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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

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Music's Most Iconic Night Delivers!

Highest Rated VMAs Since 2019
Among P18-34

+37% Total Viewers YoY

Most Social VMAs Ever!
With 45.9M Interactions



Source: Nielsen Fast National Ratings, 9/12/23; YAGO VMAs- 8/28/22; all data excl. out-of-home; demo cvg rtgs, total viewers = P2+; Best MTV prime (8p-11p) since 1Q14.

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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Deal Done: WGA Tentative Agreement To Set Example For SAG-AFTRA

Writers and producers rejoiced late Sunday when news emerged that the **Writers Guild of America** and the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers** announced a tentative deal for a new contract between the two entities after 146 days of striking. Congratulations came in from across the country for an agreement that WGA called “exceptional—with meaningful gains and protections for writers in every sector of the membership.”

The hard-fought battle and the victory for the union even earned attention from The White House with *President Joe Biden* urging all employers in a statement to remember that all workers deserve a fair share of the value their labor helps create.

“This agreement, including assurances related to artificial intelligence, did not come easily. But its formation is a testament to the power of collective bargaining,” Biden said. “There simply is no substitute for employers and employees coming together to negotiate in good faith toward an agreement that makes a business stronger and secures the pay, benefits and dignity that workers deserve.”

Details surrounding the tentative agreement weren’t immediately released for review. As for the next steps forward, the first move is completing the official Memorandum of Agreement with the AMPTP. Following that, WGA’s Negotiating Committee takes a vote on whether to recommend

the agreement to the WGA West Board and the WGA East Council. Those entities then vote on whether to authorize a contract ratification vote by the membership. Those leadership votes are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday assuming that final contract language is agreed upon. At that point, the WGA plans to release a summary of the key deal points and begin scheduling member meetings to assess the deal prior to voting on its ratification.

For now, WGA has suspended all picketing activity and if a contract ratification vote is approved by the Board and the Council, the two entities will also vote on whether to lift the existing restraining order and end the strike at a to-be-determined date and time, pending ratification. “This would allow writers to return to work during the ratification vote, but would not affect the membership’s right to make a final determination on contract approval,” WGA said. Productions likely to return the fastest if that happens include daytime talk shows and late-night television.

But this doesn’t mean Hollywood is anywhere close to being back to regular working order. The **SAG-AFTRA** strike remains ongoing, and while the guild will closely examine what the WGA was able to win and the language its union cousin will use in its final agreement, there are still plenty of negotiations to be had over the specific concerns of actors in the new media marketplace. Along with increased base pay for performers to make up for the lack of royalty payments from streaming projects, union leaders are also ask-



Congratulations 2023 Diversity & Pride List Honorees!

The Cablefax team is thrilled to announce the Honorees for this year's Diversity & Pride List, recognizing the most influential multi-ethnic executives, LGBTQ+ executives and D&I Champions in the industry.

Visit www.CablefaxDiversity.com to view the digital issue and read the Q&As from the honorees.

ing for tighter regulations and safeguards around artificial intelligence to ensure that performers' voices, likenesses and performances aren't used without their consent.

While SAG-AFTRA members have been prohibited from working on any film, TV or streaming projects since the strike began on July 14, they have been allowed to take on or promote work in interactive media (including video games) thanks to a separate contract that had been operating on an extension. Negotiations between SAG-AFTRA and the signatory video game companies, which include **Activision, Electronic Arts** and **WB Games**, have continued over the past year, but the union says the companies have been unwilling to budge on the issues at hand, which also revolve around pay, artificial intelligence and better working conditions. SAG-AFTRA members have until 5pm PT Monday to vote on whether to strike over that contract as well.

"The voice and performance capture artists who bring video game characters to life deserve a contract that reflects the value they bring to the multibillion-dollar gaming industry. Voice and performance capture AI are already among the most advanced uses of AI: the threat is here and it is real," SAG-AFTRA National Executive Director and Chief Negotiator *Duncan Crabtree-Ireland* said in a statement earlier this month. "Without contractual protections, the employers are asking performers to unknowingly participate in the extinction of their artistry and livelihoods."

