

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Turning 20: TV One Marks Two Decades Serving Black Viewers

TV One celebrated the double-decade mark last Friday 20 years after its launch on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2004, a defining moment in the expansion of TV content dedicated toward African American audiences.

It has endured a media landscape that's undergone quite a few changes and then some, but remains tall in a crowded space. TV One currently reaches 43 million households and has distribution with major providers like **Comcast, Verizon, DirecTV** and **Charter** in addition to being offered on **Roku, Vizio, Philo** and other digital platforms.

"We're no different than **Disney**, or **Paramount**, or anybody else trying to figure out 'How do we compete in this tech-heavy landscape against the **Metas** and the **Googles** and the **Apples** and the **Amazons**,'" **Urban One** CEO **Alfred Liggins** told **CFX**. "But we've got a unique demographic target, and we think that has set us apart from a lot of the other media players out there."

When TV One launched, it had one primary competitor in BET. Now it sees competition from SVODs, AVODs and FAST platforms, with independent networks finding it more challenging to navigate life in the modern landscape.

"It is getting tougher and tougher [for independent networks], particularly as the ecosystem shrinks, but there's also a whole new world of FAST channels and different content offerings out there," Liggins said. "Linear television is not going away. There's just going to be more distribution systems, and you

got to think of yourself as a content creator and figure out where and how you're going to distribute that content and how you're going to monetize it."

How is TV One managing a rapidly changing environment? It launched TV One's sister network **Cleo TV** in 2019 (also on Jan. 19) to target millennial and Gen X women of color. It currently spans 34.9 million households. TV One is strengthening its digital portfolio by putting the TV One app in more places while simultaneously enlarging its presence in the FAST space. The network launched its first FAST channel in late December called **TV One Crime & Justice** and plans to launch another in the future.

"We're going to continue to do what we've been doing. We look at it as a mission to serve this community and not just a business proposition," Liggins said.

While Liggins is focused on where TV One is headed, he did take a moment to reflect on where it has been. Its main competitor at launch, BET, was owned by then-**Viacom**. Though BET had been established 24 years prior as the African American-centric TV offering, the content was primarily music, videos and infomercials, leaving holes for other types of programming.

That inspired what was then **Radio One** to give more options to an underrepresented community. Liggins knew the company wasn't a television operator and had limited knowledge in that realm, but Radio One was confident in its target demographic and its ability to market and promote what it was trying to accomplish with TV One.

While still a competitor, it was the blueprint laid by BET that inspired Liggins and Radio One for how they approached TV

THE FAXIES

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN PR & MARKETING

The FAXIES awards recognize excellence across all areas of marketing, communications, and PR within the industry, seeking groundbreaking, engaging, interactive and creative campaigns. Help us celebrate the people who keep our industry flourishing.

NOMINATE NOW

One's launch. BET had the backing of *John Malone* and **TCI** as a partner, so Liggins knew it was important to find a distribution partner to gain that initial access to homes. In came **Comcast**, which Liggins said was "newly anointed as the big major cable operator" in large markets.

"You need that first large distributor to believe and to give you access," Liggins said. "We saw that BET had TCI and that worked. Once TCI ultimately [was] sold to **AT&T**, and then BET [was] ultimately sold to Viacom, and then Comcast bought the AT&T cable footprint, the stars were aligned and the deck was cleared for a new competitor to come."

Liggins added that without Comcast's backing early on, the network wouldn't have gotten off the ground the way it did. It was a mutually beneficial decision when Comcast decided to move on in 2015 and sell its 47.9% ownership stake to Radio One (now **Urban One**) for \$550 million. Comcast had done well with a financial investment and TV One had a widespread established audience, a crucial pillar for an independent network.

"It was fantastic for the diversification of the company, and quite frankly made us economically and financially successful when a lot of the other radio companies actually went bankrupt because they hadn't diversified," Liggins said.

.....

