

DID YOU KNOW?

FIFA World Cup 2026 is projected to generate \$9 billion in revenue, including \$3.9 billion in media rights, driven by an enlarged 48-team, 104-match schedule, premium U.S.-hosted ticketing and strengthened global media partnerships across major markets, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

COMCAST STEPS UP TO WORLD CUP STAGE

Demand for **World Cup** content is expected to be at an all-time high when the 2026 edition of the tournament kicks off on June 11—and **Comcast** is ready. Not only will it deliver wall-to-wall coverage through **Telemundo**, the exclusive Spanish-language broadcaster for all 104 matches in the States, but its Xfinity X1 platform will have a dedicated World Cup hub with personalization bells and whistles designed to amplify the live sports viewing experience and simplify content discovery.

Beyond the fact that the World Cup will be held on home turf, a look at the numbers illustrates why the operator is putting so much muscle behind the tournament from a platform perspective. FIFA is forecasting 6 billion engagements across TV, streaming and digital platforms globally.

Comcast households spent more than 30 million hours watching World Cup games during Qatar 2022, while 90% of Xfinity TV households watched at least one event during **NBCUniversal's** Legendary February presentation of the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, Super Bowl LX and **NBA** All-Star Weekend. The average household watched 38% more hours of Winter Olympics coverage compared to Beijing 2022. Notably, 2/3 of Xfinity X1 households engaged with the advanced viewing features Comcast made available for Milan Cortina, such as Create Your Own Multiview, the interactive Fan View companion and AI-generated highlights. All of these features return for the World Cup.

Comcast VP, Sports Entertainment *Vito Forlenza* told **CFX** that even before the Olympics ended, the team was already focused on scaling features further for the World Cup. “We’re using all of these events and the customer feedback. Our customers vote with their remotes, they’re interacting with the guide and with the experience every day, so we know how to optimize it,” Forlenza explained, adding that the tile-centric X1 home screen experience, where users can access the World Cup hub, gets “many billions of impressions a month.”

The Xfinity World Cup hub will emphasize content discovery and aggregation, while making sure the experience is accessible to both English and Spanish-speaking users and that content meets customers where they are. Regarding the latter, it’s why the clips feature brings vertical video and social content to the platform, and why Comcast has made it easy to customize multiview, as it found customers prefer to mix and match multiple live sports at once.

The operator is also expanding the RealTime4K low-latency offering it introduced during Legendary February, with all games on **Fox** and select games on Telemundo available in the format. It’s one way Xfinity TV is leveraging the Comcast network. Another example is smart-boost WiFi, a new feature launching for the World Cup that allows customers watching in RealTime4K to prioritize their X1 box over other devices on their WiFi network via an on-screen prompt. While internet customers already

have the ability to prioritize devices via the Xfinity app, the smart-boost prompt removes the need to take your eyes off the game to manage your network.

“This really pulls together that convergence of our products,” said *Kelly Wright*, Director of Sports Product Strategy at Comcast. “Individually, they’re strong products, but between our network and the entertainment and managing the device, it does create a better product.”

The World Cup ties into the larger Xfinity network in other ways. The operator’s current summer savings event offers Gig WiFi for \$50/month with a five-year price lock, and it bundles two years of **Peacock Premium** at no additional cost. The timing echoes a promotion Comcast ran around Milan Cortina for **Xfinity Mobile** that led to incremental signups. **Fox One** was also recently integrated into the Xfinity StreamStore and launched this week on the **Xumo** Stream Box.

There’s also the **World Soccer Ticket** part of the equation. The video package bundles almost 60 channels with Peacock Premium, delivering 1,500 soccer games, including both Fox and Telemundo’s World Cup matches. **ESPN Unlimited** is being added to that package in the fall, adding to the number of games on offer. Forlenza said it’s “too early to say” how World Cup fervor is boosting sign-ups for the package, but Comcast is “seeing interest for sure” since the bundle launched last summer.

