

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Keep Watching: Comcast's Peacock Excites With Sports, Broadband Slumps

Comcast's 3Q23 earnings call Thursday felt like something of a blast from the past with much of the conversation revolving around the company's video offerings, not its core broadband product.

Yes, domestic linear video net losses were 490,000, and cord-cutting still exists. But there is plenty to be excited about when it comes to services like **Peacock** and **Xumo**. "Peacock was a breakout star this quarter with subs reaching 28M (due to effective conversion from cable users)," **Bernstein** said in a note to clients. "Most intriguingly, an **NFL** playoff game will be streamed on Peacock for the first time in January. One has to wonder what that does to ARPU."

Executives gave a lot of the credit for Peacock's momentum to the sports that have been delivered on the platform. **Comcast Corp** President/CEO **Brian Roberts** said Peacock now has the most live sports of any of the streaming services, and that sets the company up well for any potential shift in the delivery of sports in the coming years.

"I can't speculate on what might happen to **ESPN**, but what I could speculate is as we meet with the leagues, which we do frequently, we think we present a somewhat unique ability to help get the maximum engagement now with broadcast and cable, particularly our broadcast platform, as well as having a robust streaming service," he said.

When asked about if Comcast was inspired by **Charter** and **Disney**'s most recent carriage renewal and the flexibility in that


deal to support the streaming and linear ecosystems, Roberts remarked that there is no one-size-fits-all model when it comes to the future of video.

"I'm very happy for both companies that they figured something out, it's good for consumers," he said. "Each situation is slightly different. What I think is important for us is finding a way to help our customers have a great network, aggregate content and have access to the great content, and I think we're really well positioned to do that."

The connectivity business is still in a slump with total domestic broadband customer net losses coming in at 18,000. Comcast Cable President/CEO **Dave Watson** said the depression is partially attributable to the continuation of some macro issues, but he also pointed to a competitive environment that has seen fixed wireless and fiber providers significantly expanding their footprints. Comcast also made the decision to pull back some of its more aggressive offers aimed at the lower end of the market, and that resulted in lower connect activity.

"Part of our game plan is we're going to continue to invest in a better network, better products and we compete aggressively, but we're going to maintain financial discipline and that means making certain decisions when it comes to balancing rate and volume," Watson said.

Total domestic wireless line net additions were 294,000 with Xfinity Mobile continuing to stay steady. Comcast is continuing to invest in CBRS pilots and has picked up the pace to keep in line with what Charter is doing with its investments in Spectrum




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**MOST POWERFUL WOMEN**  
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**WHERE:** The Edison Ballroom, NYC


**WHEN:** Afternoon of  
December 6, 2023

**ATTEND**


Last Year's Honorees Include:




**Jessica Fischer**  
Chief Financial Officer  
**CHARTER**



**Channing Dungey**  
Chairman, Warner Bros. Television Group  
**WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY**



**Rita Ferro**  
President, Disney Advertising  
**DISNEY**



**Dalila Wilson-Scott**  
EVP, Chief Diversity Officer & President,  
Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation  
**Comcast**

Mobile. Watson said the team had seen good progress on the ability to offload traffic using that CBRS spectrum, and the pilots are a way to improve the wireless experience without racking up an exorbitant amount of expenses.

“If you have 3% of your geographic footprint that’s delivering 60% of the traffic, that’s a good option if we can figure out how to do that,” Watson said. “That’s what’s really driving it, but we’ve always been very focused on how to build a better overall wireless experience.”

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## DELAWARE’S ARPA PROGRESS

Delaware Gov. *John Carney* joined state leaders and reps from **Comcast, Verizon, Mediacom** and **Communication Workers of America** on Thursday to celebrate that the state has connected nearly 6,000 homes, businesses, and organizations to broadband in the last year thanks to federal investments from the American Rescue Plan Act. The governor’s office said Delaware is on track to become the first state in the nation to be fully connected. There are 372 locations remaining to be installed with ARPA funding, which should be reached over the next few months. Once those residences are completed, Delaware will have spent \$33 million in ARPA funding on broadband connection. Mediacom’s part included building 151 miles of fiber to nearly 1,600 homes and businesses at a cost of just over \$11 million. Verizon received ARPA funding for nearly 1,900 homes and businesses, while Comcast received money for over 2,700.

