

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Now's the Time: Comcast Unveils New Streaming Offering

When **Comcast's** video sub losses topped 600,00 last quarter, it was just the latest illustration of how the traditional multichannel world needs a new bundling. Enter Comcast's Now TV, a \$20/month streaming offering announced Tuesday that features more than 60 channels with the ad-supported Peacock Premium tier.

Now TV is the latest example of Comcast's reimagining of video. It's also gearing up to launch a national streaming jv under the **Xumo** name with **Charter**. Both feature its bread-and-butter broadband as the heart of the offerings.

"Now TV will be something that we can have as a companion to broadband," Comcast Cable CEO *Dave Watson* said at the **J.P. Morgan** Investor Conference on Tuesday. "For us, the way we're able to position it, it will be accretive. So we're able to do this next-generation video tiering with the ability to make it financially accretive, but at the same time, I think it's going to be a great companion to broadband."

Now TV's lineup will have a similar look to that of virtual MVPD **Philo**. Now TV will launch with more than 40 linear channels from the likes of **A+E Networks**, **AMC Networks**, **Warner Bros. Discovery**, **Hallmark** and others. It won't—at least initially—have any of **Disney** or **Paramount's** networks, nor will it have **Fox** or **CNN** live news. However, customers can watch their respective local NBC affiliate via the ad-free Peacock subscription. And while it doesn't include sports channels like ESPN, Fox Sports or any RSNs, Peacock is continuing to dabble in more and move

live sports. It already carries **Premier League** matches, an **MLB** Sunday morning game and **NFL** Sunday Night Football, and it'll add **Big Ten** sports once that deal goes into effect July 1 and an exclusive NFL Playoff game for next season.

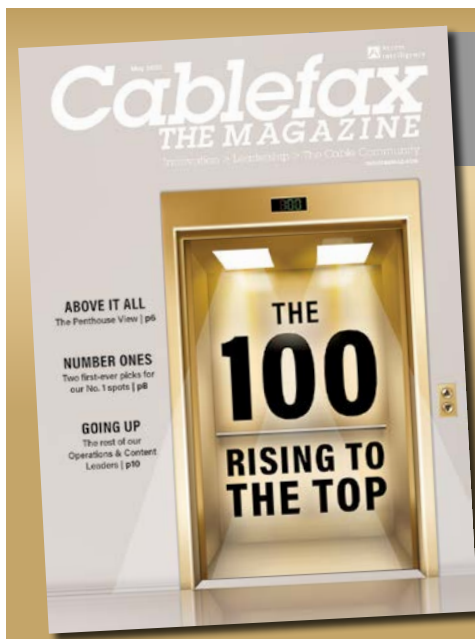
Viewers can also catch news from the FAST channels **NBC News NOW** or **Sky News**. They're part of the 20+ FAST networks pulled from **Xumo Play** that are genre-specific, spanning from **Bollywood & Indian Cinema**, to **Comedy TV** to **Sci-Fi & Fantasy Movies**.

"I think it opens up the notion of there will be a next generation of packaging opportunities that [give] us the ability to reimagine a more profitable way of delivering video, but packaging it with broadband," Watson said. "And that's that next generation double play, or even triple play, in that you can combine now mobile ... you can layer on other streaming products if you want."

On the financial side, Now TV isn't necessarily seen as an immediate influx of cash. As Watson mentioned, it's how Comcast is anticipating the growing intersection of broadband capabilities with entertainment viewing, something that the company comes prepared for with a disciplined financial strategy.

"We're planning out capital I think in a very thoughtful way that people can understand, and doing that now with this new connectivity and platforms group with [a] clear line of sight ... we're getting prepared for where I think the customer is going not where they're at right now," Watson said.

On the notion of engagement, Watson noted the current



## CONGRATULATIONS to all the honorees!

The **2023 Cablefax 100 Magazine** is FINALLY here.

The issue salutes the most influential professionals in media, cable & broadband whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. Get to know this year's **Cablefax 100** issue again features **Operations Leaders** and **Content Leaders** in separate ranked sections.

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trends of users moving toward streaming for entertainment, which was given a boost when Prime Video began broadcasting the NFL's Thursday Night Football games. He said Thursday nights are the new peak moment for broadband connectivity engagement, but even when a new peak arises, Watson suspects streaming will be at the heart of it.

"You look at all those devices, you look at this sheer amount of engagement. I think anyone that you know thinks about your own personal situation or anybody, you have to ask yourself, 'Where do you think broadband is going?' And broadband is going to continue to see more streaming, you're going to see more video games, more applications. And so there'll be these new peak moments that occur in terms of streaming."

