

# Cablefax Daily™

Friday — September 25, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 186

## New Scripps: Scripps Makes Big National Play with ION Acquisition

AVODs may be getting all the buzz, but **Scripps** is banking on free, over-the-air broadcast, with its just-announced \$2.65bln acquisition of **ION Media** from private equity firm **Black Diamond Capital Management**. The transaction gives Scripps a national TV business by combining ION with its existing **Katz** broadcast networks and **Newsy**.

“Over-the-air might not be sexy, at least not yet, but ION and Katz are proof there is a lot of value being created here,” Scripps CEO Adam Symson said Thursday in a presentation, noting Katz has seen 14% revenue growth in the first six months of this year. “Together these networks will be exceptionally positioned in the national advertising landscape because over-the-air network television is going to play an even greater role in national advertising.”

The deal is expected to close in 1Q21, with **Berkshire Hathaway** contributing a \$600mln preferred equity investment in Scripps to finance the transaction. Berkshire Hathaway also will receive a warrant to purchase up to 23.1mln Class A shares, at an exercise price of \$13 per share. The deal has an implied transaction multiple of 5.9x ION’s last 12 months EBITDA through June.

Scripps projects \$500mln in synergies over the next six years. Most of that will come from transferring the Katz stations—**Grit**, **Bounce**, **Laff**, **Court TV**, **Court TV Mystery**—to the digital multicast streams of ION. Right now, Katz’s biggest operating expense is paying other broadcasters to lease the multicast channels they’re housed on. Those deals expire over the next six years. ION Media owns 71 stations in 62 markets—and elects must carry for them instead of retrans, giving the stations guaranteed carriage on cable and satellite. Symson described the strategy as a “distribution double threat,” creating stations that look like cable networks, but are broadcast at the core.

“At the end of the day, we don’t think it’s going to matter whether or not our signal ... comes in over WiFi, over broadcast, or over a coax cable,” Symson said. “By identifying this distribution opportunity and identifying a way for us to secure transmission in the over-the-air marketplace, which is growing right alongside OTT, we believe we develop a networks business that is a double threat in distribution—very well deployed in the pay TV ecosystem, continuing to be deployed in OTT and ubiquitous in over-the-air.”

Today, about 20% of ION’s viewing is over-the-air, with the rest via MVPDs, according to Symson. But he believes

**Cablefax Selected by SCTE•ISBE  
as Exclusive Partner for the Official Show Daily**

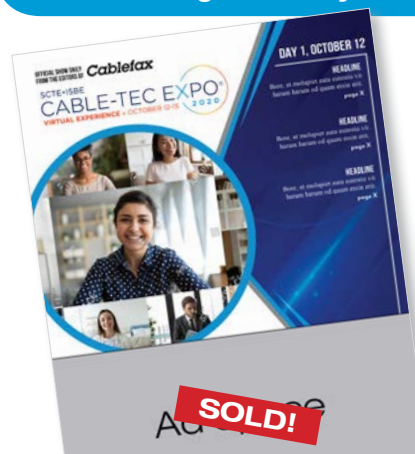


### Supercharge Your Exposure!

“The Cable-Tec Expo Show Dailies by Cablefax are a valuable resource for keeping attendees and exhibitors informed of upcoming events, as well as clear and concise coverage of the previous day’s highlights. Enlightening articles by its well-respected editors are also always a good read and round off the educational content.”

- David Atman, President, Lindsay Broadband

**Extend Your Brand  
And Message Globally.**



**Space is selling quickly!** Contact Mike Farina at mfarina@accessintel.com • Albert Nassour at anassour@accessintel.com

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher, Cablefax & Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com ● Senior Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● VP, Sales: Mike Farina, 203.218.6480, mfarina@accessintel.com ● Sales Exec: Albert Nassour, 917.545.3129, anassour@accessintel.com ● Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com ● Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,749.00/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

the OTA number will only grow as more people cut the cord and look to supplement their video with free content via digital antennas. Scripps will divest 23 ION stations to comply with FCC local and national ownership rules. The company says it already has lined up a buyer, who will maintain the ION affiliations for the stations and carry Katz stations on its multicast streams.