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## AMC NETWORKS BRINGS PROGRAMMATIC TO LINEAR

**AMC Networks** chalked up another first, announcing it has enabled programmatic ad buying on three of its linear networks. Last month’s pilot marked the first time live linear inventory was able to be purchased programmatically in a real-time, biddable ad environment. AMC Networks worked with **FreeWheel, The Trade Desk** and **Canoe Ventures** on the initiative. L’Oréal, working in cooperation with their agency **Omnicom Group**, was the first national advertiser to purchase ads programmatically as part of a pilot that ran in September and included other national brands. Beginning this month, programmatic buying is live and fully operational across all programming on **AMC, WE tv** and **BBC America**. AMC Networks has been a trailblazer in the ad space, becoming the first programmer two years ago to offer addressable advertising on linear.

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## CHICKEN SOUP SERVING UP AI-DELIVERED NEWS

**Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment** said it will be the

first distributor for AI streaming news company **Channel 1** through **Redbox** and **Crackle** apps. The channel will initially launch as a Free Ad-Supported Streaming Television (FAST) channel in February, with a dedicated Channel 1 app to launch a few months later. Channel 1 describes itself as a personalized news network that learns viewers’ interests and delivers relevant stories from across the globe. Programming is a combination of real and generated imagery, videos and news anchors. As part of the deal, Chicken Soup will be able to use Channel 1’s AI tech to “unlock value” across its catalog of 10,000 movies and TV series. That includes translating the content into any language at “virtually no cost.”

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## INDUSTRY PLAYERS BUTT HEADS OVER SPECTRUM POLICY

The industry weighed in on **AT&T’s FCC** petition to establish a midband spectrum screen and the Commission’s ask on if it should change its mobile spectrum holding policies, and not everyone is on the same page on how things should move forward. **DISH** supports opening the rulemaking, asking the Commission to look at updating its spectrum screen requirements and come up with clear divestiture remedies for transactions that are expected to harm competition or consumers because they exceed a spectrum screen. It laid forward a number of proposals for the Commission, including suggesting a national spectrum screen of 25% and a limitation on 600 MHz spectrum ownership to three 10 MHz channel blocks in each partial economic area. In **NCTA’s** opinion, AT&T’s ask is too limited in only looking at the adoption of a midband screen to help avoid excessive spectrum concentration. The association contends that it ignores the fact that every attempt to curtail spectrum aggregation has failed across all types of spectrum bands, and the FCC should use this proceeding to adopt wider policies meant to remedy the larger issue. It is asking the Commission to propose a policy that in bands where licensed frameworks are appropriate, it will adopt specific service and technical rules to avoid spectrum concentration. Additionally, NCTA wants the FCC to propose rules requiring spectrum screens and spectrum aggregation limits when it is looking at making more spectrum available to the industry. “The risk of harm to competition from excessive concentration of spectrum holdings in the hands of the three nationwide carriers, although significant, is not irreversible,” NCTA said. “Further anticompetitive foreclosure is not inevitable, provided that the Commission takes prompt action to adopt policies and rules that unambiguously communicate the Commission’s commitment to competition and innovation in the marketplace for spectrum-based services and technologies.” NCTA would also like to see the FCC adopt a policy stating that it will consider adopting licensed-shared and unlicensed spectrum access frameworks as



a way to address spectrum concentration in all new proceedings examining making new commercial spectrum available.

## ESPN RATINGS

Saturday's airing of "College GameDay" on **ESPN** averaged 1.91 million viewers, good for a 2% increase compared to the Week 8 edition of the show last season. The show accumulated 2.6 million viewers in the final hour. On the NFL side of things, the 49ers vs Vikings Monday Night Football contest garnered 18.64 million viewers across **ESPN**, **ESPN2**, **ESPN Deportes**, **NFL+** and **ABC**, peaking at 20.7 million from 10:45-11pm. That's up 57% from MNF's Week 7 game in 2022 (Bears vs Patriots with 11.9 million). "Monday Night Football with Peyton and Eli" on **ESPN2** came in at 1.07 million viewers. Season-to-date, MNF averages 15.5 million viewers.

