

Culled from the headlines of the TV Industry's Trade Press, CONTENT MATTERS is a Bi-Monthly Newsletter curated and contextualized by **KATZ Content Strategy's Bill Carroll.**

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## INSIGHTS TO KNOW

### **1. Magid Research looks at the Power of Sitcoms on local broadcast schedules**

Warner Brothers commissioned the report on the genre exploring the role and the potential long term benefits of these perennial comedies to the over-the-air broadcast marketplace.

### **2. Can Late Night become Reality TV's Savior?**

At a time when it appears that reality is rehashing formats, originality on late night segments like LIP SYNC BATTLE and CARPOOL KAROKE are becoming the basis for new reality offerings. Is this a positive trend?

### **3. The Pareto Principle, which if you don't know, is the 80/20 rule**

Here is how it is now being applied to how reach and advertising Impact are related in the Nielsen Total Audience Report and what it might ultimately mean for broadcasters.

### **4. Welcome to the Zoo. Or Call It Prime-Time TV**

Can broadcast networks successfully breakthrough with audacious even experimental comedies in primetime? We are finding out this season.

### **5. Is the Fall TV Season a Played-Out Tradition? Is it Time to Move On?**

Let's face facts: Many tell us that the "new" fall TV season is an antiquated concept or, to be more accurate, a non-concept to Millennials and, increasingly, the older folks who love them.

**In a report presented by Warner Brothers at the recent PROMAX conference, THE POWER OF SITCOMS was reviewed. Here is a condensed and excerpted version of the Magid research report and some of its key findings. As outlined in their introduction, Magid set out with the goals of exploring the role and the long term benefits of comedies on local broadcast stations.**

The survey dealt with understanding the emotional connections and motivations for viewing these programs. It also looked to strengthen viewing habits and loyalty. The report dealt with all programs in the genre including animation and did not exclusively look at Warner Brothers syndicated series.

The focus group that took part in the April 2016 survey was comprised of over 2,000 Adults between 18 and 54 years old. Among the key benefits outlined by this group were that sitcoms provide “me-time”, while also at the same time providing reliability and comfort. The series were “easy” to watch, relatable and could be a palate cleanser from the day’s activities.

Drilling down the findings in each characteristic, in the category of “me-time”, it was said they “help me shut off my mind for a while”, “melting away the stress of the day.” At the same time stating among the other characteristics, that “these shows are like comfort food”, dependable-

always know what I’m getting.” Those were the underlying traits for comfort and reliability. Reliability engendered comments like: “Characters are like old friends.” And, “no matter how old I am, I can always relate.” They were talked about as “palate cleansers from my heavy, suspenseful dramas.” “Satisfying and light after serious news.” And finally the “easy” nature of sitcoms was indicated by the assertion that you “can drop in and out and not miss anything.” While with “stand alone episodes, I can watch out of order.”

Other findings included that 86% will stay tuned if they see that a sitcom they want to watch is airing after the local news. You can recruit viewers, 89% state if their local station starts airing sitcoms they like to watch, they are more likely to watch that station. 74% are more loyal to the local station that airs their favorite comedies. Habits are created as 72% watch the same local station all the time, because they air their favorite sitcoms. On the flip side, 81% could be lost to SVOD, if the favorite sitcom is not on their local station, or 82% would probably start watching other stations or cable networks. And more alarmingly, if the local station stops airing a favorite sitcom, they would probably stop watching that station.

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In a more encouraging statistic for broadcasters, the report states that 54% of sitcom viewers turn to broadcast first. With 27% choosing cable and a combined 19% (18% SVOD and 1% AVOD) are the first choice for sitcom viewers. 55% of those

who watched a sitcom for the first time on SVOD, 36% then watched on local television. While, 72% of Millennials who tried a sitcom for the first time on SVOD, it was found that 30% then watched the sitcom on a local station.



**As was reported by the HOLLYWOOD REPORTER and summarized here, viral segments are being launched into full series on broadcast, cable and streaming platforms. The most talked about include segments from James Cordon's LATE LATE SHOW on CBS with CARPOOL KAROKE, the internet sensation, along with DROP THE MIC leading the way as a stale genre looks for a needed jump start.**

Coming soon could be the headline for MEAN TWEETS, the show. That segment would come on the heels of the recent announcements by the folks at TBS cable that they are developing a singing competition DROP THE MIC, which has already found an important place in the viral ecosystem. It is the latest example of the unscripted TV's newest and some would say most promising pipeline; namely late night. Earlier, the LATE LATE SHOW production company sold CARPOOL KAROKE, another popular segment, as a standalone show to Apple TV. In an interview, TBS/TNT senior VP of unscripted series, Michael Bloom, told reporters that "Late night has been a proving ground for great ideas, and now enhanced by the digital exposure they're getting, it's no wonder audiences want more." Bloom has ordered 16 episodes of DROP THE MIC in which four celebrities will engage in a rap battle. James Cordon will be involved as an Executive Producer, but will not host either series.

