

# EXTRA<sup>®</sup>

S H O W D A I L Y

NATPE • MIAMI BEACH

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020

## STREAM WARS ARE ON

BY CATHY CORCORAN

They've been coming for years—the promises, the warnings, the excitement, the fears. TV and production execs have either been jumping for joy or quaking in their boots. Now, the wait is over. The Streaming Wars have begun.

Disney+ and Apple TV+ launched in November, 2019; Peacock, the streaming service from NBC Universal, will launch in April;

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## UK PLANS TO LURE PARTNERS

BY CATHY CORCORAN

“Finding a new favorite TV show is like falling in love,” said Shane Allen of BBC Television. “You have that moment where you realize you're absolutely mesmerized. You just can't get enough of those characters. That's what makes it all worthwhile.”

Allen, a guest of British streaming service Brit-Box, is in town to speak at NATPE's Wednesday

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What a way to party and jump start the NATPE 2020 week: The Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted its annual pre-NATPE event at the world famous LIV nightclub in the Fontainebleau Hotel. Televisions' leading executives gathered for an evening of delicious bites, drinks and networking to celebrate another year of NATPE in the Magic City. More photos, page 6.



The NATPE 2020 team spearheaded by JP Bommel, president and CEO, were on deck Monday to get the ball rolling for NATPE's 10th anniversary in Miami.

## SYNDI'S MARKET SURGE

BY CATHY CORCORAN

Here in sunny Miami Beach, NATPE 2020 opens its 10th year at the Fontainebleau Hotel and TV execs are out in force, serving up a big spread of new shows in their suites and poolside cabanas, ready to make hot deals for 2020 and beyond.

Content buyers have four new talk shows: *The Drew Barrymore Show* from CBS, *Nick Cannon* from Debmarm Mercury, *The Lauren Lake*

See 'SYNDI' Page 2

**at  
deadline**

**F**OX Television Stations, Lionsgate's Debmarm Mercury and record-breaking producer Will Packer (*Night School*, *Girls Trip*) are teaming to bring back Central Ave in September as a new weekly, nationally syndicated format. The provocative, socially conscious and diverse Atlanta-based series, tested during the November sweeps as a weekday strip, worked so well creatively that it will return next season as two original weekly half-hour episodes. Fox Television Stations is also launching *Fox Soul*, a free, live, ad-supported streaming channel aimed at African-American viewers.

# SYNDICATION MARKET SURGES WITH ....

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Show from MGM Television, and *The Good Dish* from Sony Pictures Television. Other new shows include *Storm of Suspicion* and *Weather Gone Viral* from Entertainment Studios.

Renewals include the popular *25 Words or Less* from Twentieth Television, *Family Feud* from Debmarm-Mercury, *Judge Judy* and *Dr. Phil* from CBS Television Distribution, and others.

Though failed daytime talk shows have littered the landscape in recent years, the success of both NBC's *The Kelly Clarkson Show* and Disney ABC's *Tamron Hall* have fueled hopes that the genre is undergoing a resurgence. Both *Kelly* and *Tamron* have been renewed for second seasons.

CBS is jumping into the talk show game with *The Drew Barrymore Show*, which will launch on CBS O&Os next year. Elaine Bauer Brooks, executive VP, Development at CBS Television Distribution said, "We've had our eye on Drew as a possible talk show host for some time. Once we shot the pilot, we realized that she brought that big celebrity magic while also genuinely connecting with the audience. She shared her own personal stories, and she knew how to make her guests feel very much at home. People said the show felt like going to a fun party and coming home with a new best friend."

She added that the show will be different from Kelly Clarkson's and Tamron Hall's shows, since CBS' first priority was to create a show that best supports the things Drew does well. "One of Drew's many super powers, for example, is her incredible sense of humor," Bauer said, "and we plan to take advantage of that in fun and unexpected ways. Actually, the show was quite literally created for her."

In addition to her long film career, Barrymore was the star and executive producer of *Santa Clarita Diet* on Netflix, appeared as a judge on CBS' reality show *The World's Best*, and provided the voice-over for NBC's unscripted dating show *First Dates*.

Peter Dunn, President, CBS TV Stations, said that the show is "...the brightest prospect we've seen in many years."

Debmarm-Mercury's *Nick Cannon*, will launch in 2020 on Fox O&Os in 17 major markets. The daytime talker, already cleared in 98% of U.S. markets, will feature pop culture stories, celebrity

interviews and other surprises.

Ira Bernstein, co-president, Debmarm-Mercury, who co-produces and distributes the show, said, "We didn't deliberately set out to develop a Nick Cannon show, but when

co-president Mort Marcus said they were impressed with the way Cannon handled his time on the *The Wendy Williams Show*.

"Nick is a multi-talented force of nature," Marcus said, "but hosting a talk show is a lot harder than it looks. He was poised, confident, and he interacted so well with the guests, we knew we wanted to work with him again."

Cannon is known as an accomplished actor, comedian, rapper, writer, producer, and TV host. As a teenager, he was a regular performer on Nickelodeon's comedy sketch show *All That*. He went on to host

him." Fox owns and operates 28 broadcast TV stations in the U.S., including nine in the top 10 markets.

Over at MGM, the new *The Lauren Lake Show* will showcase the popular star of *Lauren Lake's Paternity Court*. The new show will move Lake off the courtroom platform, and allow her to roam the live studio audience, interacting with them as well as her guests.

One of the show's earliest episodes features a man who got two identical twin sisters pregnant at the same time. The women were due to give birth within weeks of one another.