T-MOBILE NEARS FIVE MILLION MARK ON FIXED WIRELESS

T-Mobile continued its stellar run Thursday evening with the release of its 4Q23 results, and customers continue to flock to its fixed wireless product. The mobile operator touted 541,000 high speed internet net additions for the quarter, and it ended the year with 4.8 million total subscribers to its fixed wireless product. Analysts on the company's 4Q23 earnings call questioned whether T-Mobile had plans to unlock more capacity on its network to allow for further growth of its broadband product, but T-Mobile CEO *Mike Sievert* isn't yet concerned about hitting a ceiling. "Our forecast all along has said that model takes us to 7 million to 8 million subscribers. We're well on our way," he said. "So stay tuned if we're able to provide you with an update on that in the future, but no update today." In wireless, postpaid phone net customer additions skyrocketed to 934,000 in the quarter and postpaid phone churn came in at 0.96%. When asked about how many T-Mobile subscribers in the company's reported base receive subsidy benefits from the Affordable Connectivity Program, Sievert said it was "substantially none." A *WSJ* analysis identified T-Mobile as the largest ACP participant behind **Charter** with \$1.05 billion in subsidies, but Sievert said only a very small number of Metro customers are on the program. The bulk of ACP subscribers are constrained to its Assurance Wireless business that is subsidized by the federal

Lifeline program. He does think broadband companies are in a different position when it comes to ACP compared to the mobile operators. "They went very big into it, committed lots of customers and numbers to it, and also, I think subscribers, they may or may not stick around," he said. "Mobile is different. Mobile is a product that customers will keep, and if they lose that discount, our job, and I think our team is up to the task, is to go win them over with our high-value offers."

.....

FCC FINES CITY COMMUNICATIONS \$16 MILLION FOR EBB, ACP FRAUD

The **FCC** released a Notice of Apparent Liability proposing a \$16 million penalty against **City Communications** for apparently willfully and repeatedly violating FCC rules relating to the Affordable Connectivity Program; its predecessor, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program; and the federal wire fraud statute. From at least January 2022 through August 2023, City sought and received EBB and ACP funding for subscribers that were improperly enrolled in the subsidy programs. The FCC said City enrolled subscribers with fake or false identifying information, using an address to which the purported subscriber had no connection or repeatedly using the same benefit qualifying person to enroll multiple subscribers. It apparently improperly received more than \$3.1 million from EBB and ACP. City also apparently violated other ACP rules governing the transfer of subscriber benefits from one provider to another, and repeatedly made misrepresentations to the Commission in its applications and election notices to participate in the subsidy programs.

.....

COX MEDIA-DIRECTV ON DECK

Add **DirecTV-Cox Media Group** to your retrans bingo cards in the lead up to Super Bowl Sunday. CMG, which has been dark on **DISH** for more than a year, began warning viewers late Thursday that DirecTV and U-verse customers could lose its stations on Feb 2. CMG's portfolio of 14 stations includes Atlanta ABC affil WSB and Seattle's CBS station. CMG is telling viewers it's the next programming on "DirecTV's list to be taken away from you," urging customers to cancel their service or complain. "Our request of DirecTV is simple. Don't rob your customers of their access to the important news, sports and entertainment programming they need and want," CMG said. DirecTV mimicked that language in its own statement: "Our request to Cox Media Group is simple, don't force your viewers who are our customers, to pay an unwarranted rate increase for 'free' news, sports and entertainment that is widely available on local station websites, through an over-the-air digital antenna and direct-to-consumer streaming platforms." DirecTV and **TEGNA** ended their six-month retrans impasse earlier

this month. DirecTV was without Nexstar stations for about two-and-a-half months last year, and it's been without **White Knight** and **Mission Broadcast** stations (which have shared services agreements with Nexstar) for more than a year.

RTA BUYS BLUE RIDGE FIBER

Blue Ridge Fiber has been acquired by **Rural Telecommunications of America**, a Texas-based ISP with a network comprised of more than 13,000 fiber route miles. RTA said it will immediately begin enhancing its acquired infrastructure and work to bring gigabit fiber services to the communities in and around Greenwood, Texas.