“These are the types of things that we’re trying to do to meet the customers where they are,” Forlenza said. “Looking at all the different skinny bundles that are launching in the industry and making sure that we’re setting ourselves apart.” - *John Saavedra*

FCC FOCUSES ON SCREEN TIME VIA E-RATE

The **FCC** is looking at how it can reduce kids’ screen time by taking a closer look at the E-Rate program that subsidizes the cost of internet and telecom services for schools and libraries. FCC Chair *Brendan Carr* has circulated a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to be voted on at the June 25 meeting that, if adopted, would solicit comments on ensuring the program advances student learning and better protects children’s online safety when using E-Rate-funded services and networks. It would also seek feedback on potential legal and policy considerations for assessing children’s screen time and empowering parents, guardians and teachers in decision-making involving children’s access to E-Rate-funded networks and services. The program is nearly 30 years old, with spending for it at roughly \$2.5-3 billion annually. The FCC’s proposed notice won’t be released until tomorrow, but a senior official said it does raise the question of whether E-Rate has fulfilled its mission and whether continued funding is consistent with Congress’s original objective. However, the official said that’s a very narrow sliver of the proposal. Instead, it focuses more on the Commission’s current interpretation of the Children’s Internet Protection Act and whether the rules established back in the days of computer labs work in today’s one-to-one device environment. In September, the FCC reversed a previous decision expanding E-Rate funds for hotspots in libraries or schools that could be used by those outside of the property, including WiFi on school buses. Carr made it clear then that he was concerned about the FCC funding “illegal” unsupervised screentime for children.

CFX Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC.
cablefax.com

EDITORIAL

Editor

Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704,
nziegler@accessintel.com

Senior Editor

John Saavedra, 908.477.1758
jsaavedra@accessintel.com

Editorial Director

Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760,
amaclean@accessintel.com

Editorial Director, Ad Tech & Convergent Media

Sarah Sluis, 212.621.4706,
ssluis@accessintel.com

SVP Media Group

Dave Colford, 631.786.9796,
dcolford@accessintel.com

ADVERTISING/BUSINESS

Divisional President, Chief Marketer Network

Kerry Smith,
ksmith@accessintel.com

Advertising and Sponsorship

Vernesa Merdanovic,
vmerdanovic@accessintel.com

MARKETING

Senior Marketing Director

Jessica Dombrowski,
jdombrowski@accessintel.com

PRODUCTION/CLIENT SERVICES

Sr Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com

Group Subs: Vernesa Merdanovic, vmerdanovic@accessintel.com

Subscription Questions:

Client Services: 301.354.2101,
clientservices@accessintel.com |
Annual subscription price:
\$1,999.00/yr

Access Intelligence, LLC,

9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor,
Rockville, MD 20850

ESPN HEARD NBA FINALS CRITICISM LOUD AND CLEAR

Last year's **NBA** Finals were a bit turbulent. Sure, the Pacers-Thunder went the seven-game distance, but it took a turn when Indiana star *Tyrese Haliburton* tore his Achilles tendon early in Game 7. It also didn't help that **ESPN** was receiving hefty criticism for failing to make the Finals feel like the spectacle fans hold it to be. However, SVP, Sports Production *Tim Corrigan* is addressing that head-on for when the Knicks and Spurs tip off in San Antonio tonight on **ABC**. The NBA itself is as well, most notably putting the Larry O'Brien Trophy and "The Finals" logos back on the court after not doing so for years. But for Corrigan and ESPN, it's making smaller adjustments to capture the moment, such as showing the in-arena starting lineup announcements, the full national anthem and running different 80-second pre-taped openings for each game. "We considered doing one open for The Finals, which is what we did for a number of years, but once you start considering all the people and all the moments, you don't want to leave anybody out," Corrigan said. Another difference with this year's championship is the expected audience figures. Last season saw the lowest-rated NBA Finals in four years, but with New York back in the big time, ratings are expected to be up by a sizable margin. That doesn't change a thing for analyst *Richard Jefferson*. "For us on the broadcast, we care about calling the best game possible and having the best situation, and last year was that Game 7. The other stuff, I think we leave that for people in different positions," the former NBA champ said. Coverage of Game 1 begins at 7pm with the "Inside the NBA" crew, who will also go live following the game before *Scott Van Pelt* caps the night with "SportsCenter." According to Corrigan, Game 1 will tip off around 8:42pm ET on ABC following pregame festivities—so don't be fooled by the listed 8:30pm start time. ESPN will also have a "Hoop Streams" simulcast on social platforms with *Vanessa Richardson* and *Iman Shumpert*, in addition to a "Hoop Collective" post-game **YouTube** stream with *Brian Windhorst*, *Tim Bontemps*, *Shumpert* and *Tim MacMahon*.