"At first, the audience hated this guy," said Barry Poznick, President, Unscripted and Alternative TV at MGM. "But Lauren listened to what he had to say. He could have walked

away from the situation, but he wanted to atone for his mistakes, and was trying to find a way to be a parent to these kids." In the end, Lauren was able to see something of this man's point-of-view, and so was the audience. "It was a great example of conflict resolution TV," Poznick said.

Lake grew up in Detroit, and put herself through law school at the University of Michigan by singing backup for Grammy Award-winning singer Mary J. Blige. "Lauren is a great lawyer and judge," Poznick said, "but she's also a real entertainer. A lot of people are calling her 'the next Oprah.'"

Lake will also continue her Daytime Emmy Award-winning *Paternity Court*, which ranks second only to the popular *Judge Judy* among court shows. She'll be in the MGM suite at NATPE to meet with clients and station groups.

*The Good Dish* from Sony Pictures Television is a talk show with a twist, incorporating food preparation, everyday recipes, trends, and money saving tips. A spinoff from the popular *Dr. Oz Show*, *The Good Dish* is hosted by the famous physician's daughter Daphne Oz, who was an original cast member of ABC's *The*



The Drew Barrymore Show from CBS Television Distribution



Fox O & O stations will be the primary launch group for Nick Cannon from Debmarm-Mercury.



MGM's The Lauren Lake Show

*American's Got Talent*, *Lip Sync Battle Shorties*, and other shows, and is producer, creator and host for 13 seasons of the MTV sketch show, *Wild 'N Out*. He also hosts the Fox celebrity competition hit *The Masked Singer*.

Frank Cicha, executive VP, Programming for Fox TV Stations, said, "The *Masked Singer* is our Number 1 show in primetime, so Nick is

Wendy Williams was ill last year, we brought in a couple of hosts to sub for her while she was recovering. Nick was one of them."

Both Bernstein and Debmarm

already a big presence at Fox Network. He's a great fit for us—talented, hip, a little edgy. We're excited about the new show because we know our audience already loves

# ...PROGRAMMING FOR 'FICKLE' AUDIENCES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

*Chew*. Co-hosts include Top Chef judge Gail Simmons, personal chef and entrepreneur Jamika Pessoa and Emmy, Grammy and Tony Award-nominee Vanessa Williams. In addition to her many film and TV credits, Williams has been a guest host on CBS' *The Talk* over the past year.

John Weiser, President, First Run for Sony Pictures Television, said that the series grew out of weekly cooking segments on *The Dr. Oz Show*. "We've already tested this format and this talent on air for two years," Weiser said, "Our audiences loved it."

He added, "Spinoffs have the highest success rate of converting into multi-year franchises. In fact, spinoffs gave us the great *Dr. Oz* straight from Oprah!"

In addition to the new talkers, Entertainment Studios has two new shows that spin off from its successful Weather Channel programming.

*Weather Gone Viral* is an adrenaline-fueled series that features videos and firsthand accounts of survivors who lived through wild weather events, and *Storm of Suspicion* is a gripping crime series that examines cases where weather played a central role in solving or covering up a crime.

Each one-hour episode of *Storm of Suspicion* features crime-solving experts and forensic meteorologists who deal with severe weather events to bring justice to the case of the week.

Andy Temple, President, Domestic Television Distribution for Entertainment Studios, said, "From blizzards to hurricanes to floods to heat waves, the show proves that when it comes to solving mysterious crimes, Mother Nature can be a detective's best friend or his worst enemy."

In addition to all these new shows, there are more great renewals available to buyers. *The Kelly Clarkson Show* is available from NBC, and *Tamron Hall* and *Live with Kelly and Ryan* are offered by Disney ABC.

Debmarm-Mercury is back with *The Wendy Williams Show*, *Caught in Providence*, *Schill's Creek* and others, and MGM has *Lauren Lake's Paternity Court*, *Personal Injury Court*, and *Couples Court*.

There's a show for every audience. In fact, that there are so many shows for every audience can actually be a problem.

"Today's audiences are fickle," said Stacy Schulman, Chief Marketing Officer, Katz Media Group. "The audience—especially the daytime audience—is not just channel surfing on broadcast TV, they're watching Netflix, Amazon, YouTube and other streamers too. We're all competing for a share of that audience's attention."

Schulman will be at NATPE to look at

program offerings and meet with producers, distributors and members of the Katz Media Group. With more than 100 broadcast groups, and nearly 800 TV stations and their digital plat-

form extensions, the company has a presence in more than 85% of U.S. markets.



Debmarm-Mercury's Family Feud



Daphne Oz, Vanessa Williams, Gail Simmons and Jamika Pessoa host The Good Dish from Sony Pictures Television.

form extensions, the company has a presence in more than 85% of U.S. markets.

Though she comes from an analytic background, and pitches Katz shows to national advertisers, Schulman said she considers more than numbers when she thinks about acquiring a show for her group.

"I like to see how syndicators are positioning a particular show and how it might fit with our station's brand," she said. "I also want to be ready to use our full spectrum of assets to promote the show both nationally and in individual markets. It can be tricky when the same show runs in different day parts in different markets."

Fox's Frank Cicha agrees. "Depending on the market, the same show could be running anywhere from 3 pm or 4 pm until midnight," he

said. "When we take on a new show, we have to decide if it makes any sense to air it after early news or not. Maybe a different lead-in would be better. Maybe we could schedule it more efficiently."

He believes in experimenting, and is willing to shuffle lineups to boost ratings. A champion of the game show, *25 Words or Less*, starring Meredith Vieira, Cicha said he often pairs that show with *Family Feud*, and has been pleasantly surprised to see the combination succeed in day parts that never aired game shows in the past. (Vieira will be in the Fox suite at NATPE to meet with stations and program buyers.)