While Black Diamond had initiated an auction process for ION at the beginning of 2020, it was terminated as COVID-19 took hold and the equity markets weakened. Scripps stepped in a couple months ago with an unsolicited bid. Why make such a transformational purchase in the midst of a pandemic? “The company has a long history of identifying opportunities in the midst of crisis and chaos,” Symson said. “Relative to the pandemic, we are feeling better about the advertising marketplace... Also, we seem to have moved into a period in which the governments have recognized the need for them to manage through the pandemic without completely shutting down the economies.”

**REVOLT Expands Distribution on Xfinity:** Comcast and REVOLT signed an agreement that will significantly expand the network’s availability to Xfinity customers. The pair said the deal expands the network’s availability to millions more viewers in over 30 markets, but neither would offer specific figures. On Sept 29, REVOLT will be added in HD to the Xfinity Digital Starter package in Philadelphia, Northern New Jersey, Orlando, West Palm Beach, Ft Myers, Jacksonville, Tampa, Knoxville, Indianapolis, Charleston and Augusta. Additionally, in markets where REVOLT has been available in standard definition as part of the Xfinity Digital Premier package, the network will be moved to Digital Starter in HD. The new deal will also see the companies collaborating to create impactful cultural content. The first program, “Black Voices on Mute,” will illuminate the importance of voting and the history of voter suppression in the Black community. The content will be housed in Black Voices, Black Stories, a curated content collection on Xfinity X1, Stream and Flex. It’s a positive milestone in the history between the two companies. Comcast began carrying the network in 2013, but REVOLT founder Sean “Diddy” Combs released a [statement](#) last November in light of the racial discrimination suit from Byron Allen against Comcast, and said that the MVPD did not offer REVOLT the level of support needed to build a successful African-American-owned network.

**Turner Strikes MLB Deal Extension:** Turner Sports re-upped its rights deal with Major League Baseball, signing a seven-year deal valued at nearly \$3.75bn. Turner will pay approximately \$535m/yr through 2028 to carry America’s pastime. That’s a major increase from the pair’s current deal, which has Turner offering up \$325m/yr until its expiration after the 2021 season. The new agreement will also have Turner shifting its showing of regular-season games to Tuesday nights, and expand its regular-season deal from one lasting a half-season to one that

The image is a promotional graphic for the NAMIC 34th Annual Conference. It features a large, stylized orange and yellow triangle on the left side, with the NAMIC logo in white. The text "34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE" is centered above the main title "BUILDING A LEGACY" in a large, bold, blue font. Below the main title is the subtitle "THE FUTURE IS NOW" in a smaller, blue font, followed by a yellow arrow pointing right. At the bottom, the dates "OCTOBER 6 - 9, 2020" are displayed in a white font on a dark blue background. Below the dates is a white box with the text "REGISTER TODAY AT CONFERENCE.NAMIC.COM" in a dark blue font. The background of the graphic is a light gray with a pattern of overlapping triangles and faint portraits of diverse people.

carries through the full season. Turner also gained an additional wild-card playoff game, and will continue to carry two division series and one League Championship Series.

**RLJ, Allen Talk Barriers to Black Media Ownership:** A lot has changed since *Robert Johnson* launched **BET** in 1980, but the barriers that existed then for Black-owned networks remain much the same. Johnson and **Entertainment Studios** founder *Byron Allen* agreed during a panel at **Cynopsis'** That Big TV Conference that the biggest challenge facing those in the Black community that want to start businesses is a lack of capital. "When BET got its start, it was started by a half-million dollar investment by a guy named *John Malone*, who owned cable companies at that time," Johnson said. "He believed in me, he believed in the vision of a black television network and he had a particular interest in seeing a Black television network exist from an economic standpoint because he owned cable systems and he wanted more Black subscribers... that is a very limited experience that happened to me, but it is a perfect example of what could happen if more white companies who control the wealth of this nation took a chance on Black entrepreneurship. If there were more John Malones, there would be more Bob Johnsons." Allen recalled that when he first started his media company, he was unable to get a single bank loan. In recent years, Allen has focused on trying to shine a light on those he considers bad corporate citizens in the marketplace, raising racial discrimination suits against **Comcast** and **Charter**. He reached a settlement with Comcast in June, and said he believes he'll soon reach a settlement with Charter as well.