Despite some who have concerns that these and other similar announced offerings may be cannibalizing the concepts, others believe that such shows are breathing new life into the reality genre. That category of programming has struggled of late to launch new hits. And for the late night series, these off-shoots are providing an additional revenue stream.

The most successful test of this trend, so far, has been Spike cable's LIP SYNC BATTLE, hosted by model Chrissy Teigen and rapper LL Cool J. The concept was born and continues on THE TONIGHT SHOW starring JIMMY FALLON. With record ratings for SPIKE and receiving an EMMY nomination, the network is prepping a kid-centric spin on the program. They are also preparing an unaffiliated take on Cordon's carpool bit entitled CAROKE SHOWDOWN.

Over at the ABC broadcast network, they have created a back door pilot for a series titled BIG FAN. The program would be hosted by Conan's sidekick Andy Richter. Coming from LIP SYNC Executive Producer Casey Patterson, it is based on the JIMMY KIMMEL LIVE! segment called WHO KNOWS ...? With all these projects, Patterson believes "the trend is a welcome relief". "It's fresh, original material coming to reality TV, versus old relaunched formats."

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Certainly the creativity shown by Cordon, Fallon and Kimmel has revitalized the late night space for the broadcast networks. It is inevitable, especially after the successful transfer to the LIP SYNC BATTLE, that the other viral hits

would not be exploited as standalone series. Unlike those who are sure that this is not cannibalization, we do have concerns of potential over reach. Fresh ideas are positive, but imitation my not be truly fresh.



**According to the Nielsen Total Audience report, the average U.S. consumer has added an hour of daily media usage over the past two years. This analysis is excerpted and condensed for NIELSEN INSIGHTS. As the media world changes the patterns and tendencies of consumers everywhere, we're finding more and more examples of why it's important to judge each platform by the three basic cross-platform tenets: how many people use each platform, how often do they do so and how long do they stay.**

Keeping track of consumers' media diets is a daunting challenge for any marketer. Thankfully it's less challenging when media consumption can be sliced and diced across multiple platforms to see how Americans are spending their media days in an age of overwhelming choice. And the astounding choice is actually driving increased media consumption.

More so than other factors, these three basic elements (which can also be categorized as reach, frequency and time spent) affect how engagement on each platform looks when it's gauged by the discerning eye of deep-dive analysis.

This can be especially enlightening when you scale your analysis according to the "Pareto Principle," which, in the media realm, states that 20% of the media-consuming public drives 80% of consumption. For example, for the first-

quarter 2016 Nielsen Total Audience report, we investigated the impact of the top 20% of users for each medium to see just how much of the total time spent with each platform they contributed.

When charting the percentage of usage contributed by the top 20% of users, it was found that 52% of total minutes are contributed by the top 20% of TV users, 48% (radio), 71% (connected devices), 76% (internet on PC), 87% (stream on PC) and 83% of the smartphone videos. Two things stand out from this analysis. First, it's clear that larger, more widespread behaviors (those that simply reach more people) are less concentrated among the heaviest users. There are simply more overall users, so the impact of the top group is not as evident. And conversely, smaller behaviors (those that reach less people) done by fewer people tend to be more concentrated among the heaviest users.

But secondly—and most importantly for advertisers considering the right media mix—this data hints at the implications of placing a campaign on one particular platform over another, and who will be affected by that message. For live and time-shifted television as well as AM/FM radio (the top two platforms for monthly reach), the top group of users drive a much lower percentage of the total usage.

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Simply stated 20% of the media-consuming public drives 80% of consumption. It is important that as broadcasters we remind everyone that a message seen on TV will reach more individual consumers overall, as compared to online or on a

smartphone where smaller groups will likely be reached again and again. This is in contrast to the large number of impressions on broadcast television that can be achieved using our mass-appeal medium.



