

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

No Problem: Nielsen Prepares to Go Private, Responds to FCC Critique

It's a new era in **Nielsen's** history. Shareholders have approved an acquisition of the TV measurement company by a private equity consortium made up of **Evergreen Coast Capital Corp.**, an affiliate of **Elliott Investment Management L.P.**, and **Brookfield Business Partners L.P.** The all-cash deal was valued at approximately \$16 billion, including the assumption of debt. It's expected to close in October, at which time Nielsen will become a private company and will no longer trade shares on the NYSE.

But before Nielsen can focus on the future, it still has a lot of work to do to repair the damage its reputation suffered during the pandemic. It's been under fire for more than a year after an audit from the **Media Rating Council** revealed it undercounted viewership numbers during the pandemic. Programming executives began to focus on collecting and owning their own data as well as test partnerships with other measurement firms. Some regulators have also become curious about what else is out there.

FCC Commissioner *Nathan Simington* [asked](#) the agency in July to open a Notice of Inquiry tied to Nielsen's inclusion in various FCC rules, encouraging his fellow commissioners to investigate opportunities to identify or generate new sources of broadcast data. He also argued that if the Commission's ties to Nielsen are no longer serving it, it should break them. At that time, the Commission had approved a Notice of Pro-

posed Rulemaking tied to FCC rules requiring local TV stations looking for carriage on a pay TV system to determine their local market using two Nielsen publications: the Station Index United States Television Household Estimates and the annual Station Index Directory. The Commission has been gathering comments on a proposal to replace both of them with Nielsen's monthly Local TV Station Information Report, and **NAB** is in firm support of the FCC considering alternatives for any of its rules or required showings by broadcast stations.

"For purposes of TV station DMA assignments, stations and multichannel video programming distributors need to be working from a single 'playbook,' so only one data source can be relied on in this context," NAB said in comments submitted this week. "However, for matters that do not require reliance on a single data source, the Commission should give fair and nondiscriminatory reconsideration to other sources of data."

Nielsen acknowledged in its own comments that competition in the TV measurement space is increasing every day, but it claims its advantage over firms like **Comscore** remains in its investment in panel measurement and sampling. Much of the industry uses return-path data for audience measurement, which can tell you which devices are on and to what programs they're tuned into. Nielsen claims only panel measurement can determine if someone is actually watching and who that person is, and it takes a mix of both techniques to extract accurate information on certain demographics.

"Our competitors, for whatever reason, have chosen not

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to make the investments necessary to provide this kind of information. This, we believe, is at least in part why the Commission has chosen to rely on Nielsen's services over the years, and why the Commission can confidently continue to do so," Nielsen said.

It also took a moment to respond to Simington's critiques, acknowledging that it did lose its accreditation from the Media Rating Council last year. But Nielsen claimed many, if not all, of the issues cited by the Council can be directly attributed to challenges it ran into during the pandemic. It was forced to cancel in-home visits and couldn't rely on panels to the same extent, and that created major challenges with its data and ratings processes.

"Nielsen has been working hard with the Council to address its concerns and hopes to have its accreditation restored in the near future," it said. "And, of course, no other measurement company has received accreditation for local or national television audience measurement."

BROADBAND MAPS ARE COMING

Thursday marked the deadline for all facilities-based providers of fixed and mobile internet to submit their broadband data to the FCC as the agency gears up for a comprehensive overhaul of its broadband data mapping and collection process. The FCC has indicated that it would consider individual requests for confidential treatment of lists of addresses or locations for fixed service along with other sensitive info. Providers, ranging from big players like Charter and T-Mobile, to smaller entities, such as MCTV, have asked for confidential treatment of some data. The confidentiality requests keep coming in as data is

submitted. The deadline is seen as a major milestone in the quest for a more accurate snapshot of unserved areas. "The FCC is leading the charge to accomplish something we've all wanted for about a decade, and Congress and the FCC should be commended for getting the BDC program launched and for bringing together all the stakeholders. From webinars, to detailed data specifications, to extensive help and support pages, the Commission's Broadband Data Task Force has done crucial work," Comcast's Broderick Johnson, EVP of both Public Policy and Digital Equity, wrote in a blog post Thursday. "While there may be ways the map needs to adapt as we move forward, even the initial version of the BDC map to be released by the FCC in the coming months will be far superior to what we have today."

FCC REVEALS TOP 2.5 GHZ WINNERS

T-Mobile emerged from the FCC's 2.5 GHz band auction as the big winner, scoring 7,156 of the 8,017 available county-based licenses. It will pay \$304.325 million for those licenses, far more than the next highest bidder. The auction produced 63 winning bidders, 77% of which qualified as small businesses or as entities serving rural communities. None of T-Mobile's major competitors, including AT&T and Verizon, scored any licenses through the auction with North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation (107), Every Kansas Central (54), LICIT Wireless Broadband Company (46) and Broadband One of the Midwest (42) rounding out the top five license winners.

