

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Money Talks: Retransmission Consent Debate Back at the FCC

The **FCC** gathered comments from the industry earlier this week on the state of competition in the communications marketplace, and some stakeholders used it as an opportunity to voice their displeasure with the state of retransmission consent and the rules surrounding it.

ACA Connects argued that the burdens placed on MVPDs today are only continuing to grow as programming and retransmission consent fees rise. At the same time, those deals are more frequently coming with requirements that MVPDs carry lower-rated programming and multicast signals if they want to offer more in-demand content. While large operators aren't unaffected by these deals, the harms that come with the current retrans market impact small and medium-sized MVPDs the most, according to ACAC.

"For providers, the options are either to accept the record-setting retransmission consent fees or face a blackout that can wreck a small business," the association said. "While the extension of 'good faith' protections for small MVPD buying groups in the Television Viewer Protection Act of 2019 ('TVPA') has shown positive market effects, it did not and could not have resolved the fundamental imbalance dynamics that smaller providers face in the retransmission consent marketplace."

ACA Connects encouraged the Commission to further look into the state of retrans in future reports on the state of competition in the communications marketplace and to collect

data on retrans consent payments made to the top four or five stations in future surveys.

DirecTV chimed in with its own concerns surrounding rising retransmission costs. The satellite and streaming provider agrees that prices are rising astronomically and believes the principal culprit for those increases is the increased consolidation among broadcasters at the local and national levels. While FCC rules block broadcasters from owning more than one top-four rated station in a local market, DirecTV, the **American Television Alliance** and others argue that there are loopholes that allow them to control as many as four major network affiliates in one market. The result is more leverage in negotiating with MVPDs.

"Generally speaking, the more of an MVPD's subscribers a broadcaster can reach, the more leverage it has in negotiations with that MVPD—and the more leverage a broadcaster has, the more harm it can do to the MVPD and its subscribers," DirecTV said. "Each time a medium-size station group becomes a large one, the Commission can expect retransmission consent prices to increase."

It also highlighted **Standard General's** proposed buy of **TEGNA** with financing from **Apollo** and its subsidiary **Cox Media Group** as a threat of increased consolidation. **Standard Media** CEO *Deb McDermott* spent time last month [reassuring](#) TEGNA employees that Standard General, which owns Standard Media, has no plans to lay off journalists following its purchase of the station group. TEGNA and Standard General have also said the deal wouldn't



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Check out the magazine to learn how you could have scored gas for 34 cents a gallon courtesy of ABC's "The Wonder Years," along with what Pluto TV did to help independent movie theaters devastated by pandemic lockdowns, how Spectrum Enterprise encouraged its clients to "Be Unreasonable" and so much more.

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increase the rate of local consolidation, but some believe the links between TEGNA post-deal and Cox Media Group would allow them to coordinate retransmission pricing across all their markets.

Unsurprisingly, broadcasters aren't of the same mindset, instead asking the FCC to rethink the restrictions that they say are holding them back compared to other media entities. **NAB** argued that TV broadcasters have faced unprecedented challenges in attracting and retaining audiences. It believes that is in part because TV station groups are forced to compete with new digital and OTT platforms that are far less regulated for viewing time. At the same time, advertisers are allocating less of their budgets to local broadcast stations in favor of digital competitors. That loss of revenue is another burden on broadcasters and one that NAB said is making it more difficult for stations to support local news production. Over the years, broadcasters have asked the FCC to consider applying retrans rules to virtual MVPDs like **YouTube TV**.

NAB called for reform in how the FCC regulates broadcasters, claiming the growth of online video and other digital media options completely undermine the basis for the agency's broadcast-only national and local TV rules, among other things. "As TV broadcasters struggle to compete for audiences with larger, unregulated video content providers while offering free OTA programming to consumers, the FCC cannot show that retaining TV station's asymmetric regulatory burdens, which discourage investment in the public's broadcast TV service, serves the public interest," the association said. "Given that consumers cannot even keep up with all available video content, no rational competition or diversity basis exists for maintaining the current broadcast TV ownership restrictions in particular."

J.D. POWER BENCHMARKS WIRELINE SATISFACTION

AT&T scored the highest out of large enterprises for a fifth consecutive year in **J.D. Power's** 2022 U.S. Business Wireline Satisfaction Study. The study looks at business wireline experiences through six factors and ranks them on a 1,000-point scale: performance and reliability, cost, communications, sales and account executives, billing and customer service. AT&T's large enterprise mark was 872, followed by **Verizon** at 865, **Cox Business** at 854 and **Spectrum Business** at 848. Verizon topped the medium business segment at 847, with Cox (838), AT&T (836) and **CenturyLink** (823) following behind. Verizon was also first in the small business group for a fourth straight year, checking in at 792. CenturyLink was second at 780, Cox Business third with 775 and AT&T fourth at 768. J.D. Power received responses from 5,061 business customers of data and voice services for the study.