MGM's Barry Posnick said, "Syndication is a very tricky business. You don't have a consistent time spot, and you know you're playing to different audiences." In certain markets, MGM's *Lauren Lake's Paternity Court* has a surprisingly high audience among 12-17 year-olds. "The show is sexy, and it's scandalous," he said. "We didn't think we were producing a show for teens, but many of these kids are probably growing up in families like the ones on *Paternity Court*. There's just no promotion formula that will work in every market."

Katz Media Group's Schulman added that, while it's encouraging to see the success of new syndicated shows, when those are renewed, there's less station inventory available for new shows. "We heard talk about a Drew Barrymore talk show a couple of years ago, but inventory was so tight, there just weren't any time slots available at the time," she said.

CBS' Elaine Bauer said, "Our conversations with Drew didn't actually begin until this past summer during our development season. Knowing that Drew had already considered coming

to daytime in the past was actually an asset. She had already thought through the idea of forging this new path and knew definitively that she wanted to come to daytime. Drew is at the top of her game right now. She has a unique multi-generational appeal. Daytime is the place where she feels she can really be herself, connect with people and do something special."

And something special is what it's all about. "As simple as it sounds, stations need product. Everyone's looking for something special, and the more programs we have to choose from, the better," said Cicha. "Not everything will work, no matter what we do, but we're gonna keep plugging. That's what makes this business so much fun."

# STREAMING WARS ARE ON

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and HBO Max will launch in May.

Established streamers Hulu (20 million subscribers) and Amazon (100 million subscribers) are still pumping out content and the big gorilla in the room, Netflix (162 million subscribers worldwide), says it is untroubled by its new competitors.

But how many streaming services will the market support? How many will survive? At this point, no one knows for sure. Streamers tout their program lineups—everything from old classics to fresh new original series—but does a successful streamer need more than great content?

“The three pillars of a successful streamer are content, technology and customer service,” said Mark Greenberg, NATPE Board member and industry consultant. “Content is king and always will be, but all the big players have great content. The more pertinent questions are: can they deliver product efficiently and profitably, and can they gain and hold consumers? That remains to be seen.”

That point became obvious in November when Disney+ kicked off its new streaming service at 12 midnight, Pacific time, 3am Eastern time. More than 10 million subscribers signed up the first day alone, but the surge led to a temporary shutdown of the platform.

Greenberg, who is the former president of EPiX, now owned by MGM, also has more than 25 years experience with Showtime, HBO and other companies. He said he wasn't surprised by Disney's problems. When he was promoting premium pay-per-view Mike Tyson fights for Showtime, an average of 2 million viewers purchased the fights at \$54.95 each. “That was great,” he said, “but 90% of those purchases were placed within 10 minutes of the start of the fight. That's what we call ‘system congestion.’ That's what happened with the Disney launch.”

New technology is critical to streamers. In fact, it's at the very heart of the streaming explosion. NATPE board member and managing partner of MAG Consulting Group, Shahid Khan, said, “When providers like Comcast and Verizon installed high speed internet to individual homes, they made it possible to stream video content over the internet. Eventually, the doors blew off! Now, there's a seemingly endless amount of bandwidth. Khan and Greenberg will speak on the NATPE panel The Future of Television today at 9:30 am in the Fontaine Room at the Fontainebleau.

Demand for bandwidth and video content appears to be ever-increasing. In 2019, Verizon estimated that 8.4 billion smart phones, TVs, tablets, computers and other devices were in use globally. That number is expected to climb to more than 20 billion by the end of 2020. They say their new 5G technology will be able to handle these devices, ultimately enabling peak data rates of 10 gigabits per second.

Verizon built an entire infrastructure of expensive high-speed fiber optic cables made of



Disney +'s *The Mandalorian*



STARZ's *American Gods* with Ian McShane and Ricky White

glass that transmit data as pulses of light. Google Fiber is also building its own infrastructure, and Comcast has announced new technology that will deliver gigabit speeds over traditional cable connections. The service will launch in early 2020.

“These days, video is much less profitable for cable companies,” Khan said, “but they're all making money on broadband.”

But do program providers understand the technology? And do they know how to manage it?

Ricky Girson, VP, Business Development for

tech consultant TaskUs, said that technology is seldom a core competency for Hollywood studios or other streamers. “The technology involved in signing up millions of people in a short period of time is just astounding,” he said. TaskUs works with streamers and other clients to help them set up, operate and maintain hardware, software and the people necessary to deliver programming to consumers. Girson is at NATPE offering tech solutions for streamers.

Problems with big launches should probably be expected, Girson said. For years, the gaming industry has dealt with congestion when players surged online when a new game was released. The volume and the resulting problems were something of a surprise for Disney though. In an interview with *The Verge*, Kevin Mayer, head of Disney's direct-to-consumer division, said that they underestimated the demand when their streaming service launched. “There were some limits to the architecture that we had in place,” he said. Most of the initial problems have been fixed, and Mayer acknowledged how much more respect he now has for Netflix. “Netflix is operating their platform at a massive scale,” he said. “Having gone through this launch, I see how difficult that is.”

So millions of customers have already signed up for new streaming services and millions will sign up for those that will launch in 2020. But will they stay? That depends on customer service, and that's a whole new area for some streamers.

“Think of it this way,” said Mark Greenberg. “In the old days, Hollywood studios functioned as manufacturers. They produced the product. Then the product went to Comcast, which functioned as a wholesaler bundling products, which they then sold to consumers. Now, Netflix, and of course, Amazon function not only as producers and bundlers, they are also retailers, selling directly to consumers. The new streamers are going to have to do the same thing.”

