

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

New Tune: Cable Cowboy DeMond Singing Fiber's Praises

New broadband entrant **Archtop Fiber** is hoping to strike a similar chord to its namesake—archtop guitars, known for their high quality, expert craftsmanship and distinctiveness. CEO *Jeff DeMond* is already an accomplished guitarist and cable operator, having previously led **Bresnan Communications** and **Vyve Broadband**—and let's not forget his time on guitar with Sailcat, the band responsible for "Motorcycle Mama." But his latest telecom venture is a little different.

With Vyve, DeMond and his team were seeking out fixer-upper systems to upgrade. Archtop, formed in partnership with digital infrastructure and real estate investment platform **Post Road Group**, is starting out at the top with greenfield construction using XGS-PON. "It's very efficient, it's very green, it's very future proof. If the standard speed set goes to 10 or 25 gig, we can go there. It's a modest upgrade for us to take up the speeds and there's a point beyond which cable won't be able to do that," DeMond told **CFX**.

It's also expensive, which is why it's noteworthy that Post Road Group is planning to invest up to \$350 million in the company's plan to accelerate fiber expansion throughout the Hudson Valley area of New York as it looks to reach more than a half million homes and businesses. Archtop will also be looking to take advantage of some of the government funding going to broadband deployment, and there will be some M&A. "We're interested in things that are already fiber rich, if not

100% fiber," DeMond. "We don't have anything to announce yet, but we will soon. We have a number of acquisitions that are in the works. These are companies that are essentially fiber-to-the home, and we're looking for things like that and that's what we're building as well."

What DeMond and his team—made up of several previous Bresnan and Vyve execs—plan to replicate from their past is the development of close community ties. "The common thread is the community relationship, which goes back 30-40 years that we've been doing this, especially in rural communities," said DeMond, who tapped former Bresnan exec *Lenny Higgins* as President/COO. "The difference is that we're coming in with the most forward-looking, state-of-the-art way to do this." *Shawn Beqaj*, who has worked at Bresnan, Vyve and most recently *Armstrong Utilities*, serves as Chief Development Officer. Serving as Chief Customer Officer is *Diane Quennoz*, who created and developed the Vyve Broadband brand (and its trademark yellow) when DeMond launched the company in 2013.

The company's initial focus is the Hudson Valley, with the Archtop team marveling at how there are areas less than two hours from NYC that don't have fast, reliable internet. DeMond said the area is in a resurgence with the new era of telework seeing more people move out of the city. It sounds like Archtop's competition will be a hodgepodge, including local phone companies, DSL and even the big incumbent cable operators in some markets.

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- TINA PERRY – President, OWN TV Network & OTT Streaming
- JOHN C. PORTER II – CEO, Telenet Group Holding
- MICHAEL K. POWELL – President & CEO, NCTA-The Internet & Television Association; Former Chairman of the FCC

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Print Issues Distributed at the
Hall of Fame Dinner on Sept. 15

Archtop's not revealing upcoming markets at this point, but is expected to announce some acquisitions in the coming weeks that should shed some light on its initial bullseye.

Will Archtop offer a traditional video product? "We're debating that. I hate to be firmly on record that we will or will not do something, but our basic thesis is that we're a pure data pipe to the house. We'll obviously need to help people access the video they're looking for over our network, so there's customer support and education," DeMond said.

DeMond is an original cable cowboy, but his new company has him competing against many of his former colleagues. "Yeah, that's a little weird," acknowledged DeMond, who has previously served on the **NCTA** board. He still has plenty of cable ties as a member of **The Cable Center's** board and a special advisor to **C-SPAN**. "We're not really setting out to be any one thing, other than a brand new, regional fiber-based ISP. We get to think of it as a clean slate approach to what we've done forever, but we get to bring something shiny and new to the table that we totally didn't have in our toolbox."

COX MOBILE LIVE IN THREE MARKETS

Cox Mobile is finally here. **Cox Communications** kicked off a pilot launch of the wireless offering Monday in three of its markets: Hampton Roads, Virginia; Omaha, Nebraska; and Las Vegas. For now, customers will have access to two plans, a Pay As You Gig option (\$15/GB per month) and a Gig Unlimited option (\$45/month). Those plans mimic those used by **Comcast** and **Charter** when they launched their mobile offerings. Customers eligible to sign up for Cox Mobile at this time are those that have Cox Internet enroll in EasyPay and

enroll in paperless billing. Cox isn't allowing customers to bring their own device, but it plans to offer the option soon. The provider's other markets won't have to wait long to gain access to the service. Cox plans to introduce it to the rest of its footprint on a rolling basis throughout the rest of the year. It's staying mum as to who its MNO partner is thanks to its ongoing litigation with **T-Mobile**. Cox originally planned to launch its wireless service last October through a partnership with **Verizon**, but was forced to put it on hold after T-Mobile sued. The mobile carrier claimed Cox was obligated to strike a deal with T-Mobile because of a previous history with **Sprint**. Cox didn't offer any new details on the suit, reiterating in a statement that while contractual limitations limit the extent it can discuss its MNO partner, customers will have access to reliable 4G LTE and 5G coverage.

FCC WRAPS 2.5 GHZ AUCTION

Bidding ended in the **FCC's** 2.5 GHz auction sooner than expected Monday after 73 rounds with gross proceeds coming in at \$427.79 million. There's no assignment stage in this auction following the clock rounds, so a public notice from the Commission will likely be released in the next week with details on the big winners and post-auction procedures. "We still assume **T-Mobile** won essentially all the licenses; with the auction behind it, the company has cleared all the visible hurdles to share repurchases (the board still needs to sign off for them to start, and there could be other factors we can't see)," **New Street Research** said in a note. According to the final results, 7,873 of the 8,017 total licenses were won during the auction with the FCC holding onto 145.