COST CUTTING FOR NBCU NETS?

Bloomberg reports that NBCU boss Jeff Shell has asked his top lieutenants to identify ways to save as much as \$1 billion from the legacy cable and broadcast TV networks. The report,

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citing anonymous sources, said plans aren't finalized and that execs have explored options such as layoffs, trimming budgets for new programs under development and focusing on a mix of more low-cost programs. A major media company looking to cut costs is hardly a surprise, with **Netflix** a cautionary tale in content spending outpacing profit.

GET GAMING

Current **NFL** players, former legends and gaming content creators are coming together for "NFL Tuesday Night Gaming." The league partnered with **Enthusiast Gaming** to create the event where teams will compete head-to-head in popular video game titles. Tuesday Night Gaming will make its debut in the U.S. and Canada on Sept. 13 at 6:30pm on **YouTube** and run through the 2022-23 NFL season. It includes an All-Star Game during Super Bowl week, where fans will select which players, legends and content creators participate in the special edition event. The schedule has three built-in bye weeks that "NFL Family Game Night" will take place as young fans play various games alongside players.

MULTICAST MOVES

Two additional broadcast multicast channels are now available on **DirectTV. Grit**, which features American Western programming, can be found on channel 81 and **Bounce**, a channel with programming, specials and events designed for Black audiences, is on channel 82. – Two of **Sinclair's** multicast networks are replacing **MeTV** in several markets. The action and adventure network **CHARGE!** added **KATU** (Portland, Oregon), **KUTV** (Salt Lake City, Utah), **WLTV** (Jacksonville, Florida), **WJAR** (Providence, Rhode Island), **KOLD** (Tucson, Arizona) and **WJAC** (Johnstown, PA). **Comet**, which features sci-fi content, added 12 stations including **KSNV** (Las Vegas), **WANT** (Memphis, Tennessee) and **KREM** (Spokane, Washington).

FIBER FRENZY

Nextlink Internet made a \$1.3 million agreement with Wise County, Texas, for the provider to deploy broadband at speeds ranging from 100 Mbps to 500 Mbps to 95% of households in the county. That's good for over 65,000 people, and Nextlink will provide gigabit internet service for 18 of the county's 20 offices—with the other two getting fixed wireless service. Additionally, Nextlink is opening a permanent field office in the county that'll employ 15 people full-time.

SYRACUSE SEEKS RFPS FOR MUNI PILOT

The City of Syracuse, New York, is requesting proposals for a pilot program for the design, implementation and maintenance of a municipally shared telecommunications network. The pilot program will be funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, with the city planning to seek to expand the program in the future with additional federal and state funding. The pilot program is intended to target households in census tracts with the lowest rates of internet and broadband access, with U.S. Census survey data putting more than 25% of Syracuse households without internet access and nearly 45% without speed levels needed to support multiple users.

TIVO REVEALS TV OS

Xperi launched the **TiVo** OS media platform Thursday to smart

TV manufacturers and revealed its first OS partnership with **Vestel**. The consumer electronics company will ship the first smart TVs powered by TiVo in Europe next year.

T-MOBILE OFFERS AD BUCKS, CANVA TO SMBS

T-Mobile is bolstering its benefits for small business customers, offering select subscribers free Canva Pro subscriptions through the end of the year as well as \$200 of free advertising on **Facebook** and/or **Instagram**. New or existing customers of Magenta for Business, Business Unlimited Advanced and Business Unlimited Ultimate+ plans with three lines or more are eligible for the offer.

DOING GOOD

The **Nexstar Media Charitable Foundation** made another \$50,000 donation to **Feeding America** Thursday to assist with the organization's promotion of September's Hunger Action Month. The contribution is part of an ongoing four-year \$2 million partnership between Nexstar and Feeding America. During the month of September, Nexstar's 200 owned and partner broadcast stations and **NewsNation** will donate airtime worth \$600,000 to air PSAs on behalf of Feeding America.

