

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

FAST Take: FuboTV Surrounding Linear with FAST Channels for Better Rates

If you're trying to launch a FAST channel, make sure you talk to **FuboTV**. And if you're looking for higher affiliate fees for a linear cable network, you should check how its content stacks up to FAST channels.

Check out FuboTV's guide and you'll see **Food Network** surrounded by food FAST channels such as **Tastemade** and **Gusto TV**. CEO *David Gandler*, speaking at the **Needham Growth Conference** on Tuesday, said he's got something like nine weather-related FAST channels around **Weather Channel** so that they're right next to the channel when a viewer is browsing.

"What I'm doing now is putting all of these FAST channels into this bundle so that I can better negotiate rates... If you're a customer that likes **NFL** and you're a huge foodie and we've lost the Food Network, I've taught you to watch these other programs," Gandler said. "On the other side, we have 50% of the ad load hours [for FAST channels], which is important because we only get 2-3 minutes of ads in the cable space."

Gandler's remarks were a much clearer expansion on comments he made last week at another investor conference about how the virtual MVPD wants to be the [great aggregator](#). He likened the hundreds of FAST channels these days as to the land grab in the early days of cable television. Everything old is new again. And eventually, the FuboTV chief predicts that the best of the FAST channels will cost distributors money. "They're going to say I want to continue to improve my programming.

We're going to say, 'Wait a minute, out of the 100 channels we have, this channel in particular does a really good job. Let's pay them one cent; let's pay them two cents.' And we get to 50% of the ad load."

It's been a headline-heavy two weeks for FuboTV, which dropped **AMC Networks**, immediately raised prices \$5, then announced that the upcoming addition of the **Bally Sports** RSNs will raise prices another \$10.99/month (or more). Asked about virtual MVPD competitor **YouTube TV**'s seven year-deal for **NFL Sunday Ticket**, Gandler takes the stance that most consumers care more about their home team than having access to an add-on package of out-of-market games, thus the deal to bring back the Bally Sports RSNs.

"I think there's a very small audience. We know 2 million [for DirecTV NFL Sunday Ticket]. So maybe with **Google**, it's 3 million. But at \$2 billion [annually] that a pretty significant [price tag], especially if you look at the **Amazon** ratings on Thursday Night Football," he said. Plus, he noted that viewers can sign up through YouTube PrimeTime Channels, a streaming marketplace of channels, TV shows, movies and events, thus they don't have to choose the YouTube vMVPD service over FuboTV if they want Sunday Ticket.

Back to those Bally Sports RSNs, Gandler claimed Fubo is now the lowest cost provider for local sports, even with those price increases. **DirectTV Stream** also offers the Bally nets and is upping prices this month. [TVAnswerman](#) puts Stream's RSN plan at \$11/month more than Fubo's. At a time when some are

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The screenshot shows the Cablefax website homepage. Callout A points to the 'LOGIN' button in the top right navigation bar. Callout B points to the 'Featured in this Issue:' section, which lists various companies and their logos. Callout C points to the 'The Daily' issue title and date (Wednesday-September 15, 2021) in the left sidebar. Callout D points to the 'PDF' icon in the left sidebar. Callout E points to the 'FULL ARCHIVES' link in the left sidebar. The main content area features a headline: 'Still Assisting: Charter Looks to Aid Community Centers, Job Training' with a sub-image and text.

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questioning the RSN model, Gandler argued that the total addressable market for regional sports customers is significantly greater than Sunday Ticket. It's a full circle change for Fubo, which was the first vMVPD to drop the nets back in January 2020, with YouTube TV and Hulu Live later following suit.

As for the change of heart, the CEO said the two sides came to a deal that makes sense. Plus, it already knows the RSN market through its carriage of **MSG, NESN** and **Marquee**. "I look at ratings on a market-by-market basis, and if you take **ESPN** national ratings and look at them on a market-by-market basis—just apply the DMA size to the national rating and line them up. You'll see that the RSNs I would say more than 50% of the time outperform ESPN. So that's the bet."