CORDELLA NAMED NEW NBC SPORTS CHIEF

The nearly three-month vacancy of President, **NBC Sports** was filled Friday, with the company promoting *Rick Cordella* to the role. He'll report to **NBCUniversal** Chairman *Mark Lazarus*. Cordella, who was most recently President, Programming for NBC Sports and **Peacock Sports**, will oversee all facets of NBC Sports' portfolio of brands and platforms including NBC Sports, NBC Olympics, **Golf Channel**, NBC Sports digital as well as two transactional sports businesses *GolfNow* and *SportsEngine*. Cordella will also collaborate with NBC Local on the company's RSN strategy while also remaining in charge of sports on Peacock. He takes over the position from *Pete Bevacqua*, who [departed](#) July 1 to become Director of Athletics at his alma mater Notre Dame, a move that takes effect in 1Q24. Cordella joined the NBCUniversal family in 2006 and has held several leadership roles since, including being a member of the Peacock founding team. As CRO and then Chief Commercial Officer he managed the streamer's programming, platform launch, content strategy, monetization and sports

rights acquisitions. Cordella steps in as NBC Sports gets in full swing in the first year of its **Big Ten** deal, but also as the company has its hat in the **NBA** media rights fight. And of course, we're only ten months away from the start of the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics.

PRIME VIDEO GETTING ADS

Add **Amazon** to the list of companies implementing an ad-supported tier to their streaming platforms. The company announced that **Prime Video** shows and movies will include ads beginning in early 2024. No changes will be made to the current subscription price of \$8.99/month, but there'll be an ad-free option available in the U.S. for an additional \$2.99/month. The additional cost for other countries will be unveiled at a later date. Ads will initially be rolled out in the U.S., U.K., Germany and Canada, before arriving in France, Italy, Spain, Mexico and Australia later in 2024.

DISH PRICE INCREASES COMING NEXT MONTH

DISH is increasing the prices of its core packages on Oct. 12, citing a rise in the cost of programming carried in its lineups. "In fact, the fastest growing cost we and all other TV providers have is driven by the cost we pay the programmers," DISH said in an announcement on its website. "We will continue to work hard for fair deals with these programmers to keep channel costs and the price you pay as low as possible." The price increase for most packages will be \$5/month, including for the Welcome Pack (to be \$55/month), the Smart Pack (to be \$61/month) and America's Top 120 (to be \$93/month). The late fee is also increasing from \$10 to \$12 everywhere except for Arizona, Maine and Virginia. We'll see if DISH is still missing Hearst stations by the time the fee increase goes into effect. DISH customers lost access to 37 local channels in 27 markets earlier this month with the provider claiming Hearst was demanding tens of millions of dollars in rate increases amid overall viewership declines. Hearst has argued back that DISH is trying to carry its stations at below market rates, an ask that is neither fair nor reasonable.

RATINGS

TLC's "Sister Wives" nabbed a season-high 2.50 L3 rating among W25-54 during its Sept. 17 airing at 10pm, also good for the network's highest-rated telecast of the year so far. Additionally, "90 Day Fiancé: Before the 90 Days"—which aired at 8pm—had a 1.91 L3 rating in the W25-54 group. The two shows combined to reach more than 4.7 million total linear

viewers and lifted TLC to its highest-rated night in over 1.5 years among A25-54 and W25-54. – Ohio State's dramatic win over Notre Dame on Saturday drew **NBC Sports'** largest regular-season college football audience in 30 years. The game averaged 10.5 million viewers across **NBC, Peacock** and NBC Sports Digital, peaking at 14 million from 10:30-10:45pm when the Buckeyes scored a game-winning touchdown with one second remaining. It became NBC Sports' most-streamed college football simulcast ever with an average minute audience of 605,000 viewers on Peacock and NBC Sports Digital platforms.

