

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Last Stop: C-SPAN Retires Iconic Bus

After 26 years on the road, the **C-SPAN** Bus is staying parked for good.

For a public affairs network that doesn't promote any personalities or anchors, the C-SPAN Bus was its celebrity mascot. The bus would show up at state capitols, political conventions and throughout thousands of communities all over the country. For the cable industry, it was the geek chic version of the Oscar Mayer WienerMobile, always parked on industry trade show exhibit floors, inviting people to come in, take a look around and often times grab a cookie. The number of selfies in front of the C-SPAN bus have to outnumber even those on a Kardashian Instagram feed.

But it wasn't just a cool ride. The C-SPAN Bus served as a mobile classroom, educating everyone who hopped on about how C-SPAN is a privately funded, public service from their local cable company. It was a chance to show off C-SPAN's public affairs offerings, including how to access hundreds of thousands of hours of archived video going back to 1987 through the C-SPAN Video Library. It was a way to celebrate C-SPAN StudentCam winners and teach media literacy to school kids. It was a gathering spot that allowed politicians to mingle with constituents. And it was all sponsored by cable.

The good news is that while the road trip is over, the journey continues. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the bus was in L.A. gearing up to travel the country to recognize winners of StudentCam, the network's annual national video documentary competition for middle and high school students. That's where it



has remained parked these past 14 months. C-SPAN took the StudentCam celebration and everything else the bus offered online.

For StudentCam, webpages were created for each winner, with the C-SPAN team asking elected officials from the federal, state and local levels to provide an accolade—either a video or citation—to recognize the students. “Honestly, we were like, ‘how’s this going to play out?’ Because imagine at that time we were asking governors and senators who were dealing with this global pandemic to provide congratulatory messages,” said C-SPAN marketing manager *Heath Neiderer*.

It turns out, stressed out political leaders were happy to have some good news to focus on. C-SPAN had nearly 400 partici-

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pants for the 600-plus StudentCam recognitions it created. Once StudentCam was out of the way, the team began virtual visits with schools, universities, civics clubs and others. “We’ve had over 220 virtual presentations, in which 175 of them have been with civic groups. Some have been with university classrooms,” said Neiderer. “We’re also working with AmeriCorps and talking to their new members about how to utilize C-SPAN resources and where they can find us.”

While the bus gets the buzz, it turns out most everything inside of it was already digital. “We just had to find how can we pivot this to make it happen without the bus, and it just really connected. It filled a void people were looking for... All of a sudden, these civic clubs that used to meet in person were like, ‘what do we do?’” said *Marty Dominguez*, C-SPAN’s vp, marketing. And without an actual bus, the C-SPAN crew has the flexibility to zip from Anchorage to Akron, Ohio, and end the day in Oahu. It just made sense to retire the bus component.

That doesn’t mean the vehicle isn’t going to be missed. C-SPAN began notifying affiliates of its retirement this week, and C-SPAN vp *Peter Kiley* posted a poignant recap of the bus’s accomplishments on a cable Facebook group that resulted in an outpouring of memories from folks like *Pat Bresnan*, *Jeff DeMond* and others.

“It becomes a convening place for lawmakers, policymakers, community leaders to connect with youth, to connect with people who are learning about the government and how it serves them, and it’s been this safe, comfortable, welcoming space to do that,” *Jennifer Holick*, vp of government and community strategy at Charter, told **CFX**.

She’s spent the past several years working very closely with the C-SPAN bus, including for its 50 Capitals Tour, which saw the bus put on a boat for the first time ever to visit communities in Charter’s Hawaii footprint.

“We set up this traditional Hawaiian blessing at the capitol. The magic that bus created because it came so far for them, for both the lawmakers and the teachers and students who got to climb on board, was just unbelievable,” *Holick* recalls. “The bus is going to be incredibly missed because of that in-person,

sort of rallying point for community that it provided. But I do look forward to seeing how C-SPAN continues to kind of roll with it and figure out new ways to stay in touch.”

CABLE ONE SETTLED ON M&A

Cable One is stepping back from major M&A after a three-year buying spree that most recently saw it acquire **Hargray**. Since 2018, the operator has purchased **Clearwave Communications**, **Fidelity Communications**, **ValueNet Fiber** and a minority stake in **Mega Broadband**. “Needless to say that our footprint is now bigger, so things that are tuck-in might not have been tuck-in before, but are now things that we can look at. So we’ll continue to explore those but definitely wouldn’t anticipate large transactions,” CFO *Steve Cochran* said on the company’s 1Q21 earnings call. Cable One brought in revenues of \$341.3 million in the quarter, a 6.2% increase YOY. Residential data revenues increased 18.5% and business service revenues rose 4.3%. The company is expecting more subs and some upgrades from the **FCC**’s Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. “I imagine that, while not having a crystal ball, that people who have our service will certainly consider upgrading since \$50 of their bill will be paid for by the government. Keep in mind, our 100Mbps service is \$55 a month, so it will be quite easy to upgrade to either our 200Mbps service or 300Mbps service,” president/CEO *Julie Laulis* said “But it’s quite possible that we will draw some people into the service for the first time for folks to try a reliable, hardwired broadband service because of this opportunity.”