TaskUs' Ricky Girson said, “You can have the best content in the world, but if you don't attract and keep

customers, you're nowhere.”

If you build it, they won't necessarily come, and if they do come and they get annoyed, they'll leave.

“Let's say you sign up a million customers,” Girson said. “If even one percent of them want to talk with you every month, that's 10,000 customers a month. If it's 10 percent, that's 100,000 customers every month. Most streamers just aren't equipped to handle that kind of volume. They have to outsource that function.”

Outsourcing can be expensive. In fact,

# STREAMING WARS ARE ON

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*The Morning Show's* Reese Witherspoon, Steve Carrel and Jennifer Aniston

everything in the streaming world is expensive, especially content. The numbers can be staggering.

“Netflix is spending more money on content than all the Hollywood studios combined,” Khan said. “The networks have to be profitable—they spend money on programming, then they have to sell advertising in order to make a profit. But Netflix isn't a network, it's a digital company, and digital stocks have been going up whether or not they're profitable.”

That kind of thinking has sent content prices through the roof.

In a recent interview with *Variety*, Jamie Erlicht and Zack Van Amberg, who lead Apple TV+ video programming worldwide, said they were exhilarated when they realized they were no longer bound by old Hollywood ideas. Both Erlicht and Van Amberg came to Apple from Sony Pictures Television, where they served as presidents, responsible for TV hits *Breaking Bad*, *Better Call Saul*, *The Crown*, *Rescue Me* and many more. They said that the traditional factors that defined their options in the past—budget deficits, international sales, and syndication potential—did not apply at Apple. Now, the guiding principle is to build a service worthy of the Apple brand that also harnesses the power of digital media.

“There's a lot of money in the marketplace as people build these new streaming businesses, and it's not really tied to any revenue,” said Dante Di Loreto, President, Sighted Programming for Fremantle.

A production veteran, with TV hits *Glee*, *American Horror Story*, and other shows to his credit, Di Loreto oversees Fremantle's current programs *American Gods* (Starz/Amazon), *The Young Pope* (HBO) and others. Its drama series, *Mosquito Coast*, is based on the 1981 novel *The Mosquito Coast* by Paul Theroux. The series will air on Apple TV+. Fremantle is working on other new programs for streaming services, too.

“Some streamers are operating primary businesses other than TV or movie content,” he said, “and they're also making immense capital investment in streaming. There's a bit of a gold rush going on in content right now.”

Which brings Amazon to mind. Once a simple online book seller, Amazon now sells everything to everybody in the world.

Its founder, president and CEO Jeff Bezos, famously quipped that, when Amazon wins an Emmy award for its programming, “It helps us sell more shoes.”

Shahid Khan said, “There's a lot of cash coming into the business, and it's not necessarily tied to audience or even to revenue. If a 1 trillion dollar company wants a relationship with certain talent, they're going to pay for it, no matter what the cost is. That can distort the true value of talent, and the true value of a program. They're playing with Monopoly money.”

There are actually more than 200 companies currently streaming content, and obviously, not all will survive. “With all this technology, it's easy to forget we're still dealing with human behavior,” said Mark Greenberg. “At a certain point, the consumer will become overwhelmed with too many choices. Then things will start to shake out.”

He added that the situation is similar to what happened way back when cable disrupted the old broadcast model. “Comcast started aggregating channels and offered them to consumers as bundles. Now, Roku and Amazon are playing the role that Comcast used to play, aggregating streamers and offering them as ‘skinny bundles.’”

What goes around, comes around, which brings us back to content, because bigger bucks don't necessarily mean better content or more subscribers, and fiber optics, and fat or skinny bundles are meaningless if there's nothing good on TV.

Dante Di Loreto said that, rather than chasing the current content gold rush, his business is built on sustaining ongoing relationships with creative talent. “We have found that, regardless of what the market is doing at any given time, powerful human drama that connects with the audience is what delivers the best long term value.”

He observed that a 50 year-old woman living in France, a 35 year-old man in India and a teenager in Connecticut can identify with—and fall in love with—a show that's set in the Latin American jungle. “We love stories because we all share so many fundamental human experiences,” he said. “We see ourselves in other people's stories. That's really what this business is all about.”

# STREAMING OFFERS AN ARRAY OF PROGRAMMING

## Disney+

Launched November, 2019

For \$6.99 per month, subscribers can stream all the Disney movies, along with titles from Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, National Geographic, and more. TV series include the new original series *The Mandalorian* (from the Star Wars franchise), *The Simpsons*, *Muppet Babies*, *The World According to Jeff Goldblum*, *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*, and more. Projections call for 60 to 90 million subscribers globally by 2024.

## Apple TV+

Launched November, 2019

\$4.99 per month, but free for one year to anyone who buys a new Apple device.

Heavy original series programming includes: *The Morning Show*, starring Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Steve Carrell; *See*, starring Jason Momoa; *Dickinson*, starring Hailee Steinfeld; and *For All Mankind*, created by *Star Trek* alum Ronald Moore, starring Edward Baldwin.

Projections call for 100 million subscribers in the first year.

## HBO Max

Launching May, 2020

\$14.99 per month, but free for one year for current HBO subscribers.

An ad-supported version of HBO Max will debut in 2021, bundled with AT&T TV. Eventually, live sports and news programming will be added.