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MSG+ OFFERS SINGLE-GAME OPTION

As **MSG Networks** prepares its new DTC product **MSG+** for the upcoming **NBA** and **NHL** regular seasons, the RSN is offering fans the ability to purchase single games for \$9.99/game. MSG+ will carry Rangers, Islanders, Devils, Sabres and Knicks contests, which can also be accessed with a monthly subscription for \$29.99/month or annually for \$309.99/year. The first game came Sunday with an NHL preseason bout between the Rangers and Bruins.

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SPECTRUM LAUNCHES SMALL BUSINESS CAMPAIGN

Charter rolled out a new national ad campaign for Spectrum Business aimed at its offerings for small businesses. Dubbed "Made to Work," the campaign will include broadcast TV, radio, direct mail, digital and social media spots across Charter's 41-state footprint. It'll showcase Spectrum Business' offerings like data speeds of up to 1 Gbps across the company's service area with no data caps or modem fees, unlimited local and long-distance calling with Spectrum Business Voice, Spectrum Mobile for Business and Spectrum Business Connect.

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FIBER FRENZY

TDS finished the construction of its fiber network in the Maine communities of Athens, Embden Lake, Etna, Harmony, Weld, West Ripley, Hampden, Hartland and Warren. Construction is still ongoing in several other areas across Somerset and Franklin Counties. To commemorate the completion, TDS donated to two nonprofit organizations: Penquis, which works to minimize and eliminate causes and conditions of poverty, and the Good Shepherd Food Bank. – A tornado in Shawnee, Oklahoma, in mid-April left a **Vyve Broadband** retail store temporarily unusable, but the company has officially cut the ribbon on a new site. The new location allows customers to explore services, pay bills or return/exchange equipment. It also features interactive displays for customers to test Vyve's internet, HDTV and home phone services. – **GoNetspeed** has begun building its fiber network to deploy service in East Hartford,

Connecticut. It's part of the company's \$2.7 million investment in the area, where customers should become eligible for service installation in the coming months. Construction is slated to be completed by this winter, giving access to more than 6,700 homes and businesses throughout East Hartford. GoNetspeed already serves areas in Alabama, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont and West Virginia.

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ROKU'S APPLE TV+ PROMO

Roku is giving users three months of **Apple TV+** free through December 3. The offer is valid for new Apple TV+ subscribers and is limited to one redemption per streaming device and Apple ID. Once the three-month promotional period ends, the plan will automatically renew at the full \$6.99/month price until canceled.

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NCTC FORMS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEAL WITH TONE

NCTC has struck a new partnership with **TONE Networks**, allowing the co-op's members to quickly deploy mentorship and professional development programs for employees. The programs are open to all, but many are designed for women in the industry. The goal of the partnership is not just to find and propel forward the future leaders of the industry, but also to help small- and mid-size companies to improve engagement and retention of talent.

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PROGRAMMING

The 44th edition of the Ryder Cup is set for this weekend in Rome. Coverage begins Friday from 1:30am-Noon on **USA**. Saturday's coverage will also begin on USA at 1:30am before switching to **NBC** and **Peacock** at 3am (with coverage wrapping up at 6pm). On Sunday, NBC and Peacock will share broadcast duties from 5:30am-1pm. – Florida Gov. and Republican presidential candidate **Ron DeSantis** and California Gov. **Gavin Newsom** will participate in a 90-minute red vs blue state debate Nov. 30 at 9pm. It'll air on **Fox News'** "Hannity," where **Sean Hannity** will handle moderator duties.

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PEOPLE

Metronet made four moves within its executive team as the company takes the next step in its long-term growth plan. The 25-year telecommunications veteran **Dave Heimbach** will become President/CEO after serving as President/COO since 2021. He succeeds **John Cinelli**, who'll transition to Executive Chairman. **Lohn Weber** will shift to a newly created role of EVP, Capital Markets after being Metronet's CFO since its inception. Current EVP **Sarah Overbaugh** has been tapped to take over CFO duties. All moves will go into effect Sunday.