## CSG EXPLAINS THE BILL

As streaming services and other media platforms implement price increases, **CSG** introduced an AI-powered solution offering customers detailed billing information. Called CSG Bill Explainer, it uses **Microsoft's** Azure OpenAI Service to personalize bill insights and predict and prevent bill shock. Azure OpenAI allows the Bill Explainer to produce information that helps consumers understand any changes in their bill as well as any reasoning for the difference, helping reduce bill-related calls and automate billing operations.

## CARRIAGE

Airport television network **ReachTV** will begin distributing **Nexstar's** **NewsNation** and sports programming from its **CW Network**, including **ACC** college football and basketball and **LIV Golf**. Financial terms weren't disclosed. The new live news and sports broadcasts begin immediately on Reach. In addition to distribution at more than 90 major U.S. airports, **ReachTV's** streaming network is delivered across 500,000 hotel rooms.

## SHOPPING NETS UP ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING GAME

**Hallmark Channel**, **Lifetime** and **Great American Family** aren't the only ones in the Christmas spirit. Streamers **QVC+** and **HSN+** are back for a second year with an original holiday movie. "The Recipe Files" is a movie mystery starring singer-songwriter and actress *Ashlee Simpson* with featured cameos from QVC hosts. During the movie's debut on Nov. 24 (Black Friday) as part of the streamer's Movie Mall experience, audiences can shop exclusive merch inspired by the film. **QVC+** also unveiled its first reality competition series—"The Ultimate Gift Wrapping Challenge" premiering Dec. 4. A new streaming show is in the works for **HSN+** from chef *Curtis Stone*.

## MARKETING POWER

**DirecTV** is the new title sponsor of the Holiday Bowl at Petco Park in San Diego (Dec. 27 on **Fox**). The bowl game, which began in 1978, matches top teams from the **Pac-12** and **ACC**.  **DirecTV** also will receive benefits across each of Sports San Diego's platforms, which includes the California State Games and Rady Children's Invitational, a four-team men's college basketball tournament that tips off this Thanksgiving.

## PROGRAMMING

**Fox News** said it has snagged the first TV interview with new Speaker of the House *Mike Johnson* (R-LA). It's set to air live from the House chamber tonight at 9pm ET on "Hannity." – **Newsmax** named *Sharla McBride* as the co-host of "Wake Up America." She joins *Rob Finnerty* behind the desk for the 6:30am newscast. – **HGTV** wants to "Rock the Block" again, picking up the home renovation competition series for a new season to debut in March. – **Peacock** will be the official streaming home of **BravoCon 2023**, where Bravolebrities and their fans come together for panels, live eps of "BravoCon Live with Andy Cohen" and plenty of tea. **BravoCon 2023** takes place in Vegas Nov 3-Nov 5 with **Peacock's** **BravoCon Hub** to air content starting Nov 3 through Nov 10. The streamer will have same-day content from **BravoCon's** live stage and will premiere all 5 eps of "BravoCon Live" on Nov 6, the day after they debut on **Bravo**. – **Tennis Channel** is home to the WTA Finals starting Oct. 29 at 3:30pm ET. This year's exclusive coverage will include more than 50 live hours and 30 hours of encore replays, and competition from the tournament that doesn't appear live on the linear network will be offered live on **Tennis Channel Plus**. All WTA Finals matches will also be available on demand following their completion.

## DOING GOOD

**Ovation TV** and *Charter* continue to Stand For the Arts. Since 2017, the two have doled out 70 awards totaling 700,000 toward arts education. This year, 10 organizations in *Charter's* footprint will each receive \$10,000 Stand for the Arts Awards. Recipients include Hui No'eau Visual Arts Center in Maui, HI, which provides an array of programs that support lifelong learning in the arts and the Bushwick Film Festival in Brooklyn, NY.

