

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Eyes on Comcast: Frontier, Atlantic Broadband Launching ACC Network

Frontier and **Atlantic Broadband** are among the latest providers to announce carriage for **ESPN's ACC Network**. **Comcast**, the country's largest MVPD, still hasn't announced a deal for the 24/7 network dedicated to the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Cablefax learned Frontier plans to add the channel Wednesday, just in time for Thursday's season opener on the network, South Florida at NC State at 7:30pm ET. The operator and programmer declined comment. **Atlantic Broadband** announced Thursday that it also plans to launch the network on Wednesday. It will be offered on Atlantic Broadband expanded basic variety tiers in those states with ACC institutions and on the digital basic family tier in other markets. Customers with corresponding Atlantic Broadband subscriptions may also access digital platform ACCNX through the ESPN App.

ACC Network has a busy Week 1 planned, with three straight days of games. Wake Forest is at Old Dominion on Friday. A tripleheader kicks off Saturday with Boston College hosting Colgate at noon, followed by Pitt-UMass at 4pm and Georgia Tech vs Northern Illinois at 7:30pm.

ESPN launched ACC Network just before the 2019 college football season. It struck deals with **Charter, Cox, AT&T, DirecTV, DISH** and others—some of them in the 11th hour—but Comcast has been a continued holdout. For one brief moment Sunday, it looked like things had changed. ACC Network was

airing on Comcast via a channel normally reserved for overflow **SEC Network** programming. But by Monday it was gone, with the brief appearance [chalked up to ESPN](#) inadvertently putting it on the overflow channel.

There's possible good news ahead for ACC fans in Comcast markets, however. The operator's programming carriage agreement expires with **Disney** in September, and you can bet that ACC Network is part of renewal talks. Obviously, the goal would be to get it done in time for a Sept 2 launch. Neither side is commenting on negotiations.

NCTC, which represents more than 700 small and medium independent operators, announced a multi-year distribution renewal this week that sees its members making ACC Network available to their customers starting Wednesday. Separately, **Mediacom** announced a renewal deal this month that sees ACC Network to its lineup. It'll be on expanded basic in ACC markets starting Sept 1.

ACC Network provides more than 500 regular-season and tournament games from across the conference's 27 sponsored sports. Add in ACCNX, and it features more than 1500 ACC events each year. The Atlantic Coast Conference includes: Boston College, Clemson University, Duke University, Florida State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Louisville, University of Miami, University of North Carolina, North Carolina State University, University of Notre Dame, University of Pittsburgh, Syracuse University, University of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Wake Forest University.

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DIRECTV STREAM COMES TO LIFE

DirectTV has officially brought together two of its streaming services under one umbrella. AT&T TV and AT&T TV Now re-launched Thursday as DirecTV Stream. AT&T satellite, streaming or IP video customers will automatically keep their view service, any bundled services and any associated discounts. This all comes in the wake of the divestment of AT&T's video unit into a separate company as part of a deal with **TPG Capital** that closed earlier this month. AT&T TV launched last year as the company's premium streaming experience while AT&T TV Now stopped accepting new customers in January. DirecTV is pushing the new launch across social media and with a brand-new ad campaign featuring *Serena Williams*. The campaign will run into early 2022.

GAC MEDIA REBRANDING ACQUIRED NETS

GAC Media is ready to step out as the next big name in family-friendly programming, and it is rebranding two of its recent acquisitions ahead of its grand launch. **GAC Family** and **GAC Living** will launch on September 27, evolving from the **Great American Country** and **Ride TV** networks that the company acquired in June. GAC Family will continue to showcase scripted content capturing American culture and lifestyle while GAC Living will offer unscripted lifestyle content. A particular focus will be put on southern and country living. Programming slates for both networks will be announced at a later date.

NETFLIX PRESSES START ON GAMING

Netflix began its first public test of its gaming offering Thursday, giving Android users in Poland the chance to access two games via its mobile app. Both titles live in the universe of one of Netflix's most popular original series, dubbed "Stranger Things: 1984" and "Stranger Things 3." Netflix gave more details on what users can expect on **Twitter**, saying there will be no ads and no in-app purchases in the games that are available to subscribers. All games that arrive on the service will be included with a Netflix membership. "It's very, very early days and we've got a lot of work to do in the months ahead, but this is the first step," the company said on its Netflix Geeked Twitter account. "We'll keep

you updated as we explore what gaming looks like on Netflix."

MORE RDOF BLOCKS QUESTIONED

Petitions for waivers have been flooding the **FCC's** dockets related to the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund after some awarded census blocks were found to be already served or have no serviceable locations. It will be some time before the review of all blocks is complete, it seems, and **Cox** is one operator that has found an additional 71 census blocks where it will not pursue RDOF support. "At the time of Cox's initial notifica-

Cablefax Executive Round Up

How has the Delta variant changed your fall plans (or your company's)?