PERMITTING ALSO ON JUNE FCC AGENDA

The **FCC** is also set to vote at its June 25 meeting on a notice aimed at preventing excessive delays, fees and other conditions from operating as barriers to broadband infrastructure builds. The agency is seeking comment on giving state and local governments 120 days to process wireline telecommunication services and infrastructure authorization requests. After that period, it would be presumed that they are prohibiting the project and thus violating the law. The notice also seeks to limit fees tied to rights-of-way and to prohibit additional requirements for wireline infrastructure deployments on the grounds that the infrastructure may also be used to provide other services. The FCC will also vote on a Report and Order that would presumptively exempt submarine cable operators from rigorous licensing review if they can certify compliance with high security standards.

GROUPS PUSH FOR SECURE DATA ACT TO MOVE FORWARD

A handful of associations are joining together to encourage **House Commerce** to pass the SECURE Data Act through markup without delay. **INCOMPAS**, **CTA**, **CTIA**, **NCTA**, **USTelecom** and others signed a letter Wednesday advocating for the legislation, which would establish a national framework for consumer privacy rights and personal data protection. The organizations believe a national framework would provide regulatory clarity for companies that operate across state lines, and the SECURE Data Act "strikes the right balance between strong consumer protections and a workable compliance structure that supports innovation and economic growth." Not everyone is on board, with E&C Ranking Member *Frank Pallone Jr.* (D-NJ) claiming the legislation is "industry-friendly" and pushed by big tech. "This bill locks in the failed notice and consent status quo, then compounds loophole upon loophole to water down its provisions. And then, to make matters worse, it adds expansive preemption that will leave many Americans with fewer privacy protections than they have today," Pallone said..

RETRANS ROUNDUP

Everything's OK in Oklahoma again for **DirectTV** subs. **Griffin Media's** KOTV (**CBS**) and KWCW (**CW**) in Tulsa returned to the MVPD's lineup last night after a blackout that began May 1. DirectTV also saw Griffin's KWTW (CBS) and KSBI (My **Network**) return in Oklahoma City last night. However, it's still in a stalemate between DirectTV and **Scripps**. Their retransmission consent contract expired Sunday, with 54 Scripps stations dark on DirectTV.

NAD MAKES ANOTHER RULING

The **National Advertising Division** once again rebuffed a challenge brought by **AT&T**, but still recommended **Comcast** make adjustments to claims that Xfinity Internet is “fiber-powered.” Central to NAD’s findings was whether the phrase “fiber-powered” in advertising was clear and sufficient to indicate Xfinity service isn’t delivered via FTTH infrastructure. NAD concluded yes since Comcast uses the language, “Xfinity Internet is powered by fiber and connected to premises by coaxial cable.” However, NAD also found that “fiber-powered” appears alongside other claims, including pricing offers that have separate disclosures impacting the prominence of the coaxial cable disclosure. “NAD concluded that the disclosure should be more prominent or placed closer to the triggering claim to increase the likelihood that consumers will notice and read it,” the Division said. Comcast told NAD it’ll comply with the ruling.

In The
WILD

A CFX feature highlighting industry doings spotted in the real world.

AMC’s Lestat Wows Live on Stage



It’s not every day that you get to watch one of your favorite characters come to life, but AMC Global Media gave Anne Rice fans just that during a “The Vampire Lestat” premiere event at the Beacon Theatre in NYC. A jam-packed three-level theater full of Lestat diehards dressed in their vampire best cheered and laughed throughout an advance screening ahead of Sunday’s season premiere, but that was just the appetizer before the delectable main course: a live rock concert featuring star Sam Reid, performing in-character as the cocky and capricious vampire-prince-turned-rockstar Lestat.