The Kaitz Dinner

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XPERI BOARD OKAYS BUSINESS SPLIT

Xperi's board has formally approved the long-awaited separation of the company's product business from its IP licensing divisions, creating two independent publicly traded organizations. The move comes more than two years after **TiVo's** initial deadline for the split of its businesses, but that was put on hold after agreeing to a merger with Xperi in 2019. At the effective time of separation, the product business Xperi will begin trading on the NYSE under the "XPER" ticker. Additionally, the remaining IP licensing business from Xperi will be named **Adeia**, and that will trade on the NASDAQ under the "ADEA" ticker.

STARLINK, FCC WIN COURT CHALLENGE

Starlink will continue to be allowed to fly its satellites at a lower altitude after a court win last week against **DISH** and **Viasat**. The **FCC** decided in April 2021 to let **SpaceX** use a lower orbit for its Starlink satellites to boost the speeds and lower the latency of its broadband service. Satellite companies stood in strong opposition to the decision, and DISH and Viasat sued the FCC to appeal the order. The DC Circuit affirmed in part and dismissed in part the appeal, arguing that the FCC had the right to make the decision despite expert reports presented by DISH indicating that changes to the Starlink constellation would interfere with its GSO satellites. It also dismissed DISH's claims that the FCC unreasonably waived a requirement that allowed Starlink to move forward with moving its satellites based on a software validation alone. "Here, the Bureau reasonably granted a waiver to avoid long delays in the provision of internet service to Americans who remain 'totally unserved by other broadband solutions,'" the court said. As for Viasat's argument that SpaceX should not have been granted the FCC licenses due to environmental concerns related to SpaceX satellite debris colliding with Viasat satellites, the Court called the company's theory of injury "much too speculative." In order to have a case, Viasat would have had to prove that a collision was certainly impending, and the FCC estimated the risk of a SpaceX satellite collision to be between 1-in-44 and 1-in-200 over the next century depending on the number of satellites launched and disposal failure rates.

CARRIAGE

INSP affiliate **Imagicomm's** FAST channel **Cowboy Way** is now available on **Xumo**, making it the third streaming platform to carry the channel after **Roku** and **Plex**.

T-MOBILE COVERING APPLE TV+ FOR SOME

T-Mobile is including one year of **Apple TV+** as part of its Magenta Max plan. Magenta Max, T-Mobile's most popular plan, offers unlimited premium data, 5G service as well as free Netflix and one year of **Paramount+** for \$140/month for 3 phone lines with AutoPay. Magenta customers will also receive Apple TV+ perks, but they'll be limited to six months of free service.

AT THE COMMISSION

FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* extended the term of the agency's Intergovernmental Advisory Committee by two months to Nov. 22. The IAC offers guidance and recommendations on communications issues which state, local, Tribal and Territorial governments share responsibility for with the Commission.

PROGRAMMING

HBO has begun production of a documentary detailing the scandal of Bishop Sycamore High School. "BS High" will premiere on HBO and **HBO Max** in 2023. – **Apple TV+** revealed the programming schedule for the fall. The "Peanuts Anthology II," which holds "He's A Bully, Charlie Brown," "It Was A Short Summer, Charlie Brown" and more, will be available Sept. 9. Then, the animated preschool series "Sago Mini Friends" makes its series premiere Sept. 16. Seasons 2 of "Wolfboy and the Everything Factory" and "Get Rolling with Otis" begin Sept. 30, and "Hello, Jack! The Kindness Show" follows with its second season debut Oct. 7. Season 3 of "Ghostwriter" kicks off Oct. 21, and the series premieres of "Slumberkins," "Circuit Breakers" and "Interrupting Chicken" are set for Nov. 4, 11 and 18, respectively. – **E!** greenlit "Nikki Bella Says I Do," a four-part series following **WWE** star *Nikki Bella* and "Dancing with the Stars" winner *Artem Chingvintsev* on their path to marriage. The series will premiere in early 2023. – **TelevisaUnivision's** platforms **ViX** and **ViX+** unveiled their programming slates for September. "Amores que Engañan" (Love that Deceives) kicks off Sept. 1 on ViX, before the platform celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with collections of Latino movies starting Sept. 15. Films part of that include "Vicky, Cristina Barcelona" and "El callejon de los Milagros" (Midaq Alley). For ViX+, the docuseries "Cenizas de la Gloria" (Ashes from Glory) will be released Sept. 22, followed by "La edad de la Ira" (The Age of Wrath) beginning Sept. 23. The movies "Presencias" and "Maixabel" premiere Sept. 7 and 14, respectively. – Season 7 of "Exatión Estados Unidos" begins Sept. 27 at 7pm on **Telemundo**.

PEOPLE

Canela Media hired *Felipe Osorio* to the newly created position of VP of Canela Sports. He'll oversee expanding content offerings to users through acquisitions, partnerships, original content and more. Osorio was previously VP, Digital Editorial Operations at **Univision**, where he worked to create sports content for advertisers who wanted to reach Hispanics in the U.S. and Mexico. – *Frances Field* was named VP of Brand Marketing for **Hallmark Media** and its marketing division **Crown Global Brand Group**. She'll manage the strategy and development of consumer marketing initiatives, as well as paid advertising efforts, email marketing, promotional partnerships and sweepstakes. Field previously led consumer marketing and media at **OWN**. – **Husslup** appointed *Alex Maghen* as CTO of its new mobile talent discovery app. Maghen recently led **Warner Media's** digital product and engineering unit for seven years and was CTO at companies such as Yahoo Music, **Viacom/MTV Networks** and MySpace.