

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Still Proud: Media Industry Not Backing Down from Pride Celebrations

For years, programmers and MVPDs have welcomed June with a slew of Pride Month-themed programming and initiatives, and that doesn't seem to be changing despite recent backlashes against Target, Bud Light and other brands over LGBTQ+ products and events.

Target and Bud Light both faced criticism for how they handled challenges from conservatives, resulting in condemnation from the LGBTQ+ community and allies. The sports world hasn't been immune either, with the Dodgers disinviting—and later re-inviting—drag nun group Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence after complaints from conservative Catholic groups. Then there's Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis vs. Disney. It feels anyone raising the rainbow flag could end up in the crosshairs.

Yet that's not stalling Pride plans for industry players CFX spoke with. "We're not seeing any decline in interest in celebrating Pride Month from our partners including cable, satellite, FAST platforms, advertisers, talent, or audiences. At Fuse Media, we're talking to a young audience who overwhelmingly demands representation and inclusion for all people," said Marc Leonard, SVP, Content & Marketing at Fuse. "We celebrate cultural identities year-round, with just a little more focus on days and months of cultural recognition. This is baked into our company mission which is to create an ecosystem where everyone can see themselves represented."

Adriana Waterston, who serves as EVP of the Horowitz Divi-

sion of M/A/R/C Research, said it's important for brands to not fear activism. Horowitz's 2022 State of Consumer Engagement found 6 in 10 Gen Zers don't have a problem with homosexuality or queerness and 61% of LGBTQ+ consumers have taken an action, negative or positive, based on a company's sociopolitical stance. "It's really important for brands to understand that they need not be so afraid to take a stand because the future is on their side," she said. "I think that a lot of companies really need to take sort of a step back and think about who are we really serving here. Are we going to cater to the vocal minority of people who are on the wrong side of history, on the wrong side of social justice, on the wrong side of civil rights, or are we going to be on the side of a future-oriented view of the world that is the view of the world shared by young people?"

Networks have full slates of Pride-themed programming planned for June. Ovation TV's lineup of curated programming includes titles such as "Lil Nas X: Unlikely Cowboy," and "Rebels on Pointe," a documentary about Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, the all-male, drag ballet company founded over 40 years ago on the heels of New York's Stonewall riots. "Ovation TV's mission has always been to celebrate and share all forms of art and artistic expression. Creativity and individuality are intrinsic to the artistic and LGBTQ communities and we remain committed to championing LGBTQ artists not only during Pride Month, but throughout the entire year," said Scott Woodward, who serves as the programmer's EVP Programming,

**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

www.cablefax.com

Access Intelligence www.cablefax.com

© 2023 Access Intelligence, LLC. Federal copyright law prohibits unauthorized reproduction by any means and imposes fines of up to \$150,000 for violations.

Production & Broadcast Operations.

**OUTtv Proud**, Fuse Media and **OUTtv's FAST** channel, has core Pride Month programming airing each day from 5-7pm ET. Fuse and OUTtv said there's a new urgency behind Pride celebrations this year given the rise of bans on queer books and drag performances, and anti-queer rhetoric. June programming includes "Being Bebe," a documentary about drag performer *Marshall Ngwa* (BeBe Zahara Benet) who came to the U.S. from Cameroon, which criminalizes same-sex relations, and "Shine True," a series helping non-binary and trans people explore their identity and passions. On Friday, **MSG Networks** announced a month-long lineup of special programming, presented by **Delta Airlines**, to celebrate Pride Month. The content slate includes a spotlight on the NYC Pride Basketball League Fantasy All Stars Game and a profile on New York University's women's volleyball coach and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, *Andrew Brown*.

There's plenty happening internally at companies as well. **ESPN** has several events lined up for the month, which kicked off with a Progress Pride flag raising Thursday at the Bristol HQ. A Pride Night at Dodger Stadium is planned that includes an exclusive Dodgers LGBTQ+ jersey. Other events include a screening of "The Bicycle Diaries," about the first German footballer to come out as gay, and a Pride picnic hosted by ERG ESPN Equal. External programming Pride Month offerings include a feature on L.A. Sparks head coach *Curt Miller*, the first openly gay male coach of a professional team, and 10 custom storytelling vignettes featuring members of the LGBTQ+ community across sports, generations and cultures.

In a June 1 blog post, **Comcast NBCU** stressed that it celebrates the gay community all year long. For more than a decade, Pride has been a year-round celebration on Xfinity with the LGBTQ+ Film & TV Collection and NBCU touts that it created one of the country's first LGBTQ+ focused employee resource groups. All month and throughout the year, Comcast NBCU employees are participating in and hosting events underscoring the company's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community, including professional development summits, wellness sessions and Pride parades.

**Charter's** continuing its annual tradition of a special On Demand collection of free and for rent LGBTQ+ themed programming, including "I am Jazz," "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "The Wedding Banquet," about a man who is not open about his sexuality with his Taiwanese parents.

.....

