-sight to the tower. The paper was authored by engineer and **VantagePoint** CEO *Larry Thompson*.

#### NETFLIX LEADS NAACP NOMINATIONS

With 48 nominations, **Netflix** leads NAACP Image Award nominations. **HBO** is the runner-up, with 25 nominations. **BET** is set to televise the awards during a two-hour live special March 27 that will be simulcast across **CBS, BET Her, VH1, MTV, MTV2,** and **LOGO**. Voting is now open for the public to determine the winners of the 52nd NAACP Image Awards.

#### NBCU RESTRUCTURING

**NBCUniversal** TV & Streaming Entertainment Content chairman *Susan Rovner* has finalized her team, with approximately 50 employees exiting as a result of the restructure. The layoffs are part of the planned impact across NBCU that has been previously announced and follows layoffs in November that impacted those in the Entertainment Networks division headed by *Frances Berwick*. *Lisa Katz* is serving as scripted content president, with *Cara Dellaverson* and *Alex Sepiol* under her and co-leading drama current & development. Also reporting to Katz are *Jeff Meyerson* (comedy current & development) and *Michael Sluchan* (movies, kids programming and co-productions). *Jenny Groom* heads unscripted content (talent competition, game show), with *Sharon Vuong* and *Shelby Shaftel* reporting to her. *Rod Aissa* serves as evp, unscripted content (lifestyle docu-series), with *Rachel Smith* and *Shari Levine* reporting to him.

#### SENATE TARGETS TELECOM WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Senators *John Thune* (R-SD), *Jon Tester* (D-MT), *Roger Wicker* (R-MS), *Gary Peters* (D-MI) and *Jerry Moran* (R-KS) reintroduced the

Telecommunications Skilled Workplace Act Tuesday. The bipartisan legislation targets the shortage of trained workers needed to fill next-generation jobs in telecom. It directs the **FCC**, in consultation with the **Department of Labor**, to issue guidance on how states can use federal resources for workforce development. An FCC-led interagency working group will also be established to develop recommendations on addressing telecom workforce needs. The bill has the full support of FCC commissioner *Brendan Carr*, who leads a 5G jobs initiative aimed at standing up tower tech training programs at community colleges and trade schools.

#### UNIVISION JOINS PROJECT OAR

**Univision** has joined Project OAR, a consortium of American media companies created to establish a common technology for addressable advertising management for TV. Univision will serve as a member of the primary Steering Committee dedicated to creating a standard by which all parties in the TV ecosystem can unite on addressable advertising. Other committee members include **AMC Networks, Comcast NBCU, Disney** and **WarnerMedia**.

#### AMC NETWORK BETS ON SHAFTESBURY

**AMC Networks** and production company **Shaftesbury** have entered into a partnership that will see the programmer gain access to the company's slate while expanding its Canadian content and development capabilities. Shaftesbury CEO/chmn *Christina Jennings* will continue to guide the creative focus of the company and lead day-to-day operations with evp *Scott Garvie*. AMC Networks evp, programming and marketing *Harold Gronenthal* and **Acorn TV** gm *Matt Graham* will join Jennings, Garvie and *Michael Levine* on Shaftesbury's board.

#### DISH TAPS VERTICAL BRIDGE

**DISH** and **Vertical Bridge** signed a long-term agreement that will grant the provider immediate access to Vertical Bridge's portfolio of towers, rooftops and other sites used for wireless infrastructure development. Vertical Bridge holds a portfolio of over 300,000 sites across all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

#### HONORS

The **Media Financial Management Association** board is accepting applications for the 2021 Steve McIntosh Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship will cover attending full conference registration for Media Finance Focus 2021 and is available to those employed by a media provider, have fewer than five years' industry experience and are under 35 years of age.

#### PEOPLE

**Scripps** named *Jodi Chisarick* general sales manager for its national television networks business, effective immediately. Chisarick joins from **20th Television**.

#### IT'S FAXIES TIME

**Cablefax** is accepting nominations for The FAXIES, its annual awards recognizing the best in PR and marketing. Categories include PR Executive of the Year, Sales Team of the Year and Digital Marketing Campaign. The initial entry deadline is March 19, with the final deadline March 26. Winners will be recognized at a celebratory event in June. To view a full list of categories, please visit [www.thefaxies.com](http://www.thefaxies.com).