

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## TV for Gamers: G4 Returns to Linear Packages After 8 Years

After nearly eight years off the air, gaming-centric network **G4** is back on linear television.

The G4 Media brand was first created through a partnership between **NBCUniversal** and **DISH**, launching in 2002. The channel was rebranded as **Esquire Network** in April 2013 through a partnership between NBCU and Hearst Magazine with programming targeted at an upscale male audience. Esquire went digital-only in 2017.

But fans of the original gaming-centric network never forgot about their time spent with “Attack of the Show” host *Kevin Pereira* (fun fact: Attack of the Show was a co-winner of a **Cablefax** Program Award in 2009) or “XPlay” mainstay *Adam Sessler*. Social media exploded when G4’s **Twitter** and **Instagram** accounts posted a video in July 2020 teasing a 2021 date with a simple message: “We never stopped playing.”

Since then, G4 has been posting content on **YouTube**, **Twitch** and social media platforms that aligns with its commitment to offering a home for all things video games and nerd culture. *Russell Arons*, who was hired in September to serve as President of G4, told **CFX** that the work of the last year and the feedback gathered from fans old and new played a major role in shaping what the network would look like come its linear launch.

“Earlier this year, we debuted ‘B4G4,’ a weekly digital content series that allowed us to experiment with different types of

content—from original sketch comedy to irreverent esports coverage to game reviews—which gave fans the opportunity to provide feedback to G4’s **Discord** and **Reddit**,” she said. “The overall sentiment was at least 95% positive for all of our content. We made a promise to build this with our fans and have stayed true to that promise. We have a great tailwind and we have our fans to thank for that.”

An area of focus for G4 ahead of the linear launch was diversity and inclusivity in who it placed in front of the camera, charged with the design of programming and what viewers could connect with the network. The personalities heading its shows represent a number of different gaming sectors as well as various marginalized communities, cultures and religions. But you also don’t need to be a lover of video games to start watching G4’s content.

“For those who might be curious about esports, we want our content to be as welcoming and wide as possible to cast that net. To do that, we are taking a comedy-first approach with deep expertise to help educate,” Arons said. Weekly esports variety show “Boosted” will demystify competitive gaming while “Crash Course” will slow the pace of esports down to make the games easier to watch and understand for those new to the experience. “For those already steeped in esports, we’ve signed on to be the exclusive North American broadcast partner for the ESL and will be announcing other major league partnerships very soon,” she added.

**Verizon Fios, Cox, Comcast** and **Philo** are carrying G4 on



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their programming lineups at launch, bringing the network's reach to more than 70 million homes when you factor in streaming. Arons said it will be adding more than 10 million to that number by year-end. But measuring the success of the relaunch isn't quite as simple today as it might have been back in 2013, particularly for a network that has such a presence in virtual spaces that have served as meeting points for gaming communities.

"What's important to remember is that during G4's original run, the network peaked at roughly around 65 million cable homes in 2013. In terms of success, there's no playbook for what we are doing," Arons said. "No other entertainment company is creating and distributing specific-channel content across linear, streaming and AVOD platforms. So when it comes to ratings and analytics, it's not just concurrent viewers or hours watched or **Nielsen** ratings... We have immediate feedback on the content that works, but what we are really focusing on, especially early on, is our engagement—especially through chat, Discord and Reddit."

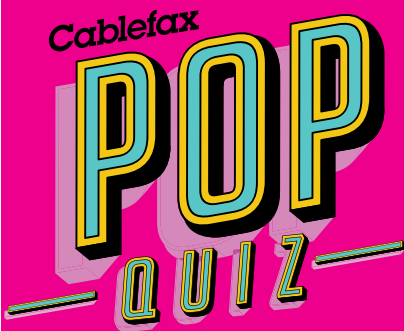
#### ROSENWORCEL CONFIRMATION HEARING AHEAD

**Senate Commerce** isn't holding its hearing to consider *Jessica Rosenworcel's* nomination to the **FCC** until tomorrow morning, but it doesn't take psychic powers to predict the issues she'll be probed on. Net neutrality and her desire to bring back Title II regulation tops the list, but broadband mapping and **FAA** C-band delays are also likely to earn some questions. "Then there are always parochial issues. There probably are members on the committee that have companies in their states that have not received their RDOF subsidies yet," *Ari Fitzgerald*, who leads **Hogan Lovells'** Communica-

tions, Internet and Media practice, told **CFX**. "There's always the possibility that someone will raise concerns that are particular to their state." Rosenworcel is likely to get high marks for her years of advocacy for closing the homework gap, with the Democrat talking about student's lack of internet access long before the pandemic came around. On broadband mapping, Fitzgerald expects her to tell senators that she wants the FCC to be very careful in the way it crafts the maps, which will take time. One thing that is certain is that *Gigi Sohn* won't be part of Wednesday's nomination hearing with Republicans saying they want more time to consider the former FCC official and **Public Knowledge** co-founder. Fitzgerald believes Sohn is well qualified, but that it's going to take a bit more time because she's not as much of a known quantity as Rosenworcel, who has been a commissioner for nearly a decade. Ultimately, he predicts Sohn will get her hearing, though there remains some uncertainty over whether it will happen by year-end.

#### FCC'S MID-BAND AUCTION COMES IN UNDER \$22B

The **FCC's** auction of licenses in the 3.45 to 3.55 GHz band came to a close after Round 151 Tuesday, with gross proceeds topping \$21.8 billion. After some initial concerns over a bidder's dropout, the auction ranks among the FCC's highest grossing. Bidders won 4,041 of the 4,060 available generic blocks. Winning bidders will now have the opportunity to bid for frequency-specific licenses in the assignment phase of Auction 110 with more details to come. (We won't know who dropped out of the auction until the FCC's closing public notice comes out after the assignment stage) It's not



One winner will be selected each week for a Starbucks gift card

Last week's answer: Hillman College was the fictional college featured in "A Different World."