Gandler said some of the business decisions come because of the pressures of being a public company with investors anxious for it to turn cash flow positive. He said lots of CEOs besides himself are dealing today with the need for instant gratification, and you have to manage expectations. Hence, Fubo's decision to back out of its [sportsbook](#) operations.

As with his appearance at a different conference last week, Gandler said he was most excited about FuboTV's tech platform potential. He talked about a beta version coming in late 2023 or early 2024 in France that would use AI to index every frame so a viewer could ask Fubo to show every soccer goal scored from the left side of the field. Needham's *Laura Martin* immediately pressed him on how that could be turned into money.

"It improves engagement and retention. In a world where you have very limited content differentiation in the aggregation business, you need to differentiate your product," he said, sug-

gesting you could also charge consumers for the feature. On the flipside, Fubo could use the metadata to find a chair from **Ethan Allen** featured on an **HGTV** program, and reached out to see if the furniture maker wants to buy an ad. "Similar to ChatGPT, you don't even know all the capabilities yet," he said.

C-SPAN ASKS FOR CAMERA CONTROL IN HOUSE

It doesn't have to end. That was the message from **C-SPAN** co-CEO *Susan Swain* to House Speaker *Kevin McCarthy* (R-CA). The public affairs network was highly applauded for its coverage of the 15 votes to elect McCarthy as Speaker—the result of a rare instance of the House allowing independent cameras to cover special proceedings. During normal business, the House controls the cameras that provide video to C-SPAN and other networks. "The public, press and Member reaction to C-SPAN's coverage—along with the 'transparency' themes in your new rules package—have encouraged us to resubmit a request we have made to your predecessors without success: Allow C-SPAN to cover House floor proceedings on behalf of our network and all Congressionally-accredited news organizations," wrote Swain. C-SPAN wants to add a few additional cameras in the House chamber, with footage from them to be mixed with additional coverage from the House Recording System. Swain acknowledged a resolution from some lawmakers that would relax current House Recording Studio rules to allow for more flexibility in the shots shown to the public, but Swain argued that video produced by government employees would lack the transparency that C-SPAN promises. "If ongoing daily coverage of sessions by C-SPAN is not acceptable to the Congress, we request that you at least revisit the rules and permit C-SPAN and other independent journalists to cover key legislative sessions," Swain wrote.



Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax: The Magazine.

It's free to enter — but you must submit your entries by Jan. 21!



Nominate at www.Cablefax100.com | Questions: Kate Schaeffer at kschaeffer@accessintel.com

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CALIFORNIA STORMS CAUSE COMCAST OUTAGES

A powerful series of storms over the past week left many in the Sacramento and San Francisco areas without power and internet service, and **Comcast** has moved quickly to identify and fix any damaged areas of the network. As is typical in these situations, the operator is following behind the power companies, creating delays to restoring service. As of 4pm PT on Sunday, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District reported 63,000 customers without power while PG&E reported 83,000. There have also been access problems due to some roads, especially in remote areas, closing due to fallen trees and debris. Comcast California also said the city of Paradise experienced a service outage due to a large tree falling and damaging service lines. Crews have been able to physically inspect equipment and services where power has been restored in the North and East Bay areas and are continuing to follow up and make repairs in areas where service continues to be disrupted.

BULLDOG BEATDOWN LEADS TO RATINGS LETDOWN

UGA's 65-7 trouncing of TCU in Monday night's College Football Championship drew an audience of 17.2 million viewers (16.63 million on **ESPN**, 483,000 on **ESPN2** and 114,000 on **ESPNU**), the lowest mark since the Bowl Championship Series' creation in 1998. That distinction was previously held by Alabama's 2020 CFP National Championship win over Ohio State (18.7mln). You might recall that was also a blowout game, with Bama winning 52-24. According to a **SportsTVRatings** [breakdown](#), Monday's broadcast peaked in the 8:30-45pm window and began to fizzle as the Bulldogs took a 38-7 lead into the halftime break. Over the playoff's three games, 20.6 million viewers tuned in, a 9% increase YOY.