CINEDIGM PREPS STREAMING PLATFORM LAUNCH

Cinedigm is launching a flagship streaming channel this August that will serve as a one-stop AVOD service. At launch, **Cineverse** will have a lineup of more than 15 FAST channels, both company-owned and from third-party partners, with films and series from the entire Cinedigm catalog. The service will also include the VOD content catalog and a selection of FAST channels that are currently part of the **Cinehouse** streaming service. A partnership with audience engagement platform LiveLike will bring gamification to the platform, allowing viewers to earn loyalty points to be redeemed for digital prizes and NFTs. A premium subscription option with no ads and additional content will be available this fall, and more details on that will be announced



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soon. It will initially launch on iOS, Android, Roku, Samsung and the web with plans for it to come to Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, LG, webOS and HTML-5 by the end of the year.

AMC NETWORKS, G4 BACK AT COMIC-CON

AMC Networks is returning to Comic-Con International in San Diego with four panels and an immersive fan experience. It's turning the Skylight Terrace and Gaslamp ballroom at the Hilton San Diego into "The Walking Dead Fan Celebration," featuring a collection of series set pieces, props, artifacts and more. Ahead of the show's final eight episodes, a "Tales of the Walking Dead" panel will be hosted by "Talking Dead" host *Chris Hardwick* on July 22 at 3:30pm. Hardwick will also moderate The Walking Dead Season 11C panel that follows at 4:30pm.

Shudder's four-part documentary "Queer for Fear" will have a panel discussion at 7:45pm, and "Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire" panel will take place July 23 at 5pm. **G4** is also coming to Comic-Con after its revival on cable in November 2021. The network currently has three panels scheduled to take fans behind the scenes of shows like "Attack of the Show" and "Xplay." Comic-Con runs from July 21-24.

NETFLIX INTRODUCES SPATIAL AUDIO WORLDWIDE

Spatial audio is rolling out across select **Netflix** programming starting today, bringing more immersive sound to shows like "Stranger Things 4" and "The Adam Project." The service partnered with German audio company **Sennheiser** to implement the feature. Subscribers can type "spatial audio" into the search bar to find programs that support it.

EVOCA LIVE IN MICHIGAN

ATSC 3.0-powered MVPD **Evoca** is up and running in Traverse City, Michigan. Customers will have access to over 60 channels including **Michigan Sports Now Plus** for \$25/month plus a receiver and can add **Sling Blue** and **Sling Orange** to their subscriptions for \$55/month. Subscribers who choose to have both will pay \$70/month.

CRACKLE PLUS RENEWS ISPOT DEAL

Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment's Crackle Plus extended its partnership with TV measurement company **iSpot.tv** through 2023. ISpot will continue providing its unified measurement solution to brands working with Crackle Plus to identify the reach delivered over linear platforms. This year, Crackle Plus will use measurement segments to quantify targeted reach and frequency for the service's campaigns.

GLO-UP

Glo Fiber installed a multi-site enterprise network for Massanutten Resort in Massanutten, Virginia. The customized network connects six geographic locations that optimize the resort's operations. Glo Fiber also created a voice solution for the resort that includes guest rooms, call center and administrative offices.

SPECTRUM EXPANDS TABLET OPTIONS

Spectrum is adding **Samsung's** Galaxy Tab A7 Lite and Galaxy Tab S8 + 5G to its portfolio of tablets. The devices will be available to purchase online and at Spectrum stores starting

Friday. The A7 Lite features an 8.7-inch screen and up to 32GB of internal storage that can be expanded up to 1TB. The S8 + 5G offers a 12.4-inch AMOLED display and supports WiFi 6E, among other features.

RATINGS

YES Network had its best June in 12 years as the New York Yankees sit on top of the MLB league standings. Yankees games averaged 391,000 total viewers in the New York DMA in June, with 17 of the 25 most-viewed games this season happening last month. From June 14-June 30, primetime games ranked first in total viewers on eight of 11 game nights among English-language cable and broadcast programs.

MAVTV PLUS FINDS NEW DTC HOME

Motorsports platform **MAVTV Plus'** live and future on-demand content is available on **FloRacing**. Programming that previously aired on the MAVTV Plus app is available on **FloSports** under the "MAVTV on FloRacing" banner. FloRacing and MAVTV Plus will co-stream programming to subscribers as well through midnight on July 26. MAVTV will notify customers with information and instructions on how to access MAVTV Plus on the platform.

PITARO NAMED CHAIR OF NAMIC CONFERENCE

Chairman of **ESPN** and Sports Content at **Walt Disney Jimmy Pitaro** was selected as honorary chair at **NAMIC's** annual conference. The conference features leaders in media, entertainment and technology who congregate to share insights on various topics. Pitaro has two decades of experience in technology and sports and he currently oversees all of ESPN's multimedia offerings. The conference will take place in NYC on October 11-12, with this year's theme being "Resilience: The Courage to Lead."