Viewers will have access to 1800 movies, including *The Matrix*, *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* franchises, *Superman* and *Batman* movies, and the library of Warner Brothers films from *Casablanca* (1943) to Stephen King's *Doctor Sleep* (2019). TV offerings will include *Game of Thrones*, as well as a new GOT Prequel - *House of The Dragon* from George R.R. Martin and Ryan Condal. Other shows include *Friends*, *West Wing*, past episodes, as well as the next five seasons of *Sesame Street*, limited series *Pretty Little Liars*, and others. AT&T TV recently announced that it would shut down its Audience Network Channel on Direct TV, and re-package the channel as part of HBO Max.

Their target is 50 million domestic subscribers and 75-90 million premium subscribers in the first five years.

## Peacock (NBC Universal)

Launching April, 2020

Tiered pricing. Specifics not yet released. An ad-supported service will be offered free.

In addition to more than 15,000 hours of content, rumors say that subscribers will also be able to access live programming from NBC News Now. Details have not yet been released.

TV offerings will include *The Office*, *Cheers*, *Frasier*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Parks and Rec*, and others. Movies will include *Back to the Future*, *Jaws*, and others.

Original series offerings include *Angelyne*, based on L.A.'s mysterious billboard bombshell; *Dr. Death*, based on the true story of a sociopathic Dallas surgeon; and *Brave New World*, based on the classic Aldous Huxley novel. In a twist for sci-fi fans, a re-boot of the iconic *Battlestar Galactica*, produced by Sam Esmail, will run alongside the popular original Sci Fi Channel series from Ron Moore.

# SCENE & HEARD

# SCENE & HEARD



*The Television Syndication Company's* Cassie Yde, Mary Joyce, and Lisa Romine

*Electric Entertainment's* Nolan Pielak, Sonia Mehandjiyska and Raul Piña



*FilmRise's* Danny Fisher, Melissa Wohl, Trey Durst, Emma Leslie, and Max Einhorn



*Soto Co.'s* Renata Ishihama



*Ovation TV Networker's* Erica Henry

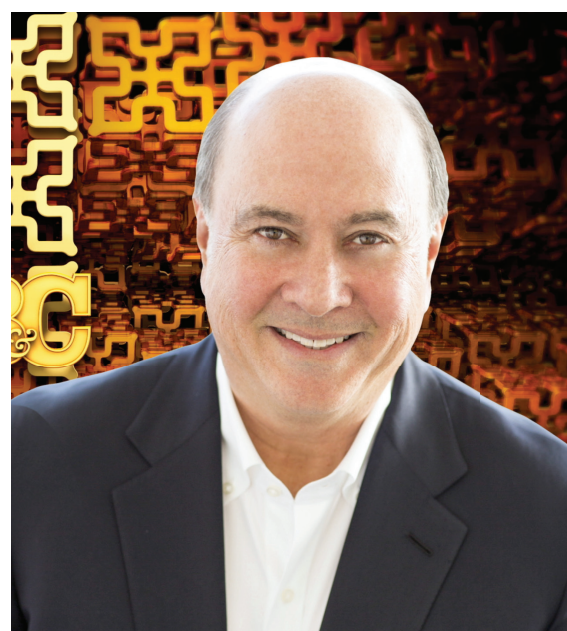


*Avalon Distribution's* Isobel Hughes and Carly Hardman

# IRIS AWARDS

**Celebrating the rapid expansion of new program content, NATPE brings back the iconic IRIS Awards for the NATPE 2020 Iris Awards Luncheon.**

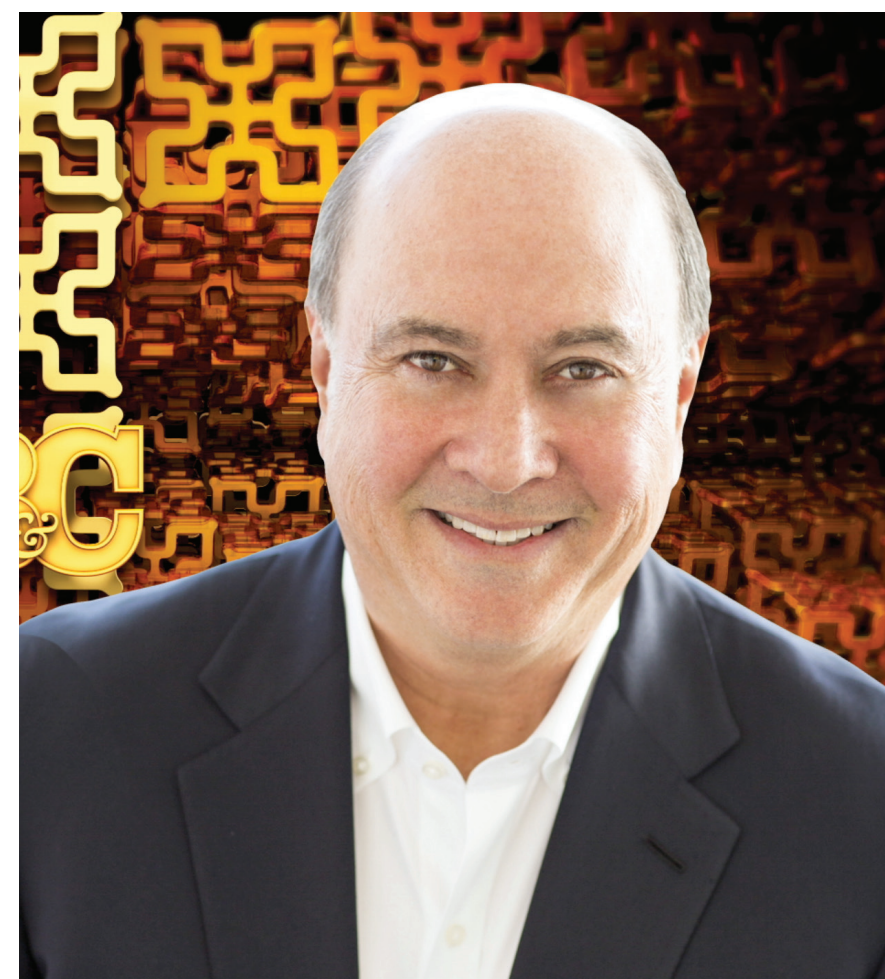
**The first honorees are Lionsgate's Debmar-Mercury co-presidents Mort Marcus and Ira Bernstein receiving the *Career Achievement Award*; and Perry Sook, receiving the *Lew Klein Leadership Award*; and the weekly syndicated political show "Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien" receiving the *Iris Award of Excellence*.**