### COMCAST'S BROADBAND SUBSIDY PLANS DEVELOPING

When it comes to its future broadband buildout plans, Comcast is taking into account the opportunities within government subsidy programs. The company is targeting 1 million new fiber passings in 2023, and while most of Comcast's broadband builds aren't subsidized yet, it's getting ready for when those programs come along. "It is a new opportunity in that we have a whole portfolio of products to be able to go to these communities with—mobile included—and be able to talk about business services [and] residential. But we will be very disciplined in terms of profitable outcomes and how aggressive we are," Comcast Cable CEO Dave Watson said at the J.P.Morgan Investor Conference on Tuesday. He said Comcast has had success at the state level and the benefits will begin to show next year. The company is eyeing 200,000+ edge outs in 2023, and while Watson said it's "hard to say" if that number will climb, Comcast is going to be aggressive. "This is a huge opportunity for us," he said. "I can't give you the exact number, but we're going to be on this for the next couple of years."

### LIFE AFTER STANDARD GENERAL

Now that Standard General's \$5.4 billion deal to acquire TEGNA has collapsed, TEGNA is going forward with a \$300 million accelerated share repurchase program and a 20% increase in its quarterly dividend. Standard General is expected to pay TEGNA a \$136 million termination fee. TEGNA had paused earnings calls while the merger was pending, but those are back on the table. On Thursday, it will host an investor call to discuss its 1Q23 results and will provide guidance for the second quarter and full-year 2023. In February, the FCC Media Bureau announced it would have the ALJ hold a hearing on the transaction, a lengthy process that didn't occur before a May 22 financing deadline.

### NTIA CHIEF CONFIDENT BEAD DEADLINES WILL BE MET

NTIA Chief Alan Davidson knows there is some anxiety in the industry about whether broadband providers will be able to meet the ambitious buildout deadlines set for the BEAD program, but he doesn't share that stress yet. "We will be pushing to get shovels in the ground and get people connected as fast as possible. We're going to keep pushing providers to hit those goals because we know communities need to be connected," Davidson said during an NTIA oversight hearing held by the House Communications Subcommittee Tuesday. "We'll be watching to see if there are problems, but we're hopeful that people will be able to meet that mark. Four years is a fair amount of time to do the implementation." He did acknowledge the workforce gap that has already been felt across the telecommunications space and the challenges it brings, calling this an all hands on deck moment to ensure providers can get staffed up. NTIA is estimating its broadband programs will create somewhere between 100,000-150,000 new jobs. "We want them to be good, high-paying, safe jobs. We want them to be in the communities where the networks are being built, and it's really going to take a lot of training," he said. Ensuring that the funding is being distributed in an equitable way has been a huge focus for NTIA with its Digital Equity Act programs distributing \$2.75 billion through three grant programs designed to promote digital equity and inclusion. It's something the agency is looking at when states submit their BEAD action plans, and Davidson hopes that communities will be able to feel the difference when these buildouts are completed. "I think the goal that we're pushing for and that you should hold our feet to the fire on is being able to measure outcomes. If money gets spent in a community, we ought to be able to see five years down the road, 10 years down the road, how did that impact poverty rates, how did that impact educational levels, healthcare outcomes?" he said. "That's the kind of data that I think we ought to be collecting and you ought to be measuring our success based on." NTIA is continuing to make progress on the development of a national spectrum strategy, a key piece to the creation of a long-term spectrum pipeline. The agency received approximately 140 comments in response to its request for comment, and now the team is focused on identifying the particular bands that could be targets for spectrum reallocation. "We've put out this ambitious goal, 1500 MHz of spectrum to study. We're on track to make sure we get that into a study that comes out towards the end of this year," Davidson said.

### MAX TRANSITION COMES WITH MIXED RESULTS

Today is the day where HBO Max became just Max, and the seam-

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less transition that **Warner Bros. Discovery** promised isn't exactly what was delivered. Smartphone users were required to download a separate Max app and enter their HBO Max credentials before being able to watch, and **Roku** users needed to manually update their HBO Max app before viewing. Some subscribers that purchase Max as an add-on through other providers reported issues with the app's authenticator that prevented them from logging in. Subscribers from **Charter**, **YouTube TV** and Roku were among those tweeting complaints throughout the day Tuesday. Other users reported that the switch from HBO Max to Max occurred as they were watching a series, and when they emerged on the other side of the transition, they couldn't find the content they were watching. In our editorial team's experience, the most seamless experience came on a **Vizio** smart TV with the Max app remembering login credentials from HBO Max and getting the user to the content guide in two clicks.