MFM UNVEILS NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The **Media Financial Management Association** announced its officers and newly elected board members. *David Bestler*, EVP and CFO of **Hubbard Radio**, will serve as Chairman, while **Warner Bros. Discovery** EVP and Chief Accounting Officer *Lori Locke* will be Vice Chair/Conference Co-Chair alongside **Beasley Broadcast Group** CFO *Marie Tedesco*, who's the new Secretary. **Gearbox/Embracer** CFO Jenna Hardy and **Sinclair** SVP/Chief Accounting Officer *David Bochenek* will be the Treasurer and Immediate Past Chair, respectively.

PROGRAMMING

Univision's "La Herencia" will premiere July 11 at 9pm. – Season 6 of "Ready to Live" will begin July 29 at 8pm on **OWN**. The program was the No. 1 original cable series among African American women 18+ in 2021-22. – "Naked and Afraid XL: Frozen" will debut July 31 at 8pm on **Discovery**. – **Oxygen** True Crime's "Mastermind of Murder" returns July 17 at 7pm. The hour-long, 10-episode season investigates a murder that holds twists in the investigation. – **Paramount+** renewed original series "Evil" for a fourth season. The first four episodes of Season 3 are available on Paramount+.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

AXS TV Paves Paradise, Puts Up a Parking Lot Game Show


There's something special about the parking lots outside of concert venues. In a news cycle where our differences are magnified on a daily basis, for that brief moment while waiting to hear your favorite band you know you're surrounded by a group of folks who at the very least have good taste in music. **AXS TV** understands that camaraderie so well that it has created "Parking Lot Payday," its first-ever game show (debuts Tuesday at 8pm ET). The inaugural season features four 30-minute episodes, with concertgoers on their way to see chart-topping musical acts tackling trivia questions about the band. The premiere features fans on their way to rock out with Metallica, while other eps are centered on The Rolling Stones, Imagine Dragons and Coldplay. "As soon as concerts started coming back [following COVID cancellations], we wanted to just dive right in with our audience of passionate music fans. We're as excited to get back to the shows as they are, so we thought we would meet them where they are, meet up with the fans and give them an opportunity to win money," explained *Sarah Weidman*, Head of Programming, Development and Multi-Platform Content for AXS TV. The Parking Lot Payday format is simple: get ambushed with 10 trivia questions about the band. Question 1 starts at \$5, Question 2 doubles to \$10. Get the final question right and you've won \$2,650, which, let's face it, is likely going toward merch and beer. The episodes are perfect for playing along at home and have a fast pace that allow for 4-6 contestants from all walks of life (we're partial to the high school teacher in ep 1 intent on showing another side of himself to students). The show's festive atmosphere has only been amplified by the pent-up desire to return to live events. "The Metallica fans were hilarious. They were crashing each other's trivia games and they're in the background making devil horns," said Weidman. "There's a lot of positive energy. For most people, it's their first show back after the pandemic so there's a lot of joy in the air." Rock on. – *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

"The Bear," **FX**, streaming on **Hulu**. Some viewers might not appreciate behind-the-scenes stories about food preparation. The sausage is fine for eating, but you don't want to know how it's made. Still, *Jeremy Allen White*, who made his bones as Lip Gallagher on **Showtime's** hit "Shameless," is pitch-perfect in this 8-part series as a culinary artist who's agreed to run a deceased relative's Chicago sandwich shop. Yes, the role is dangerously close to Lip and both shows take place in the Windy City, but White's acting and a good ensemble will make viewers, er, eat up this delicious fare. – Notable: "Victoria's Secret: Angels and Demons," premiere, Thursday, **Hulu**. OK, so it's come to this. Your reviewer (and plenty of critics) is so anxious to see this Hulu Original that we're 'reviewing' its 2-minute, 35-second trailer instead of a full-length ep. The trailer gets its point across clearly and promptly. This doc is not only about lingerie and models, it centers on CEO *Leslie Wexner*. Specifically, it questions why the billionaire chief of Bath & Body Works, Abercrombie & Fitch and others was involved with the late sex trafficker *Jeffrey Epstein* for nearly 30 years. Spoiler alert: as an expert money manager, Epstein was friendly with many billionaires. All swear they knew nothing of Epstein's dark side. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(06/27/22-07/03/22)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.659	2053
MSNBC	0.454	1414
HGTV	0.276	858
INSP	0.252	783
HALL	0.232	723
TBSC	0.231	720
DISC	0.231	718
TLC	0.228	711
HIST	0.212	662
CNN	0.211	658
FOOD	0.209	651
PRMNT	0.182	566
USA	0.174	542
TNT	0.173	540
HMM	0.162	506
TVLAND	0.161	502
ID	0.157	488
LIFE	0.148	460
ESPN	0.138	429
WETV	0.132	410
FX	0.125	389
BRAVO	0.118	367
GSN	0.111	345
BET	0.111	345
AMC	0.107	333
APL	0.100	312
OXT	0.100	310
TRAVEL	0.098	305
NAN	0.098	304
NATGEO	0.096	299
A&E	0.084	261
NICK	0.083	260
SUND	0.083	259
MTV	0.081	253
COM	0.078	242

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






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