**When: Wednesday**  
**Time: Luncheon. Noon - 2pm (By invitation only)**  
**Where: Glimmer 3/4**

## IRIS AWARDS : CAREER ACHIEVEMENT IRA BERNSTEIN & MORT MARCUS

Lionsgate's Debmar-Mercury co-presidents Mort Marcus and Ira Bernstein are the brains and brawn of the innovative media company specializing in syndication, network, cable and ancillary markets. Their collaboration spans decades of producing and distributing iconic programming. Debmar-Mercury is a wholly owned subsidiary of Lionsgate, a premier next generation global content leader



**What does this award mean to you—on both a personal and/or a professional level?**

Mort: It feels great to have started a company in 2003 when most people thought the syndication business was over and here we are 17 years later—and we are still competing with the studios. It is an honor to be recognized.

Ira: I agree, it truly is an honor. What this award says pretty well is that we have never forgotten from where we came—two sales guys trying to sell a show and seeing how it goes. Honestly, every day I wake up and part of me still feels like we still need to sell one more show to survive.

**What is your proudest accomplishment—personal and professional?**

Mort: Honestly, the creation of Debmar-Mercury is my proudest accomplishment. Despite all of the naysaying about the syndication business, we have come so far and built a truly dynamic company with great people—and all of us having fun doing it!

**Who or what is a constant source of inspiration to you?**

Ira: I wouldn't be here today if not for the support and confidence instilled in me by my parents,

Marlene and Bernie. And now when I look at my grown kids, I feel really proud of what they have already accomplished, and the values that they live by every day.

Mort: My wife Debby. She is TRULY the love of my life and the person who literally none of this could have happened without.

**If you were not now involved in media, what other profession would you like to follow?**

Mort: Well, I know for a fact that I wasn't very good at being a gas station attendant, so thank goodness the media business exists!

Ira: I would have loved to have been a running back for the Jets, but since that wasn't in the cards, I guess I'd have been happy being a really popular history professor at UCLA.

**What is a mistake from which you have learned?**

Ira: Not exactly a mistake but it was my Cox boss, Nick Trigony, who taught me that anyone who succeeds has to also accept failure—and not being afraid to fail may, in fact, be the secret to success. Just so long as you don't make the same mistake twice!

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

Mort: Bike riding and traveling.

Ira: Working out almost every day, finding the sunshine wherever it is and traveling to those places as often as I can.

**What is your greatest strength? Greatest weakness?**

Ira: My strength is my optimism, and that may be my biggest weakness, too.

Mort: And mine would be the exact opposite. When Ira thinks it is sunny, I think it is going to rain. But that's what makes it all keep working.

**What is your advice to 20-somethings now trying to build careers in media?**

Mort: Find what you love, but figure out the new industry ecosystem first—which, of course, could change again by this time next week. Then it will be a different answer. And realize you need to start at the bottom and learn your way up. That way, hopefully, you will find a career track you like and do it well.

Ira: Play chess, not checkers. Figure out where you want to go and how to get there—and realize it might not be a straight line that gets you there.

**What is a day in your life like? Please take us through a typical**

**time line—the highlights and low lights?**

Ira: Same as it has been since I took my daughter to work so many years ago: She said that all I do is talk to people on the phone, meet with people and then take them to lunch. Then in the afternoon, same thing, but maybe watch a tape or two on my TV.

Mort: I have a tendency to watch or listen to the news while I bike, then get ready to go to work while watching Morning Joe. Every day is different—that's why I love what I do.

**What is one question you wish people would ask you?**

**'Do you really still like what you are doing?'**

Mort: Yes, I've love every moment of it – and I want to stick around to figure out a way to continue as the business changes. I mean if you love it, why stop?

Ira: Yes, and I consider myself one of the luckiest people I know, because I love every minute of it, and they pay us! We have really had a blast!



# IRIS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

## SOLEDAD O'BRIEN

Soledad O'Brien is an award-winning journalist, speaker, author, and philanthropist who anchors and produces the Hearst Television political magazine program *Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien*. O'Brien, founder and CEO of Soledad O'Brien Productions, also reports for *HBO Real Sports*, the *PBS NewsHour*, *WebMD* and has authored two books. She has appeared on networks, Fox and Oxygen and anchored and reported for NBC, MSNBC and CNN. She has won numerous awards, including three Emmys, the George Peabody award, an Alfred I. DuPont prize and the Gracie. Newsweek Magazine named her one of the "15 People Who Make America Great." With her husband, she is founder of the PowHERful Foundation that helps young women get to and through college. Follow her on Twitter: @soledadobrien

**What does this award mean to you—on both a personal and/or a professional level?**

I'm enormously grateful for this award, particularly because it recognizes the great teams I've had around me working to create solid journalism this award is celebrating. The viewers out there need facts, context, history and differing perspectives to help them make important choices. We are giving them that.