John Higginbotham
EVP and COO
ACA Connects

"The short answer is 'a lot,' but my answer will undoubtedly change by the time this is in print. Late September and most of October have been packed for months now as we all look forward to being back together at conferences.

We are monitoring the news every day and staying in close contact with our Members to have a solid Plan B, if not C or D too! Our ACAC Board is meeting virtually through the rest of 2021, but we plan to be all in-person in 2022. On a personal level, I'm traveling, but I'm watching the news and not taking unnecessary risks."



Andrew Petersen
SVP, Corporate Affairs
TDS Telecommunications

"At TDS, we strongly encourage associates to analyze how vaccines maximize protection against the highly contagious Delta variant, while reducing the spread within our organization and communities. We extended our return to office from September 7th and moved to an 'until further notice' timeline. We are following mask guidelines in accordance with our local public health departments. Fortunately, TDS maintains a well-tenured, resilient workforce. Nearly 2/3 of our associates have been productively working from home since the onset of the pandemic. Our remaining 1/3—our highly valued technicians—have been responding to customers' needs from day one."

2 Sponsor Expo Video Show Daily

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tion to the Commission, some questions remained about the nature of service in some of the census blocks identified by the Commission as warranting review. Given this and the need to ensure good stewardship of limited USF funding, Cox has continued a deeper review of these remaining census blocks,” the provider said in its waiver supplement filed Wednesday. The majority of the blocks it will not pursue are in California with the rest falling in Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The provider initially asked for a waiver of default penalties in connection with its decision not to pursue RDOF support in 104 census blocks it won in the RDOF auction.

FCC AWARDS MORE TELEHEALTH FUNDS

The **FCC** approved an initial set of 62 applications for funding commitments totaling \$41.98 million for the second round of its COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The dollars will be used by the award winners to provide telehealth services during the ongoing pandemic. The first set of awards in the \$249.95 million second round was directed to the highest-scoring applications in every state, territory and the District of Columbia as well as the second highest-scoring application from the states and territories that did not receive funding in Round 1. The next round of awards will go to the highest-scoring applications, regardless of geography, until at least \$150 million has been committed. Following that, the **Wireline Competition Bureau** will give remaining applicants an opportunity to supplement their applications before a final review that will determine the remaining award winners.

COMCAST MAKING IPTV EASIER

Comcast Technology Solutions launched a managed terrestrial distribution service to support pay TV operators searching for alternative ways to offer video to their customers. The service is designed to offer Comcast Technology Services customers a clear path to IP video by leveraging ground-based video infrastructure in lieu of a satellite-based managed service. Operators that take advantage of the service could see reduced headend infrastructure expenses, enhanced video feeds and greater flexibility to focus on broadband investments, according to the company.

FOX CHOOSES SYNAMEDIA FOR ATSC 3.0 ROLLOUT

Fox Television Stations is partnering with independent video software provider **Synamedia** to support the broadcaster's **ATSC 3.0** deployment. The deployment will take place in the Orlando, Florida, market with the Fox-owned **WRBW** station. The station will serve as the ATSC 3.0 lighthouse to host

infrastructure from other participating stations as part of the ATSC 3.0 lighthouse model. Synamedia and partner **Triveni Digital** will manage incoming streams at WRBW to ensure that the effort to deliver high-quality content, like events in 4K, will not disrupt the market's bandwidth usage. Fox will use Synamedia's ATSC 3.0 Broadcast Solution featuring its virtual Digital Content Manager for statistical organization, advertisement insertion and more in an end-to-end fashion. The broadcaster will also use Synamedia's Media Edge Gateway ATSC 3.0 Receiver to deliver broadcast signal reception to monitor and accept ATSC 3.0 signal testing.

BLACK BUSINESS MONTH

Comcast is celebrating August's National Black Business Month highlighting a few of the Black entrepreneurs it has partnered with this year, such as **AfroLandTV** founder *Michael Maponga*. Comcast first became acquainted with the free online streaming service for premium African movies and TV through its **NBCU Lift Labs for Entrepreneurs**. “We knew the AfroLandTV team was special—passionate and purpose-driven—and it is an honor to partner with them to help bring their vision to life. AfroLandTV is now reaching 50+ million people through their channel distribution partnerships with XUMO, Plex, Local Now, and is also featured on Black Experience on Xfinity,” *Keesha Boyd*, Comcast executive director of Multicultural TV/Film, penned in a [blog post](#) this month. She also highlighted **Black & Sexy TV**, a Black streaming service with original content all produced and developed in-house, which Comcast has helped expand its viewership to millions of new households.