## PEOPLE

**Warner Bros. Discovery** President of Global Brands *Pam Lifford* is stepping back from her role to focus on her family's healthcare needs, effective Nov. 27. She's been with the company since 2016 and helped increase revenues five-fold. As a result of her departure, *Robert Oberschelp*, who currently leads North America consumer products for WBD, will become the new Head of Global Consumer Products. Chief Revenue and Strategy Officer *Bruce Campbell* said he'll also be recruiting a new Global Head of Franchise who will work closely with him and the senior creative leadership team at WBD.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## BET+ Brings The Scares With 'Stay Out'

If you're left without plans this Halloween weekend, you're in luck. **BET+** is delivering more than jump scares with its latest original film "Stay Out" (streaming now), which centers on a businessman named Donovan (*Kareem Grimes*) who quickly returns to rural Georgia when he learns his aunt and uncle have left him their estate. But things take a turn when he learns his uncle practiced black magic and was murdered by a racist mob. Donovan becomes possessed by the spirit of his uncle and is used as a vessel to get revenge on his relatives' enemies. "Black folks have always been into horror... we don't often get to see ourselves in these movies," **BET+** VP Content Programming, Strategy & Original Movies *Marvin Neil* said. "Part of what we're trying to do as a team here is service an underserved group and all of us to see ourselves reflected in all of these different types of stories." The tension throughout the film is palpable, particularly as Donovan encounters his less-than-friendly neighbors, many of whom would prefer he leave town as soon as possible. In many ways, the horror of the film is in the way it reflects the lived experience of many underrepresented groups in America and around the world. "This movie is really speaking to the historical context of Black people in America, some of our unfortunate history. And I think when you're able to combine the historical context within a genre that we know Black people and broader audiences love, I think it's a recipe for success," Neil said. But the film's production wasn't all a breeze. A different actor was originally cast in the role of Donovan, and the crew was left scrambling to find someone new when that individual dropped out early in filming. "The lead was no longer able to continue after three days and we found that out at about 11pm after day three, and had a new lead at 10am the next morning," first-time director *Jared Safier* said. "But the team handled it really well and it was a blessing in disguise." – *Sara Winegardner*

### REVIEWS

"Fair Play," streaming, **Netflix**. It's a first-world problem. You invest in a film whose initial scenes are compelling, but after that, it's clear the filmmakers lacked a good ending. Paraphrasing *The Clash*, "should you stay, or should you go?" We stayed with this story about a clandestine office romance gone awry when one participant gets promoted. Worse, the promoted lover becomes the other's boss. Despite its ending, "Fair" has moments, including a scene where staff attends sensitivity/DEI training while a disgruntled employee is smashing objects with a golf club. In this send-up of cutthroat financial firms and sexist bro culture, the usually excellent *Eddie Marsan* seems out of place, though *Phoebe Dynevor* ("Bridgerton") is believable. – Notable though Not Reviewed: "The Graham Norton Show," premiere, Thurs, 11pm ET, **BBC America** (streaming on **AMC+** and **Acorn TV** Friday). *Graham Norton* will say or do anything for entertainment's sake. Entering this dangerous environment are *Sir Patrick Stewart*, *Dame Joan Collins* and *Ralph Fiennes* among others. How does he get away with it? – Speaking of getting away with things, we know how *Ryan Murphy* and *Brad Falchuck* can ape their **FX** series "American Horror Story" (AHS) with a 4-parter called, get ready for it, "American Horror Stories" (Hulu). It's because AHS is a bona fide hit. It's part of one of the best-named stunts in TV: Huluween. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(10/16/23-10/22/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.870</b>	<b>2742</b>
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.639</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.611</b>	<b>1927</b>
<b>FS1</b>	<b>0.399</b>	<b>1258</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.398</b>	<b>1255</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.285</b>	<b>899</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.258</b>	<b>815</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.216</b>	<b>680</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.192</b>	<b>606</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.177</b>	<b>558</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.162</b>	<b>510</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.161</b>	<b>509</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.152</b>	<b>479</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.150</b>	<b>474</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.138</b>	<b>436</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.134</b>	<b>421</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.125</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.122</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.102</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.100</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.098</b>	<b>308</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.096</b>	<b>304</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.096</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.095</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.088</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.088</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>ADSM</b>	<b>0.086</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.086</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.083</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>NWSMX</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.076</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.070</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>FETV</b>	<b>0.068</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>COM</b>	<b>0.066</b>	<b>206</b>

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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