**When you were a youngster, could anyone have predicted the track of your career? What would have been their clues?**

Well, I first wanted to be a doctor. You see how that turned out! I always liked data and facts and had an inquisitive and probing mind. That's what landed me at a local Boston TV station as an intern and launched my career.

**What is your proudest accomplishment—personal and professional?**

All my kids—not just the four I gave birth to but all the young people who my husband and I have mentored and supported through our foundation in getting to and through college and out into the world where they can make things better.

**Who was or is your mentor(s) or the person you most admire?**

My first mentor was Jeanne Blake, a force of nature at WBZ in Boston. She was the medical reporter and I was her intern when I was in college. She didn't just help me learn how to be a good, fair, and accurate journalist, she also helped me understand why the work of a journalist matters, how it can transform and empower and why it is not a calling to be taken lightly.

**Who or what is a constant source of inspiration to you?**

The scholars my husband and I sponsor through our PowHERful Foundation. Some have overcome challenges that seem unsurmountable. They pursue their dreams with strength and purpose, but they don't leave it there. They also look to help other people. It's inspiring to me to see someone who has nothing look for ways to share and help and empower others.

**If you were not now involved in media, what other profession would you like to follow?**

Being a journalist is what I love! I think if I wasn't doing this I would be doing something like this -- whether that's teaching or investigating or mining data to empower change. I believe we all have an obligation to look for ways to inform and educate and grow good ideas.

**What is a mistake from which you have learned?**



There have been so many! I think learning from mistakes is a quality we all need to have. One example is learning that you should do fewer things better instead of filling your plate with a lot of things you can't do well. I remember trying to do a series when I had four children under the age of 4. It was about how to manage the job of parenting them and working. It was a big mistake. I had newborn twins. And a fulltime morning show job. I didn't need to take on anything else!

**What do you like to do in your spare time? Hobbies? Sports? Write Poetry? Sing/Dance?**

Horses. Horses and more horses. I love to ride. I love to learn about riding while the horses are learning right with me. We are like this team.

**What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?**

My strength is that I truly believe anything is possible if you just work long and hard at it. My weakness is that I truly believe anything is possible if you just work long and hard at it! I don't

think I'm the first person to discover that your strength can also be your weakness.

**What is your advice to 20-somethings now trying to build careers in media?**

Focus. Don't let all the noise in journalism distract you. Don't allow yourself to be consumed by bells and whistles. At the end of the day, reporting is about talking to real people and telling their stories.

**What are three things most people don't know about you?**

That I love horses. That my dad is Australian of Irish descent and my mom is black and Cuban. That I grew up on Long Island in the suburbs.

**What is a day in your life like? Please take us through a typical time line—citing a few highlights and low lights?**

My day usually starts and ends on planes, trains and automobiles. I am always going somewhere, whether it's down to DC from NY to shoot my show or across the country to speak to students at a university or driving to pick up my kids from school. The highlight is when I arrive! The low-light is when I'm just getting ready to take off and the pilot or conductor comes on to announce a delay.

**What is a question you wish someone would ask—either personal or professional? And please provide the answer!**

Ask me why journalism has lost credibility with so many people. And I will tell you that it's because our industry failed to reflect the

American public in all its diversity of race, class, gender, and so many other things. The industry lost touch with people outside its narrow world and stopped leading with facts and substance. People began to look elsewhere for answers to fundamental questions about what was happening in the world around them. Fiction and propaganda filled the void.

**What do you think the industry will look like in five years?**

I'd rather say what I hope it will look like than what I think it will look like. Nothing is certain except that I know I will do my part (and so should you) to re-enforce facts as the spine of everything that gets reported. I hope the industry is infused with a new crop of enthusiastic truth-tellers, people who value the human story and the data and details that bring it to life. I hope our industry in five years recaptures the trust of the American people by having a diversity of reporters who tell the story of all our lives in a thoughtful and informative way.

# IRIS LEW KLEIN LEADERSHIP AWARD

## PERRY SOOK

Perry Sook founded Nexstar in 1996 with one local TV station in Scranton, PA, and began building the foundation of what became one of the world's leading local marketing and content companies. With its \$7.1 billion accretive acquisition of Tribune Media and the \$4.6 billion accretive acquisition of Media General, Nexstar Media Group is now the largest local broadcast TV operator in the U.S.—with 197 stations reaching 115 markets, or approximately 63% of all TV households, and annual revenue more than \$4.5 billion.

**What does this award mean to you—on both a personal and/or a professional level?**

This award means a lot to me given that it is named after Lew Klein. Lew ran Gateway Communications which is the first company I worked for out of college. Later when I started Nexstar, the company was originally based in Pennsylvania. I was active on the board of the PAB (Penn. Assn. of Broadcasters) and Lew was always present at the conventions. He always told me that he was proud of what I had accomplished. So this award is very personal to me.

**When you were a youngster, could anyone have predicted the track of your career?**

My mother used to say that at the age of 3, I would come out from behind the curtain with a flashlight for a microphone and imitate Bob Barker on Truth or Consequences. I originally aspired to replace Bob Price as the play-by-play voice of the Pittsburgh Pirates, and as a teenager I used to do play-by-play of little league games and later college baseball games on the local radio station.

**What is your proudest accomplishment—personal and professional?**

Sandy and I have been married for almost 38 years and have three wonderful children, Laura, Victoria and Perry Jr, and two awesome grandsons, Theodore and Lucas. Nothing else comes close personally. Professionally, I would say closing on the Tribune

acquisition and taking a moment to reflect (which hardly ever happens) to realize that from one station in 1996 we have created the largest local broadcasting company in America was a very humbling and momentous occasion for me.