PROGRAMMING

Discovery+ and **Talos Films** signed a multi-year, multi-project deal for Talos to produce true crime programming for the streamer. Two limited series from the deal have been announced, “House of Hammer (wt)” and “Tough Love Inc. (wt).” – **INSP** greenlit cowboy competition series “Ultimate Cowboy Showdown” for a third season.

PEOPLE

BBC Studios, Americas upped *Suzu Raia* to svp, consumer products and business development. Raia joined BBC Studios in 2018 from **Nickelodeon**.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not publish on Friday, Aug 27. Cablefax.com will keep you apprised of any breaking news, and the Daily will return Monday, Aug 30.

3 Sponsor the Cablefax Expo Panel (Moderated by Amy Maclean, Editorial Director)

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PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Only Laughs (and Murder) In the Building

There are few comedic duos with the chemistry of *Steve Martin* and *Martin Short*, but the pair never thought of doing a television show together until the former came up with an idea that promised both mystery and laughs. Set in a New York City apartment building, “Only Murders in the Building” (premieres Aug 31 on **Hulu**) sees their characters meet Mabel Mora (*Selena Gomez*) after the fire alarm goes off. The trio bond over their love of true crime podcasts, but everything becomes more real when a body is discovered in the building. Executive producer *Dan Fogelman* is known for creating **NBC** drama “This is Us” and wasn’t looking for another project when Martin asked him to go to lunch. The comedian dreamed up the concept for the show without planning on any particular casting, but everything fell into place after that discussion. “I’d been really reticent to take on another show while ‘This Is Us’ was still going because I like to get really involved and be involved with the scripts and the edits. It took something special, and when Steve had said the idea and the opportunity to work with these three guys, that was kind of the thing that moved it forward,” Fogelman said at the virtual **TCA** summer tour. True crime podcasts have hooked audiences for years, and there are a plethora of shows in the genre that discuss everything from serial killers to pyramid schemes gone wrong. The promise of introducing the genre’s biggest fans as characters and giving them their own case to solve seemed perfect to fellow ep *John Hoffman*. “It was the combination of this incredible comedic cast and then the idea of true crime lovers coming together and attempting their own podcast seemed ripe with sort of possibilities,” he said. “Martin’s character Oliver and Steve’s character Charles, coming from the world of acting and directing for the theater, there’s a theatricality to it that is not necessarily built into the sort of quiet world of podcasters.” – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

“Nine Perfect Strangers,” streaming (new eps added Wednesdays), **Hulu**. You might need a calculus degree to decipher how Hulu figures ratings. But the platform says this new limited series from *David E. Kelley* is its most-watched original, topping “The Handmaid’s Tale.” And why not? We crave escape in the form of travel during this COVID-19 moment. And we like to whack at privilege (and not just during a pandemic). So, similar to **HBO**’s “The White Lotus,” viewers can forget about the quotidian for a while and ‘travel,’ COVID-free, to a secluded resort. Once there, they watch as a questionable guru named Masha (*Nicole Kidman*) attempts to lead a strong cast of troubled, wealthy characters, including a neurotic author (*Melissa McCarthy*), a former football player (*Bobby Cannavale*) and a nervous school teacher (*Michael Shannon*), among others, to a healthier life. It’s derivative and Kidman’s Russian accent comes and goes willy-nilly. Still, for those who enjoy watching the wealthy squirm, it’s not a bad way to go. – “The Looming Tower,” **Hulu**. With today’s tragic news from Kabul, danger escalates as the US attempts to exit from Afghanistan. We have several 9/11 specials for upcoming reviews as the 20th anniversary approaches. One way to get historical context is to re-watch this excellent 2018 short series, starring *Jeff Daniels* as an FBI security chief. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (08/16/21-08/22/21)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.953	2,936
MSNBC	0.387	1,193
HGTV	0.359	1,107
TLC	0.322	992
CNN	0.306	943
ESPN	0.281	865
INSP	0.279	858
TBSC	0.269	828
NFL	0.247	760
HIST	0.241	744
HMM	0.234	720
HALL	0.228	703
FOOD	0.227	699
DISC	0.226	697
USA	0.221	681
ID	0.197	607
AMC	0.191	590
WETV	0.177	544
LIFE	0.167	515
TNT	0.165	508
A&E	0.162	499
TVLAND	0.154	475
BRAVO	0.143	441
SYFY	0.136	419
NAN	0.134	412
GSN	0.133	410
BET	0.132	405
NICK	0.129	398
ADSM	0.123	378
FX	0.120	370
APL	0.110	340
NATGEO	0.110	338
TRAVEL	0.105	325
MTV	0.102	313

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

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