SPORTS MEDIA ON THE HILL

Wednesday's **House Communications and Technology Subcommittee** hearing on sports media rights is worth a tune-in. The witness list includes *Puck News'* and former *SBJ* reporter *John Ourand*, **Scripps Sports** President *Brian Lawlor* and *Carol Stiff*, a 30-year **ESPN** vet and current president of FAST channel **Women's Sports Network**.

WALKING DEAD STILL KICKING

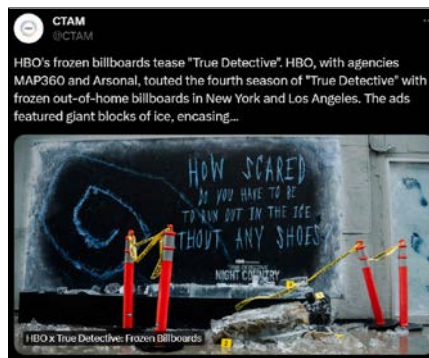
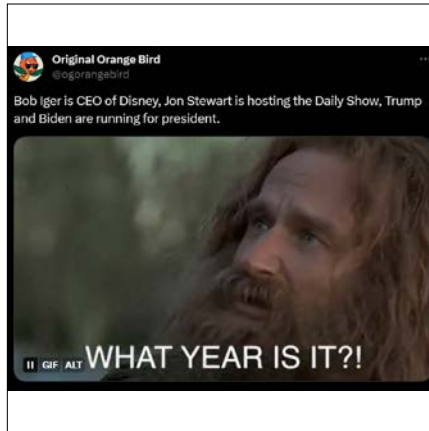
Can a third post "The Walking Dead" spinoff deliver for **AMC Networks**? There are some early promising signs for "The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live." AMC dropped the final trailer for the series Thursday at noon. In the first 24 hours, it had more than 16 million views across a variety of platforms, including AMC social accounts on TikTok and YouTube. With this new installment set in Philly, we're crossing our fingers that the burnt-out **Comcast** skyscrapers seen in the post-apocalyptic skyline work their way into the storyline. It debuts Feb. 25 on AMC and AMC+.

COMSCORE, NEXSTAR SIGN DEAL

Nexstar has chosen **Comscore** as one of its trusted currency providers for cross-platform audience measurement. Comscore's currency-grade linear measurement will offer granularity on TV viewership behavior across all of Nexstar's 116 markets. It is an expansion of Comscore's existing relationship with Nexstar and will give advertisers market-level precision down to specific regions across linear and digital.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits



Research

(Source: [Fiber Broadband Association Fiber Deployment Annual Report](#))

> Typical costs ranged from \$11-24 per foot for underground deployment, and \$4-9 per foot for aerial deployment.

> These costs were largely driven by labor, which comprised 50-90% of total cost, leaving materials to contribute 10-50%. Average splits were 73% labor, 27% materials for underground construction, and 67% labor, 33% materials for aerial.

> While 46% of respondents reported "significant" cost increases in 2023 (greater than 10%), only 24% expect the same in 2024. Most respondents (59%) predict a slight price increase (less than 10%) and 13% expect costs to remain the same.

Up Ahead

JAN. 29-FEB.1: [Realscreen Summit](#); New Orleans

FEB. 8: [Regional Fiber Connect](#); Richmond, VA

FEB. 25-27: [NCTC Winter Educational Conference](#); Las Vegas

MARCH 5-7: [ACA Connects Summit](#); D.C.

Quotable

"For us in our industry, the telco industry, because we're grinding every day to drive revenue, it's going to be a gamechanger. Anything that touches the consumer is going to be more joyful, better, more efficient. Anything that involves our networks is going to be more energy efficient, we're going to find outages more quickly. And our people are going to be more productive from all the knowledge work we do internally. So I think it's real and I think for us, we've already got use cases identified. You don't have to be first in AI, you just have to be fast, and I think we're on that track. The risks are real, no question about it, but unlike prior innovation cycles, I've never seen such awareness. Regulators are on it and companies are going to self-regulate."

- Liberty Global CEO Mike Fries [discussing AI on CNBC's "Squawk Box"](#)