## DIAMOND SPORTS ORDERED TO MAKE RSN RIGHTS PAYMENTS

**MLB** and four teams emerged victorious at the end of a two-day hearing with **Diamond Sports Group** with Judge

*Christopher Lopez* of the **Southern Texas Bankruptcy Court** ruling they were entitled to all payments promised in their originally-signed broadcasting deals. Lopez acknowledged that the value of RSNs has declined since the signing of those deals, but ultimately determined that wasn't enough of a reason to overrule the terms of the contracts. Diamond has five business days from the entry of the order on Friday to pay the **Cleveland Guardians, Minnesota Twins, Arizona Diamondbacks** and **Texas Rangers** all outstanding amounts it is meant to pay them under its existing telecast rights agreements. This doesn't mean the end of its talks with MLB over issues like DTC rights and other sticking points, and Diamond remains hopeful that it can find a solution with the league that will make all parties happy. "In keeping with Judge Lopez's comments, we look forward to engaging with MLB and our team partners to negotiate a go-forward rights package that works for all parties and positions Diamond for long-term success," a Diamond Sports Group spokesperson said in a statement. MLB said it hopes Diamond continues to broadcast games and meet its contractual obligations to clubs. "As with the [Padres](#), MLB will stand ready to make games available to fans if Diamond fails to meet its obligations," the league's statement read.

.....

## HOUSE COMMITTEE LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO KHAN

The concern from Republican lawmakers about **FTC Chair Lina Khan** grew 3.5 months ago when GOP Commissioner *Christine Wilson* resigned citing Khan's leadership. That worry took the next step this week when the **House Committee on Oversight and Accountability** opened an investigation into Khan. Committee chairman *James Comer* (R-KY) wrote a [letter](#) to Khan and fellow FTC Commissioners *Rebecca Slaughter* and *Alvaro Bedoya* requesting documents and information that shed more light on Wilson's allegations. In the letter, Comer cites four concerns raised by Wilson in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion [article](#) announcing her resignation, including Khan's conduct regarding **Meta's** merger with Within Unlimited. "These matters raise questions whether the FTC under Chair Khan has become a rogue agency—particularly given Chair Khan's drive at the beginning of her tenure to 'bulldoz[e] procedural safeguards,' 'consolidate agency power,' 'unilaterally assert and expand regulatory authority,' and 'abandon bipartisan and open processes,'" Comer wrote. "We also are concerned whether departures from prior norms under Chair Khan are due to White House influence."

**CTV POPULARITY GROWS**

With the digital wave continuing to rise, the vast majority of U.S. households are utilizing CTV devices. **Leichtman Research Group** found that 88% of U.S. TV households have at least one internet-connected TV device, and 49% of adults watch video on a connected device daily. Of those adults, the A18-34 demo still leads the pack with 63% watching video via CTV daily, with A35-54 behind at 58% and 55+ at 27%. But when it comes to the amount of connected Smart TVs in households, 74% have at least one—far from the 13% figure in 2013—and 44% of TV households only have smart TVs.

**VERIZON'S +PLAY BUNDLE OFFER**

Verizon's **+play** is an all-in-one destination for customers, and now it's offering an exclusive bundle. Starting Saturday and running for a limited time, customers can get **Netflix's** premium plan and **Paramount+ with Showtime** together for \$25.99. The offer applies to new Paramount+ with Showtime subscribers and new or existing users of Netflix Premium.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Telemundo** and **NBC's** bilingual podcast "My New Favorite Futbolista" will have a new 10-episode season profiling stars in the upcoming 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. **Janelly Farías** will be the Spanish-language host while former USWNT star and World Cup winner **Meghan Klingenberg** will have the English-language duties. Episodes will also have local NBC and Telemundo reporters contributing to the features. The first two episodes debut June 14 and can be seen on NBC and Telemundo-owned stations' digital platforms and linear channels. – **Max** is joining the Pride Month celebrations. An in-app page "LGBTQ+ Voices" will appear throughout June, highlighting queer content premiering during the month. That includes the June 21 debut of the **HBO** documentary "The Stroll" and June 28 release of "Rock Hudson: All That Heaven Allowed." Speaking of The Stroll, Max is teaming up with the film festival NewFest Pride and Rooftop to host an outdoor screening of the film June 5. Max is also giving its spotlight page a design refresh, adding an "Ultimate Pride" celebration, "Essential Pride Month" watchlist and more.

**CABLEFAX DASHBOARD**

**Twitter Hits**



**Research**

(Source: [Mediaocean's 2023 Mid-Year Advertising Outlook Report](#))

- > 57% of respondents chose TikTok and social video when asked about significant consumer trends.
- > Connected TV was also highlighted as a critical channel with more than 50% of respondents planning to increase ad budgets.
- > The survey showed a 16% decrease in concern over talent retention and access to expertise, but creative testing and analysis showed the biggest year-over-year jump with a 27% increase.

**Up Ahead**

**JUNE 8:** [FCC Open Commission Meeting](#); DC

**JUNE 21:** [FBA Regional Fiber Connect](#); Lake Tahoe, CA

**JUNE 22:** [Media Institute Luncheon with Michael O'Rielly](#); DC

**JULY 30-AUGUST 2:** [The Independent Show 2023](#); Minneapolis, MN

**AUGUST 11:** Cablefax Most Powerful Women Entry Deadline

**Quotable**

"I'm sure. But it's certainly a very small part, a very small pocket of the organization. So I don't spend a lot of time thinking about it. But I would say that for anyone who does want me to fail—what are you going for? Who would you want in this seat? You want a journalist? You want someone who has a direct line to the corporation and can make a phone call and go, 'Hey, what the fuck?' Do you want someone who's done the job? Who's done a lot of the jobs? Who understands exactly what it takes to do what I'm asking? Someone who believes that our future is based on executing great journalism? Maybe they don't like my style or whatever, but I'm not quite sure what you're going for—if you want me to fail." - **CNN CEO Chris Licht speaking in a wide-ranging Atlantic profile about whether people at the news organization want him to fail.**