

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

TV x NFT: Where the Industry is Headed in 2022 and Beyond

NFT. Blockchain. Ethereum. Words that were barely in the public lexicon a year ago are now driving entirely new business models across the television and media industry.

Lesley Silverman, head of digital assets at **UTA**, believes we're barely out of the starting gate, as new manifestations—like Web3, short for Web 3.0, which aspires to a decentralized Internet where services run on blockchain vs. at the hand of tech giants—continue to evolve.

"We are at the very beginning of understanding the new lanes Web3 will create for traditional media—how creative projects are financed, marketed and distributed," Silverman says. "There are a lot of exciting aspirational ideas brewing and the demand is there, so now the work is being done to build infrastructure and demonstrate its power."

Among headlines, **ViacomCBS** next spring will debut a platform that enables fans to buy and trade NFTs based on its IP, the result of a partnership the company formed with tech firm **Recur** in October. All of its consumer brands, including **BET**, **CBS**, **MTV**, **Nickelodeon** and **Paramount Pictures**, will be in the mix.

Warner Bros., **DC** and **Lionsgate** have all jumped on the blockchain bandwagon. Lionsgate's agreement with **Auto-graph**, an NFT platform launched by *Tom Brady*, will see the creation of content based on its TV and film properties including "Mad Men," "John Wick," "Hunger Games," the "Twilight"

franchise and "Dirty Dancing."

Fox Entertainment and its animation studio Bento Box are keeping things in-house. The companies in May launched **Blockchain Creative Labs** and established a \$100 million fund to provide solutions for content creators, IP owners and advertising partners to build, manage and sell NFTs, and enable fandoms to flourish in micro-communities created around its properties.

First foray the **MaskVerse**, a community and marketplace hawking digital assets that complement its competition series "The Masked Singer," in October dropped packs of three mask NFTs with a price tag of \$20 apiece. They sold out 10,000 packs in the first 10 hours, says *Scott Greenberg*, CEO of Blockchain Creative Labs.

Greenberg tells **CFX** the primary opportunity today is bridging the gap between early crypto adopters and the mainstream audiences Fox serves. "We want to educate them about these tools and about the value proposition of Web3 and NFTs and make it easy and safe for them to use. It's really about connecting communities of fandoms and creators."

It's for this reason the company set a relatively low price tag for its initial MaskVerse rollout, rather than setting up an auction-style environment to drive up the price. "We intentionally priced these low, with a long-term goal of educating fans and creating value for the community," Greenberg says. "This is about seeing how fans reacted; it's just the beginning."

They reacted well. Greenberg says there were 200,000 digital wallet installs for the activation—to participate, fans had to create

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a wallet through **Eluvio**, the blockchain infrastructure provider in which Fox is an investor. "People showed up and engaged. We know the numbers are there," he says, adding, "We are going to make good revenue... Blockchain Creative Labs is a revenue-generating business. We aren't a marketing department."

Next up is a dedicated digital marketplace for **WWE** centered around "Smackdown," which is slated to premiere in Q1, and a blockchain community that will evolve around the launch of *Dan Harmon's* upcoming adult animated series "Krapopolis."

The universe of minted assets around which to gather fans is vast. "We don't believe it begins and ends with art and JPEGs. There's great opportunity for video and movies and TV," Greenberg says, as long as the authenticity and utility are there.

"We believe in not using blockchain for blockchain's sake, but looking at the real use case and the toolset, and what could it solve and make better for both the audience and creator."