YOUTUBE TV OFFERS FIX FOR ROKU CUSTOMERS

YouTube TV has developed a workaround for new customers that can’t access the vMVPD on their **Roku** devices after the app was removed from Roku’s channel store. The feature gives users access to YouTube TV from within the traditional YouTube app and should be available to all YouTube TV members on Roku over the next few days. The offering will be available on as many other devices as possible over time. Youtube said it is still in talks with Roku on a new distribution agreement. “As of right now, existing YouTube TV members still have access to the app on Roku devices. We’re also in discussions with other

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partners to secure free streaming devices in case YouTube TV members face any access issues on Roku,” the service said in a blog post. “Separately, we are also in ongoing, long-term conversations with Roku to certify that new devices meet our technical requirements.”

AMCN TALKS STREAMING

AMC Networks is on track to have its streaming services serve as the company's top source of revenues by 2025, management said on Friday's earnings call. It is on track to end 2021 with more than 9 million subscribers and anticipates having 20-25 million paid subscribers by 2025. “We are not looking for moon shots on these streaming services... the playbook we're running is pretty different than whole house services who frankly, God bless them, have ambition for a quarter of a billion subscribers and more in global share,” president/CEO *Josh Sapan* said. “We have our characteristics, and what we need to do to achieve our objectives is to provide content that the fans, constituents, subscribers, members of our services like. That'll frankly cost less.” That confidence in streaming comes as the company saw domestic operations revenues decline 6% YOY to \$574 million. Advertising revenues fell 7% to \$199 million due to shifts in the timing of the airing of original programming and lower delivery. Distribution revenues also dropped 6%, with content licensing revenues plummeted 54% due to content production delays.

PROGRAMMING

YES Network will televise 19 New York Liberty games this season, the first being May 14 at 7pm ET (Liberty vs Indiana.) All 19 telecasts will also stream live on the YES app and air on YES on tape delay. – **OWN** will air its first-ever Father's Day program, two-hour special “Honoring Our Kings: OWN Celebrates Black Fatherhood,” on June 15.

PEOPLE

ESPN promoted two executives to svp roles. *Brian Lockhart* is now svp, **ESPN+** original content and ESPN films, and *Mike Shiffman* is svp, production, with oversight of all basketball properties. Lockhart joined ESPN in 2019 from **NFL Media** and Shiffman joined ESPN in 2000.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

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Cox California @CoxCalifornia

Thank you @sdut for sharing this great story which included @cox_media team member Sabrina Wilkerson. Nice work supporting the #SanDiego community! #LifeAtCox #CoxinTheCommunity



Robert M. McDowell @McDowellTweet

This is a very substantive, quantitative and data-rich study by @CCAmobile which merits serious consideration by my old agency, @fcc. When looking at millions of locations, errors are going to happen, and they can and should be fixed. That's just #GoodGovernment.

Competitive Carriers Association @CCAmobile · 23h

Using publicly available data, CCA was able to find problems with hundreds of thousands of RDOF Phase 1 locations. @FCC we welcome further analysis and refinement. We can and should address any problems before spending scarce resources. Read: bit.ly/3tVtpp

Show this thread

Joe Flint @JFlint

I grew up in a Catholic household where watching TV was considered a sin, says AT&T CEO John Stankey at USC event. He says he is getting past his Catholic guilt and watching everything the company makes.

4:48 PM · May 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Research

- > Demand for Paramount+ content (9%) was in a close race with HBO Max (10%) and Peacock (8%) ahead of ViacomCBS's earnings.
- > Over 2021 to date, the full Netflix catalog of original and licensed series accounts for around 20% of US demand for SVOD services.
- > Apple TV+ typically has around 4-5% of the demand share for US digital original series, but their originals-only strategy leads to less than 1% share of demand of the US SVOD market.
- > Hulu's library and licensed content has led to it having the largest slice of SVOD demand in 2021.

(Source: Parrot Analytics)

Up Ahead

- MAY 11: MEDIA INSTITUTE LUNCHEON WITH FCC COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**
- MAY 12-13: MOFFETT NATHANSON MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS SUMMIT**
- MAY 13: INTERNET INNOVATION ALLIANCE FIRESIDE CHAT WITH FCC COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**
- MAY 13: WICT ROCKY MOUNTAIN VIRTUAL WALK OF FAME**

Quotable

“The first thing that happens when you begin testing to try and identify accessibility issues, is that you'll find them. Lots of them. And you'll realize that this very cool product that you love, and you've been working on for a while doesn't actually work for people with disabilities. And you'll feel badly about that. And then you'll begin to get a little, or possibly a lot, overwhelmed and might not even know where to start. So that's why we're doing this presentation. Trust me, we've definitely all been there. And the good news is that with some patience and some practice things will get better, and eventually you might just start to feel like you know what you're doing and even kind of like this accessibility thing,”

– **NBCUniversal Accessibility Director Lori Samuels speaking at the Microsoft Accessibility Summit**