## NETFLIX STARTS DOMESTIC PASSWORD CRACKDOWN

**Netflix** is officially cracking down on password sharing in the U.S., sending an email to subscribers notifying them they can share their account with someone outside of the household for \$7.99/month. Everyone within a household will continue to be able to watch at home or when traveling, and new features like Transfer Profile and the Manage Access and Devices tab will be rolled out to all U.S. users.

## CARRIAGE

**The Cowboy Way** FAST channel is headed to **Philo**. The channel features original content from **INSP**, including "Ultimate Cowboy Showdown," "Wild West Chronicles," "County Line" and "The Warrant." – Another day, another FAST service for **Sling TV**'s Freestream offering. This time it's female and minority-owned **Canela.TV** joining the lineup. The addition means Freestream now offers more than 85 Spanish language channels available for free. In addition to the main Canela.TV channel, four additional channels will be available to Freestream viewers: **Canela Tele-novelas**, **Canela Clasicos**, **Canela Deportes**, and **Canela Cinema**.

## FIBER FRENZY

Residents and businesses in the area of Alexandria, Louisiana, are now eligible to get fiber internet service from **Vexus Fiber**. Customers can get multi-gig symmetrical speeds with Vexus, and the provider is set to open a retail store in Alexandria next month. – **Archtop Fiber** is acquiring **Warwick Valley Telephone Co.** after signing a stock purchase agreement Tuesday with Warwick's previous parent company **Momentum Telecom**. The agreement allows Archtop to provide telecommunications services to customers in Orange County, New York, central New York and northwestern New Jersey. Archtop will also upgrade WVT's network to fiber.

## WEEKLY RATINGS

Not much changed in last week's primetime cable leaderboard vs the week prior. **TNT** once again took the top spot with 2.91 million viewers, followed by **ESPN** (2.59 million), **Fox News** (1.41mln) and **MSNBC** (1.12mln), according to **Nielsen**. The one change-up is **INSP** pushed **HGTV** out of 5th place with 770,000 viewers vs HGTV's 701,000. In total day, Fox News celebrated its 20th consecutive week at the top with an average of 1.1 million viewers. It's closest competition in total day was ESPN at 829,000.

## NAMIC'S 29TH VISION AWARDS

**AMC** led the **NAMIC Vision Awards**, taking 2 of the 15 honors for "Dark Winds" and its star *Zahn McClarnon*. The awards, now in their 29th year, celebrate excellence in programming that pushes the boundaries of creativity, storytelling, and inclusivity. Other winners include **Food Network's** "Delicious Miss Brown," **Smithsonian Channel's** "The Color of Care," **Revolt's** "Revolt x Michelle Obama," **HBO Max's** "Pause with Sam Jay," **History's** "After Jackie" and **ESPN+'s** "Why Not Us: Southern Dance." See the complete winners' gallery [here](#).

## PROGRAMMING

Memorial Day is near, and **Great American Adventures** will celebrate with a marathon of travel cooking series. The FAST channel will have 24 hours of curated episodes from "Seaside Snacks and Shakes," "Southern Barbequed Everything," "Baked" and "Late Night Eats." – **NewsNation's** weekday program "Morning in America" has a new co-anchor: *Markie Martin*. She'll join *Adrienne Bankert* on June 12 as the show expands to a four-hour format, running from 6am-10am. Martin has been with NewsNation since 2020 as the network's Dallas-based correspondent. – **Peacock** will have a performance special starring *Nick Jonas* on July 7. It's part of the recently re-launched "Be All You Can Be" campaign with **NBCUniversal** and the U.S. Army.

## PEOPLE

After 34 years at **Showtime**, *Kim Lemon* has decided to embark on his next chapter, the programmer said Tuesday. He most recently served as EVP, Data Strategy, Research, Scheduling and Programming for Showtime. *Laurel Weir*, EVP/Head of Programming and Strategic Insights & Research, **MTV Entertainment Studios** and **Paramount Media Networks**, will be stepping in and expanding her purview to now include Showtime. – **PBS** and **GBH Boston** veteran *James Dunford* was named as President/CEO of **American Public Television** effective June 12. He succeeds *Cynthia Fenneman*, who has led APT since 2001 and will retire in early June. On the heels of its rebrand Monday, **Cineverse** is making changes to its leadership team. *Erick Opeka* was promoted to President, where he'll continue to oversee Cineverse's corporate strategy, strategic initiatives and M&A efforts. Cineverse also promoted *Tony Huidor* to COO/CTO and tapped *Mark Torres* as Chief People Officer.