- Cathy Appfeld Olson

PAST FCC CHAIRS URGE C-BAND RESOLUTION

Former **FCC** Chairs **Ajit Pai**, **Tom Wheeler**, **Mignon Clyburn**, **Julius Genachowski**, **Michael Copps** and **Michael Powell** have banded together to voice their concerns about the **Federal Aviation Administration's** attempts to delay the launch of C-band spectrum for 5G due to concerns about how that deployment could affect aircraft equipment. In a joint filing, the group expressed its faith in the FCC's 2020 decision to expand flexible use in the C-band and urged all stakeholders to come together to prevent similar spectrum management issues in the future. "The FAA should work with the FCC and the **National Telecommunications and Information Administration** (NTIA), the federal

agency that manages federal spectrum use and speaks for federal stakeholders, to assess and resolve the FAA's concerns expeditiously, but this debate should not be fought publicly in a way that undermines consumer confidence in the process, nor should it require months of additional delays," the former chairs said in the filing. **Verizon** and **AT&T** are scheduled to commercially launch their C-band spectrum on Jan. 5 following a delay meant to give wireless stakeholders and the FAA more time to examine worries about potential impacts to the aviation industry. FCC Chair **Jessica Rosenworcel** said at a press conference following the Commission's open meeting Tuesday said she's optimistic that a resolution will be reached soon. "We're having productive conversations with the FAA. I have confidence in the mitigations that have been offered up by the wireless industry with respect to these airwaves and I also have confidence we're going to find a solution to safely and quickly deploy 5G services and these midband airwaves," she said.

DISNEY NETS COULD LEAVE YOUTUBE TV

YouTube TV warned subscribers late Monday that they could lose access to 18 **Disney**-owned channels if the pair can't agree to a new carriage agreement before Friday. YouTube TV and Disney are still in active discussions, but they've not yet been able to reach an equitable agreement. The current deal includes local **ABC** channels, Disney Channel, **ESPN**, **National Geographic** and **ACC Network**. "Our ask of Disney, as with all of our partners, is to treat YouTube TV like any other TV provider—by offering us the same rates that services of a similar size pay, across Disney's channels for as long as we carry them," YouTube TV said in an email to subscribers. "If

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The tilted image shows the cover of Cablefax Daily magazine, dated Monday, November 2, 2020. The main headline on the cover is "Deal Talk: RCN/Altice/Grande CEO Discusses \$6.1bn Strategic Deal". Other headlines include "Purposes: More on Atlanta Regional Interests" and "Mandates: Update on the FCC's 2020 Decision". There are also smaller promotional boxes on the cover, such as "Cablefax MOST POWERFUL WOMEN" and "Congratulate the 2020 Most Powerful Women Honorees!".

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we are unable to reach a deal by Friday, the Disney-owned channels will no longer be available on YouTube TV starting December 17, and we will decrease our monthly price by \$15, from \$64.99 to \$49.99 (while Disney content remains off of our platform).” The vMVPD also told customers they could sign up for Disney’s bundle of **Disney+**, **Hulu** and **ESPN+** for \$13.99/month as an alternative way of accessing that content.

CARRIAGE

Waiting for **ACC Network** to join **Comcast** now that the **Disney** renewal is done? The **ESPN** network will launch by Dec. 22 in all Comcast Xfinity markets.

ALTICE USA CHANGE-UP

Lee Schroeder will be leaving **Altice USA** in July 2022. She currently serves as EVP, Government & Community Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer. The Community Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer roles will be assumed by *Lisa Gonzalez Anselmo*, Altice USA’s EVP, Communications. The company will look to appoint a new head of Government Affairs. The role is especially important because Altice doesn’t have **NCTA** repping it as it pulled out of the association in 2018. “My time at Altice USA included some of the most pivotal and fulfilling moments in my career, and I have so much respect for Dexter, the entire leadership team, my direct teams, and all my colleagues at the company, who I have no doubt will continue to do great things for the industry and our customers,” Schroeder said in a statement.

WEEKLY RATINGS

ESPN ruled the primetime roost last week, averaging 2.6 million viewers. **Fox News** took second with 2.35 million, followed by **Hallmark Channel** 1.57 million, **MSNBC** (1.16 million) and **HGTV** (890,000). ESPN was boosted by Saturday’s 2021 MLS Cup, which averaged 1.14 million viewers, making it the most-watched MLS Cup match on **ABC** and ESPN networks since 2009. The audience for the NYC-Portland match was 38% higher than the 825,000 viewers who watched Seattle Sounders vs. Toronto FC on ABC in the 2019 MLS Cup—the last Major League Soccer title match on an ESPN network. In total day, Fox News was easily the leader with 1.47 million. Its closest competitor was Hallmark with 883,000 viewers. Fox News’ total day viewership was more than double that of MSNBC (684,000) and nearly triple CNN’s average of 501,000.