Which of the shows in the "Real Housewives" franchise was the first to air?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

clear when the next big FCC auction will take place. There's a push for a 2.5 GHz auction to get underway soon. After that, it's less clear what spectrum will be auctions and what will be shared with incumbents.

#### COX INTRODUCES LOW-COST CONNECTASSIST

**Cox** added another affordable internet tier to its portfolio with ConnectAssist. The tier, which offers customers broadband and a modem rental for \$30/month, is designed for low-income households that do not qualify for Connect2Compete, the provider's plan for families with children in grades K-12 who are enrolled in government assistance programs. The modem offered with ConnectAssist will support speeds of up to 50Mbps download/3Mbps upload. Cox is also encouraging customers that qualify for ConnectAssist to enroll in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program, which may allow them to drop their internet bill to \$0/month.

#### TELEMUNDO STARTS WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN

With FIFA World Cup Qatar one year away, **Telemundo** is revving up the publicity machine. It will have live broadcasts of all 64 matches, including 56 games on Telemundo and eight on **Universo** (all will be available via live stream with authentication). During a virtual press conference Tuesday, Telemundo brass promised more analysts, more reporters, more celebrities, more experts than ever before. The programmer also pledged to have more female voices in its coverage. Twelve months out, Telemundo has already doubled the number of advertising deals relative to the comparable time period in 2018, according to Advertising EVP *Dan Lovinger*. "We've doubled our linear revenue. We've tripled our digital revenue relative to that same time period. In this shifting media landscape, major events like Qatar are vital to marketers and the demand for inventory is actually stronger than ever," he said. "All three major spots in the 22 FIFA World Cup—the presenting pregame, halftime and postgame positions—are already sold out."

#### DISCOVERY DOUBLES DOWN ON ADVANCED ADS

**Discovery Advertising Sales** revealed a suite of advanced advertising products Monday designed to drive higher engagement and reach younger demographics across **discovery+** and **Discovery Go**. Among the options now available to advertisers include one-day immersive sponsorships that all them to be the first ad that all viewers see on discovery+. They can also buy Showcase Ads, Discovery's proprietary shoppable ad format that allows viewers to purchase products that align with home and food-focused content. Discovery believes the tools will allow advertisers to further their already considerable reach of more than 173 million consumers/month across the programmer's content portfolio,

#### ANTHEM ADDS GRAVITAS VENTURES TO PORTFOLIO

**Anthem Sports & Entertainment** acquired narrative film and documentary distributor **Gravitas Ventures** from **Red Arrow Studios**. The purchase adds another 8,000 hours of sports and entertainment content to the company's library.

Founder/CEO *Nolan Gallagher*, President *Michael Murphy*, EVP/General Counsel *Brendan Gallagher* and CFO *Brian Kenyon* will be joining the Anthem executive team, and the entire Gravitas Ventures organization will remain intact.

#### NET NEUTRALITY WINS OVER RECONNECT ADMIN

Sens *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Ron Wyden* (D-OR) are among those applauding **USDA** Secretary *Tom Vilsack* after his decision to offer preference to ReConnect Program applicants that commit to following net neutrality principles. The ReConnect Program offers loans and grants to fund the construction, improvement and acquisitions of facilities and equipment needed to offer broadband in rural, Tribal and underserved areas, and net neutrality rules forbid ISPs from blocking or slowing down internet access for customers.

#### HONORS

The **WICT Network** announced the members of Classes 44 and 45 of the Betsy Magness Leadership Institute. You can find a full list of participants and additional details about the program [here](#). Since its launch in 1994, more than 1,000 women have graduated from BMLI.

#### DOING GOOD

**Fox Weather** is partnering with the Mississippi State University Foundation to increase diversity in the meteorology field by creating scholarship opportunities for students concentrating in broadcast meteorology or professional meteorology/climatology. Students will be eligible to receive an annual scholarship as early as 2022, and preference will be given to upper-level undergraduates who have a 3.0 GPA or higher. Fox Weather will also provide an internship with the streamer and a dedicated mentor for each recipient throughout their college experience.

#### RATINGS

**ESPN2's** telecast of Friday's FIFA World Cup qualifying match between the US and Mexico was seen by an average audience of 1.315 million viewers. That sets it as the most-watched FIFA World Cup qualifying match on the network, according to **Nielsen**. The previous record was held by a USA vs. Mexico match played on Feb 11, 2009, a showdown that drew in 1.191 million average viewers.

#### PEOPLE

**RCN's** *Tori Faulkenberry* was elevated to SVP, Customer Care. She'll replace *Bill Sievers*, who is retiring from the company after more than a decade of service. *Doug Guthrie* and *Michael McPhillips* have also recently joined the RCN team. Guthrie will serve as SVP/General Manager for the New York market while McPhillips will act as VP, Business Solutions for the company's central region. Other upcoming retirements include those of VP, Regulatory & Public Affairs *Tom Steel* and VP, HR *Ken Conrad*. – **Allen Media Group** upped *Lisa-Renee Ramirez* to President, Lifestyle Networks. She'll continue to oversee **Recipe.TV**, **MyDestination.TV** and **Pets.TV** while also serving as Executive Producer/Director of the network's series. Ramirez is well-known for her production work, garnering four Emmy noms on behalf of AMG over the last three years.