BYE SHIFTS ROLES AT DISH, JOINS ZIFF DAVIS

Stephen Bye is stepping down from his position of Chief Commercial Officer at **DISH Wireless** effective Jan. 17 and will join the digital media company **Ziff Davis** as President of the Connectivity division. No replacement has been named by DISH Wireless yet. Bye was with DISH since 2019 where he helped develop and commercialize the company's standalone 5G network, and before that, he helped deploy **Sprint's** LTE-based network as its CTO. Bye isn't completely done at DISH, though. He'll join the DISH board on Jan. 18.

XFINITY STREAM ADDS AIRPLAY

Comcast's Xfinity customers are now able to use AirPlay to stream programming from the Xfinity Stream app. Customers can use the app to play live news, sports or on-demand movies and shows on an **Apple TV** or other AirPlay-supported devices. Comcast has grown its partnership with Apple in the past year, launching the Apple TV+ app on its entertainment platforms in March and bringing the Xfinity Stream app to Apple TV devices.

STANDARD GENERAL HITS WEB WITH TEGNA PAGE

Standard General launched an informational [website](#) to share its hopes for the future of **TEGNA** should it be allowed to acquire the broadcaster. The site also includes an FAQ section on the potential impacts of the transaction and a landing page containing letters of support for the deal that have been submitted to the FCC.

CARRIAGE

With **DirectTV** and other MVPDs dropping **One America News** last year, owner **Herring Networks** continues to focus on broadcast over-the-air carriage for **OAN Plus**. It said Tuesday that the offering will be available in more than five million new OTA only households through a partnership with **Major Market Broadcasting**, which owns more than a dozen low-power TV stations in markets such as San Francisco, NYC and Orlando. OAN Plus expects to reach 15 million OTA homes by the end of 1Q23.

RATINGS

ESPN continued to lead the weekly ratings for primetime among cable nets. While it didn't reach the average of 7.76 million viewers P2+ that was [recorded the week prior](#), it led the way from Jan. 2-8 with 2.71 million. **Fox News** followed with 2.1 million, with **MSNBC** (1.37 million), **Hallmark Channel** (982,000) and **CNN** (918,000) completing the top five in prime. For total day, Fox News was first with 1.44 million. ESPN and MSNBC came second and third with 1.2 million and 950,000, respectively, while CNN checked in at fourth with 740,000 and Hallmark Channel fifth with 505,000. – **INSP** marked 100 consecutive weeks in the top 10 cable networks in the 24-hour C3 ratings. The network has climbed as high as third in those rankings in June, also coming fourth three times and fifth 11 times. – **Hallmark Channel's** premiere of "Wedding Veil Expectations," the first installment in Part 2 of the "Wedding Veil Trilogy," was the most-watched program of the week on entertainment cable among Households, W18+ and Total Viewers. The movie averaged 2.5 million total viewers and 291,000 W25-54, helping the channel be the most-watched entertainment cable net of the week in primetime and total day in Households, W18+ and total viewers.

PROGRAMMING

Journalist *Elizabeth Vargas* is joining **NewsNation** to serve as host for the new hour-long weekday news show "Elizabeth Vargas Reports." The program will premiere April 3 at 6pm and feature interviews and on-the-ground reporting. Vargas—who formerly hosted "America's Most Wanted" on **Fox** and "20/20" on **ABC**—will also contribute to the network's other news and talk programs. – The premiere of **History Channel's** "Dirty Old Cars" is set for Jan. 18 at 10pm. The show will look at the owners and staff of three detailing shops that search for dilapidated classic cars.

PEOPLE

Charter's ad sales arm **Spectrum Reach** named *Jason Brown* as SVP/Chief Revenue Officer, effective Jan. 30. Brown fills the role after *Beth Plummer* announced plans to retire following a transition period through March. He was most recently SVP, Advertising Sales at **DirectTV Advertising** and was SVP, Addressable, Local and Political for **WarnerMedia**. – **Allen Media Group** upped 25-year company vet *Andrew Temple* from President of Domestic Television Distribution to COO of Broadcast Sales & Syndication. He'll continue to manage all broadcast TV syndication and distribution for AMG's 70 TV series, while also overseeing the group's OTA networks **This TV** and **The Grio Television Network** as well as distribution for the streaming service **HBCU GO**.