COMCAST ADVISED TO DISCONTINUE 5G PLAN CLAIMS

The **National Advertising Division** recommended that **Comcast Cable** discontinue a number of “Unlimited 5G” and “best price” claims tied to its **Xfinity Mobile** 5G plans. NAD determined that the unlimited 5G claim communicates to customers that the plan offers an unlimited amount of data at 5G speeds. Those customers actually get access to 5G speeds up to 20GB of data/month. After that, a customer’s data is limited to 3G speeds. On the pricing front, NAD determined that at the time of dissemination, a claim that Xfinity Mobile’s Unlimited 5G four-line plan was priced lower than its competitors four-line packages was unsupported. The claims were challenged by **T-Mobile**. Comcast has agreed to comply with NAD’s recommendation

and will make an appropriate disclosure

605 COMPETES WITH NIELSEN WITH NEW CURRENCY

Cross-platform measurement and analytics firm **605** launched an independent media trading currency Tuesday that it hopes will serve as an alternative to **Nielsen**. The currency, called 605 Exchan6e, is designed to underpin advertising transactions between partners on the buy-side and the sell-side. 605 is also preparing to kick off an Open Partner Program to support the initiative, giving programmers, agencies and advertisers the chance to collaborate with the firm to create an independent ecosystem for the trading of advertising. 605 Exchan6e will be made available to participants in the Open Partner Program as a tracking currency in 2022.

WOW! TV+ COMING TO NEWNAN

WOW! is bringing its IP-delivered video product to residents of Newnan, Georgia. WOW! tv+ will be available to all HSD customers in the area. The service includes live channel packages, cloud DVR, on demand content and a voice remote with Google Assistance and Netflix integration.

PROGRAMMING

Family Entertainment Television licensed a selection of films starring John Wayne that will air on **FMC** and **FETV** beginning in January. The featured titles include “Big Jake” and “Rio Bravo.”

PEOPLE

AMC Networks tapped *Sara Wong* as SVP, Streaming Strategy & Analytics. Wong most recently was VP, Direct-to-Consumer Strategy at **WarnerMedia**. She reports to AMC Networks President of Streaming Services *Miquel Penella*. – Best wishes to *Laurie Goldberg* who is leaving **Discovery, Inc** after 13 years. The Group EVP of PR is the master of creative “Shark Week” press kits. We have the cool shark-themed nail polish, sunglasses and shirts to prove it. – **The Cable Center** elected four new board members: **NCTC** CEO *Lou Borrelli*; **NCTA** Chief of Staff *Nilda Gumbs*; **Curiocity** President/CEO *Clint Stinchcomb* and **Comcast** Central Division President *Christine Whitaker*. Each will serve a two-year term. Cable Center President/CEO *Jana Henthorn*, who is retiring at the end of the year after 17 years leading the organization, will remain on the board as the Immediate Past President. – **Media Financial Management Association** and its **BCCA** subsidiary named *Joseph Annotti* as its President/CEO, effective Feb. 1. He’ll step into a position last held by *Mary Collins*, who left the role after 19 years when her contract ended on Sept. 30. Annotti most recently served as President/CEO of the **Center for Truth in Science**, a nonprofit focused on fact-based science and the intersection of science, economics and litigation.

DOING GOOD

Sparklight pledged \$15,000 to the American Red Cross to support relief efforts following the tornadoes that devastated parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi and Tennessee. Service to a small portion of customers in the company’s Kennett, Missouri, and Dyersburg, Tennessee, markets were briefly impacted by the tornadoes but was restored within 24 hours to those not affected by commercial power outages.