PROGRAMMING

Car racing series "Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings" returns to **Discovery Channel** on Sept. 19 at 8pm, available to stream the same day on **discovery+**. Following the program is a new show "The Great 8," where the top eight drivers in the standings race for \$15,000 and 20 points toward the No Prep Kings leaderboard. – Starting today, the **Ed Sullivan Show** channel is available exclusively on **Pluto TV**. The channel features content from the former TV personality **Ed Sullivan** and can be found in the Classic TV category. – **Prime Video's** upcoming Western drama "The English" will premiere with all six episodes on Nov. 11 in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Nordics. – **MSG Networks** is broadcasting select football games from New York and New Jersey throughout the season, with the first coming Friday at 4pm. Games aired on MSG will be made available on MSG GO as well. – **Spectrum Networks** is launching a weekly show where high school students are tested on local and national news topics relating to history, politics and government. "Spectrum News Challenge" debuts Sept. 7 at 8:30pm on local Spectrum News networks and the Spectrum News app. Teams will be made of three students from areas across Spectrum's footprint for a chance to win \$1,500. – **Freeform's** "31 Nights of Halloween" returns this October with a mix of recent and classic films. "Edward Scissorhands" kicks the event off Oct. 1 at 7am, followed by "The Witches" at 9:10am and "The Haunted Mansion" at 11:20am. Other movies to be played during the event include "Ghostbusters," "Halloweentown," "Get Out" and "A Quiet Place." The event wraps up with "Hocus Pocus" at 9pm on Oct. 31.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily is taking an extended break during the Labor Day Weekend and won't be publishing a September 2 issue. Your next issue will arrive on Tuesday, September 6.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Serving the Other Side of Stardom

Many remember tennis legend *John McEnroe* as a fiery, spirited player who was quick to let his displeasure with an official—or anyone else for that matter—known. But as time goes on and McEnroe looks back on his upbringing and tumultuous yet storied career, the importance of his family and displaying love becomes increasingly more important to him. “McEnroe” premieres on **Showtime** on Sunday at 8pm but is available on VOD and Showtime apps starting Friday. The documentary looks at McEnroe’s childhood and his rise before breaking into the world tennis scene at 18 years old. Even while young and new to the global stage, McEnroe’s brash attitude and explosive outbursts cultivated a reputation among fans. However, as always, there was and continues to be more beneath the surface of one of tennis’ all-time greats. That’s why Director *Barney Douglas* wanted to steer away from “retelling” a sports story and focus on more universal themes. “I definitely felt like there was more humanity to John than what had been portrayed [in the past],” Douglas told **CFX**. “I felt that a lot of people decided what he was, or who he was, and that this film was an opportunity to just be a lot more compassionate with him, as well and empathetic of where he came from and the struggles internally that he faced.” The documentary doesn’t completely ignore tennis as it chronicled the various moments—both good and bad—throughout his career, like his longstanding friendship and on-court rivalry with Bjorn Borg. Though McEnroe remains involved with tennis as a commentator and analyst, he wants viewers to watch the documentary and relate to the various struggles he’s endured over the years. “I felt it was like important for me to sort of talk about the journey I’ve taken as much or more, and where I’ve come out hopefully better the other end,” McEnroe told **CFX**. “I think there’s a lot of things that people can relate to. Going through a divorce, issues with your parents, obvious things. Kids. Post-career, et cetera.” – *Noah Ziegler*

REVIEWS

“Frontline: Lies, Politics and Democracy,” season premiere, 10pm, **PBS**. Points to anyone younger than 50 who can identify the lineup of presidential hopefuls who grace the opening of Frontline’s mini doc. Pols from *Wendell Willkie* and *Thomas Dewey* to *Bob Dole*, *John Kerry* and *George McGovern*, even First Lady *Betty Ford*, are shown conceding an election with grace and class. *John McCain* must quiet a displeased crowd as he concedes. In one breath, Al Gore registers disdain for the Supreme Court’s decision, but then he too accepts the outcome. Capping this historical tribute is a clip of former president *Donald Trump* on election eve 2020 uttering, “This is an embarrassment to our country...Frankly, we did win this election.” The contrast is glaring. We then hear the voice of narrator Will Lyman, who says, “It was the lie that sparked an insurrection.” Next, the film argues Trump’s reaction was predictable. In the 2016 Iowa Caucus, where he lost to *Ted Cruz*, the future president tweeted, Cruz “didn’t win Iowa, he stole it...he cheated...a total fraud.” Four years before, Trump, who backed *Mitt Romney*, alleged supporters of *Barack Obama* rigged voting machines. “It’s a disgusting injustice...we should march on Washington.” Depending on the viewer’s point of view, they’ll marvel at a very good piece of contemporary history or scream at the set. – *Seth Arenstein*

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P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
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MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.699	2176
MSNBC	0.404	1257
HGTV	0.302	939
ESPN	0.279	868
HALL	0.239	744
NFL	0.237	738
INSP	0.234	728
TLC	0.231	720
TBSC	0.219	684
DISC	0.205	637
CNN	0.201	627
USA	0.201	627
FOOD	0.199	619
HIST	0.164	512
TVLAND	0.155	484
TNT	0.141	439
ID	0.140	437
A&E	0.135	421
WETV	0.129	402
SYFY	0.128	398
HMM	0.123	384
REELZ	0.120	372
GSN	0.116	362
BRAVO	0.110	344
TRAVEL	0.104	325
OXY	0.103	322
APL	0.101	314
MTV	0.099	309
FRFM	0.099	307
HBO	0.097	303
AMC	0.097	301
LIFE	0.095	297
BET	0.094	291
NATGEO	0.091	284
FETV	0.091	283

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