Reid, with a band led by composer Daniel Hart, played a collection of songs from the show’s soundtrack, including several singles released in past months to promote the show. There was the raving-mad “Long



Face,” visceral lyrics sung from the gut by Reid, all gyrating hips and winks at the crowd, while love ballad “Your Biggest Fan” tied into the vamp’s longing for a companion (his “brave little wolf killer”) on the show. The actor was pitch-perfect as Lestat in the flesh, down to his closing lines, which went something like, “That’s all the time I have, but I want to congratulate you for your close proximity to me,” producing a cheeky smile to go with it. He never broke character, and all of his “beasties” (as he referred to his energetic supporters) loved it.



AMCGM CCO and AMC Studios President Dan McDermott kicked off the night’s festivities with brief remarks thanking not only the cast and crew but also the fans, saying the event was as much a celebration of the show’s fandom as its return. The goodie bag was certainly a nice touch, containing a Lestat vinyl and a Rolling Stone magazine with the character on the cover. The very funny first episode was a great time, too. Lestat premieres Sunday at 9pm on AMC and AMC+.

- John Saavedra



THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MINUTE...

COMMENTARY BY STEVE EFFROS | STEVE@EFFROS.COM

Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of CFX.

AI'S SECTION 230?

I was planning to write another light piece today, like the last rant. Enough with the wonky, complex exercise of considering the policy implications of what we do. But then I listened to “The Ezra Klein Show” [podcast](#) last week, featuring a conversation with Israeli historian, philosopher and author Yuval Noah Harari. I strongly recommend it with a warning: it’s two hours long and definitely heavy lifting!

Harari is the best-selling author of “Sapiens” and several other books examining society through the lenses of military history, technology, science, language, and now, artificial intelligence. He’s been sending up red flags about AI for almost 10 years. He’s clearly of the view, and certainly the fear, that human beings will be transformed in the not-too-distant future into something new based on a core of data processing.

Now that’s probably not a great explanation of his ideas. It’ll have to do here because the real point that I had not focused on before, and the reason I think it’s worth your time and effort to listen to him, is his concern about the current policy effort to define AI as a person.

This is not a discussion about sentience or consciousness. That’s for another time. No, the thing that triggered my thinking after listening to the last half of the interview was the similarity between his concern over “AI personhood” and accountability for the adverse use of AI. This is something we know a lot about. We just went through this issue and are still debating whether Section 230 was ultimately a good idea to supercharge the development of the internet—Facebook, Google and all the other edge platforms that have been able to avoid accountability for what their platforms allow to happen.

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996) protects online platforms, service providers and users from civil liability for content posted by third parties. It’s considered a foundational rule that essentially protects Twitter, Facebook, etc., from being civilly responsible for what others write, say or do based on most material

gleaned from their service. Without that protection, the internet would have had to develop in a very different way, with different business plans, guardrails and so on. We don’t know what it would have been like, but it sure wouldn’t be what we now have, and I, for one, think that may have been a good thing, given the current mess.

What Harari pointed out, which I had not considered, is that (again, forget the “Transformer” stuff for now) we have already accepted the idea that something non-human can be considered a person. That’s what the notion of corporate personhood is all about. A corporation, or a union, or some other group already has some of the same rights as a natural person, such as owning property, entering into contracts or taking actions totally separate from owners, managers or employees. The most recent reinforcement of that idea came from the Supreme Court in the Citizens United case allowing essentially unlimited corporate political spending.

Harari asks if some of the major Silicon Valley companies are now trying to extend similar notions to AI. In other words, it’s not the AI companies that create the damage enabled by them that are responsible; it’s the individual users. They are the ones whom you can try to make accountable. Sure, the AI “person” (i.e. Claude) figured out how that individual could create the damage, but potentially (with enough political money) as in Section 230, the AI was not the creator of the instruction for the specific AI “hack” that was designed. So the only accountability, the only responsibility, is placed solely on whoever did.

Obviously, this is all very complicated. We are just at the beginning of the discussion. However, the two main threads of the debate over AI focus on whether we should accelerate AI development (beat China!) or should we try to develop a structure that creates guardrails around that development. Yes, that might slow things down, but is that bad?

The personhood implications are only one piece of the puzzle. Harari also argues that AI is developing its own language that we cannot understand, which gives it great power. That’s a discussion for another time.