**JD Power Television Survey Winners:** **AT&T/DirecTV** and **DISH** ranked the highest nationally (763) in **JD Power's** Residential Television Service Provider Satisfaction Study. Coming in second was **Comcast** (733) and third was **Charter** (716). AT&T/DirecTV ranked highest in the East (793) followed by **Verizon** (771) and **DISH** (754). **DISH** rose to the top in the North Central (749) followed by AT&T/DirecTV (739) and Comcast (729). It also scored a victory in the South (781) with second going to AT&T/DirecTV (770) and third heading to Comcast (747). AT&T/DirecTV and **DISH** also tied in the West (752). **CenturyLink** took the second spot (728) while Comcast took third (731).

**Philo Strikes Retailer Deal with Best Buy:** **Philo** partnered with **Best Buy** to offer exclusive subscription offers to customers purchasing select hardware devices, as well as in-store and online promotional pricing exclusive to the retailer. New Philo subscribers can choose from two Best Buy offers: Getting one month of Philo free with a qualifying purchase, or sign up for a Philo subscription through Best Buy and customers will receive 50% off their first month's bill.

**Banse Ready for Retirement:** *Amy Banse*, **Comcast** vp and managing director/head of funds, **Comcast Ventures**, is retiring after nearly three decades at the company. Banse joined Comcast in 1991 as an in-house attorney responsible for Comcast's acquisition of programming and content. She will remain with Comcast through the end of 2021, serving as a senior adviser to Comcast's executive leadership team. Comcast CFO *Mike Cavanagh* will step in to oversee Comcast Ventures. **Atairos** chmn/CEO *Michael Angelakis* will advise Cavanagh and Comcast Ventures on the organization's strategic and financial priorities during the transition.

**Cable Pioneers Headed to Primetime:** The [54th annual class](#) of the **Cable TV Pioneers** is ready for their close-up. With the pandemic putting a kibosh on the annual Pioneers' banquet, the 22-member class will be inducted via a ceremony carried on **C-SPAN 3** Dec 4 at 9pm ET/6pm PT. It will also be streamed on C-SPAN.org. In addition to speeches from the 22 inductees, the telecast will feature shout-outs from industry notables.

**WICT Wins More Sponsors:** **WICT** expanded its sponsor portfolio, adding **RCN**, **Grande**, **Wave** and **AWS** as Inspire Touchstone Partners in 2020. **Carlson Resources** also now serves as the executive sponsor of the WICT newsletter, @WICT. Additionally, WICT has confirmed more sponsors for its annual Leadership Conference than any year prior. New sponsors include **Afiniti**, **Crown Media Family Networks**, **Precision Optical Transceivers** and **Red Hat**.

**People:** *Pete Bevacqua* has been upped to chmn, **NBC Sports Group**. He succeeds *Mark Lazarus*, who was recently promoted to the position of chmn, NBCU television and streaming. Bevacqua joined NBCU as pres, NBC Sports Group in Sept 2018, and he assumed oversight of the entire sports division in Feb 2019. -- **AMC Networks** pres, **SVOD Miguel Penella** expanded his role, adding **AMC+** to the portfolio of services he oversees. Penella is also responsible for **Acorn TV**, **Shudder**, **Sundance Now** and **UMC**. -- **Atlantic Broadband** director, government affairs *Fran Bradley* was re-elected to a second two-year term as chmn of the **Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania**. Also re-elected to an additional two-year term were the officers comprising BCAP's executive committee: **Blue Ridge's Joe Lorah** as vice chmn, **Service Electric Cablevision's Bob Wieand** as secretary and **Breidinger Associates' Dave Breidinger** as treasurer. **Armstrong's Shawn Beqaj** and **Jackson Broadband's Michael Hain** have both been re-elected to three-year terms on BCAP's board.



# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Tiger King Roars Again at ID

Carole Baskin doesn't just have to worry about pulling off a respectable cha-cha on "Dancing with the Stars" these days. **Investigation Discovery** has a new three-hour special "Joe Exotic: Tigers, Lies and Cover-Up" debuting Sunday (parts 1 & 2 premiere Sunday at 9pm, with part 3 airing Monday). The production delves into the big question left unanswered by **Netflix's** "Tiger King" series: what happened to Baskin's husband *Don Lewis*? "As it turns out, there's quite a bit of meat on the bone. We've been working with retired homicide investigator *Jim Rathmann*. He's leading our active investigation—it's still ongoing," said *Pamela Deutsch*, vp, production for ID and ep of the special. "He's trying to find the truth, reveal new theories, working with other private investigators and really looking into Don Lewis' final days with people close to him." The special features the Tiger King himself, with *Joe Exotic* granting exclusive jailhouse interviews and even coming up with the show's title. We asked Deutsch how she felt about Netflix trapping Tiger King instead of ID. Instead of envy, she said she only saw opportunity. "It gave you just enough information that it made the whole thing intriguing, but it didn't really resolve anything. That's really what we do here," she said. "Given how hungry people were for more information on this story, it seemed like the timing was actually great to take it to the next level." No spoilers, but Deutsch said the Lewis investigation is finding new information into his death—all of which is being shared with the Hillsborough County, FL, police department. "There are some pretty substantial things that have come up," she said. "There's a lot of people looking into this, particularly now that there's a \$100K reward from Don's family." For those who somehow missed the Tiger King craze, ID will offer a refresher and deeper look at Joe with "Joe Exotic: Before He Was King," Monday at 10pm. — *Amy Maclean*

**Reviews:** "The Comey Rule," premiere, 9pm, Sunday and Monday, **Showtime**. It's an interesting choice to begin this two-night saga with former Deputy Attorney General *Rod Rosenstein*. He's describing former FBI director *James Comey* as a "Boy Scout." That's putting it mildly. This portrayal of Comey is the opposite of warts and all. He's a great boss, loyal husband, a by-the-book jurist and public servant, with an emphasis on servant. This version of Comey stands in line when he's in the FBI cafeteria, although employees urge him to go to the head of it. Yes, he gets every cent of the taxpayer's money from his overworked, underpaid staff, but they love him nonetheless. Perhaps it's because he cares. He orders them to get out of the office for an hour to clear their heads and remembers that his driver's daughter had a recital over the weekend. *Jeff Daniels* is excellent, though even he seems embarrassed by the angelic characterization at times. OK, everyone wants to know how *Brendan Gleeson* is as President Trump. Although his makeup is over the top, he's terrific during night 2. When Gleeson and Daniels are on screen together, the fireworks begin. Night 2 also is a much better part of the story. Overall, though, this film's quality is middling, and will appeal mostly to anti-Trump news junkies. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (09/14/20-09/20/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	1.201	3,698
ESPN	1.047	3,226
MSNBC	0.657	2,025
CNN	0.442	1,361
TNT	0.422	1,299
HGTV	0.396	1,221
NFL	0.357	1,100
TLC	0.318	979
HALL	0.308	950
TBSC	0.280	862
FOOD	0.251	774
ID	0.228	702
USA	0.226	695
DISC	0.206	634
INSP	0.199	613
HIST	0.196	602
TVLAND	0.182	561
A&E	0.182	560
ADSM	0.168	519
LIFE	0.163	503
FRFM	0.158	488
HMM	0.156	481
BRAVO	0.155	478
FX	0.137	423
NAN	0.134	412
NICK	0.130	399
GSN	0.127	390
WETV	0.126	388
E!	0.121	373
SYFY	0.120	370
BET	0.119	366
APL	0.118	364
NATGEO	0.118	362
TRAVEL	0.110	340
AMC	0.097	298
DSNY	0.095	291
OXY	0.094	289
HBO	0.093	286
MTV	0.092	283
NKJR	0.089	274
WEATHER	0.085	263

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

# Corporate Licenses

## Cablefax Daily

**WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST.**

Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization.

Find out more! Contact Client Services at [clientservices@accessintel.com](mailto:clientservices@accessintel.com)

[www.cablefax.com](http://www.cablefax.com)