**With a headline: Welcome to the Zoo or Call it Prime-Time TV, the New York Times explored changes in this excerpted and condensed article. This TV season — hidden among the reboots and movie spinoffs and copy-of-a-copy sitcoms — are at least five comedies that break what has long been a cardinal broadcast-network rule: Go with what has worked before. Instead, as they try to break through the television glut, NBC, ABC and Fox are suddenly serving up audacious, almost experimental primetime humor more in keeping with cable networks like FX and the risk-taking streaming services.**

The Good Place takes place in what is essentially heaven. It’s an idyllic, flower-filled town where residents are awarded soul mates. But when a newly dead woman turns up — by mistake, really strange things start to happen. Another new comedy provides Jenna Elfman with a furry, spotted, nonhuman B.F.F. with a big mouth. These “high-concept” shows can be difficult to execute, partly because writers must walk a fine line between inventive and gimmicky. But they represent a new programming strategy for old-school primetime. Broadcasters are not quite throwing in the ratings towel, but they are trying to worry less about an immediate mass audience and more about finding, at the very least, a group of core fans attracted to a strong comedic point of view —more than ever,

comedies rely on passionate fans.”

This season will bring its share of old-fashioned sitcoms —Kevin James (Kevin Can Wait) and Matt LeBlanc (Man With a Plan) will both headline new shows with time-tested bumbling-dad storylines. For the new season, FOX is throwing caution to the wind. Son of Zorn,’ mashes together 1980s-style animation and live action: An updated He-Man, returns to conservative Orange County, Calif., and tries to reconnect with his ex-wife. Making History, headed for FOX, is a time-travel comedy that finds its cast zapping among the centuries. ABC is readying Imaginary Mary, in which an invented childhood friend returns to offer sometimes misguided advice. A talking-pet show called Downward Dog is also headed to ABC.

High-concept comedies are not new, but they are coming back, in part, because they have an immediate hook and premises explained in easy shorthand. In an age with more than 400 series annually that’s important. Rather than aiming at everyone, find an audience — any audience — as long as it’s a passionate one. The new entries are trying to distinguish themselves in the execution as well as the conceit — to create complex characters and be about something. And that is what networks hope will give them staying power.

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There is good and bad news in the trend outlined in this item. The good news could be that the broadcast networks are willing to look outside their comfort zone to try to reach an ever elusive millennial audience.

The bad news is these sitcoms and ones like them may reach a passionate, but not large audience. That does not successfully feed the pipeline for future syndication. We have to wait for Kevin Can Wait.



**NBC made one of the smartest moves that any network has in years when it decided to keep “America’s Got Talent” as a summer show that builds to the finals in September –to provide an invaluable promotional platform for its new fall shows, and anything else it wants to call attention to at a time of year when there is very little to watch, at least on broadcast television according to this excerpted and condensed item from an article by Ed Martin in Media Village.**

Now more than ever it’s a good thing at least one broadcaster has something in place to support its fall season – not for traditional competitive reasons, but because all of the broadcast networks need all the help they can get simply to remind the American public that a new television season is about to begin. To wit, thousands of people toil tirelessly to create several dozen series that are launched within days of each other only to see most of them suffer because of the intense competition of the fall, when they are suddenly all competing with each other for the attention and many die early deaths simply because they didn’t get noticed quickly enough.

Now, however, it’s a whole new long-tail ballgame, thanks to the industry changing potential of streaming services and, of more importance, the happy rejection by millions of people of the standard ways of watching television. It matters not when something launches or on what network it appears. They have moved beyond the behaviors of their elders, who adhered to the structure of network imposed schedules and industry imposed seasons. Anyone under 30 – maybe older – has no interest in a “fall season” (or any season), or more to the point any understanding of what a “fall season” is, unless it involves leaves changing color.

The networks [have blown] the doors off with the usual cavalcade of new fall shows and returning franchises. Few people will care. Many heads will spin, while a few will roll. This is not because of the quality or lack thereof of the networks’ freshmen series, which collectively are above average. Rather, this will happen because of an absence of oxygen when it comes to the played-out tradition of the traditional TV season.

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We are not sure that we agree completely with Martin’s conclusion that the networks really ought to follow the lead of cable networks and streaming services and focus more on debuting individual shows rather than cobbling them together [in] the traditional TV season. We do agree that for most of our

viewers simply maintaining knowledge of everything that is happening on television today is almost as impossible. With that said, we must find a reasoned way not to have to sacrifice or compromise anything that might be worth keeping of a ritual that people may not respond to anymore.