**Who was or is your mentor(s) or the person you most admire?**

I always admired Cap Cities Communications as a company. It was a company of individuals who worked hard, played by the rules, weren't afraid to poke fun at themselves and have fun at their work, and at night went home to their families. That's the culture I've tried to emulate at Nexstar. At one point in my career I had occasions to interact with Tom Murphy and Dan Burke and some of their key lieutenants. Even though they were in the middle of completing the acquisition of ABC, they still made time for this barely 30-something guy with a lot of questions. That stuck with me and I have tried to pay

it forward.

**Who or what is a constant source of inspiration to you?**

I would say my faith and also my belief that America is still the greatest land of opportunity. I tell aspiring entrepreneurs that one of the qualities you need to be successful is optimism. I truly believe that and it is how I choose to love my life.

**If you were not now involved in media, what other profession would you like to follow?**

I joke that this is the only business I've ever been in or ever wanted to be in. I don't know what I'd be doing otherwise. Probably the car business or the jewelry business.

**What is a mistake from which you have learned?**

What I have learned from making mistakes and what I tell our employees is that it is ok to make mistakes. Just own it immediately and learn from it.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**



Grandkids, golf, and travel with the family are my priorities outside of work.

**What is your greatest strength? Weakness?**

Decisiveness, ability to take and tolerate risk, optimism and ability to communicate and articulate a vision are in my opinion my strong points. Sense of humor is in there, too. Impatience is probably my worst trait. I work at being a better listener in both my professional and personal life.

**What is your advice to 20-somethings now trying to build careers in media?**

Decide what you are passionate about and then go all in pursuing your passion.

**What are three things most people don't know about you?**

If they don't know about them, there is a reason.

**What is a day in your life like? Take us through a typical time line—the highlights and low lights?**

I'm a fairly light sleeper so my phone is in a different room at night, so first thing I'll check emails and news headlines. I don't like to waste time in traffic so I either go in early of work from my home office and go in as the rush hour is winding down. I spend about 25% of my time on investor relations and an equal amount of my time on government relations, 25% of my time on strategy and initiatives and the other quarter of my time on operational issues. We've got a great team of executives actually running the company which enables me to spend the time on other areas. Strategy is not an occasional meeting, I believe a CEO should dedicate a good portion of his/her time to shaping the direction of the company for the future. Lunch is almost always a quick bite at my desk. To avoid rush hour traffic, I usually stay late.

**What is a question you wish someone would ask?**

In almost 17 years of running a public company, I think everything has been asked. My life, my compensation, my net worth—it's all an open book!

**What do you think the industry will look like in five years?**

At the local market level, where we spend most of our time, not much different than it looks today. Technology may change how we do our jobs, but the basic mission is still the same. Produce good local content and help local businesses sell stuff.

# FORAGING CO-PRODUCTION DEALS TOP AGENDA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

session, New European Content Opportunities: The UK. He and other UK producers and execs are exploring relationships with U.S., Latin American, and other international partners to co-produce programming that can air anywhere around the globe. Allen's title is Controller of Comedy Commissioning for the BBC.

British comedy? Some would say there's no such thing.

"Bollocks to that!" Allen said. "In the old days, comedies like *Are You Being Served?* and *Benny Hill* sometimes left American audiences scratching their heads at their offbeat humor." Back then, the BBC used to fully fund their own programs, which tended to be narrowly focused and made specifically for British audiences. "Now, we're doing shows we know will travel," he said.

"A show like *Benny Hill* is hopelessly dated, especially with its pratfall humor and its attitudes toward women," Allen said. "Today's comedies are edgier single camera auteur pieces. They can go to darker places, and invite the audience to get emotionally engaged." And many of them are co-produced with American or other international companies.

Take the offbeat comedy *Fleabag*, for instance, a series that follows the show's creator and star, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, as she lurches around London. Winner of both Emmy and Golden Globe Awards, *Fleabag* received an extremely rare 100% rating from *Rotten Tomatoes*. The critics' consensus said, "Clever and viciously funny, *Fleabag* is a touching wildly inventive comedy about a complicated young woman navigating the aftermath of trauma."

BBC produced the pilot, then partnered with Amazon to produce two seasons of the series. BBC retained exclusive rights to air the series in the UK, while Amazon aired both seasons internationally. Though fans would have loved the show to continue, Waller-Bridge said she had had enough of that story. She moved on to create *Killing Eve*, a drama series about a female assassin and the British Intelligence operative, played by Sandra Oh, who is assigned to track her down. Produced by the BBC, the show airs on BBC America, AMC, and Hulu, and was nominated for both Golden Globe and Emmy Awards.

"We are fortunate to have a huge domestic talent base of actors and production people here in the UK," said Kenton Allen, CEO, London's Big Talk Productions. The company has also produced *There She Goes*, a popular comedy/drama about a severely learning disabled 9-year-old girl and her family.

Kenton Allen (no relation to Shane Allen) will

also speak on the European Content panel. Riding high on his First Look deal with CBS Studios, Allen's Big Talk Productions recently announced *The Offenders*, a new co-production with Amazon, which will star Stephen Merchant. Merchant wrote and developed the original English version of *The Office*, which was adapted for the U.S. mar-

and deliver a program anywhere in the world in minutes."

McCarthy-Simpson, also a speaker on the Wednesday panel, will oversee the PACT-UK exhibit booth on the NATPE Market Floor. With more than 20 independent UK production companies participating in the PACT-UK booth, McCarthy-Simpson said her main focus is to forge relationships with international production companies and explore co-production treaties with other countries, particularly those in Latin America.

"We already have 14 co-production treaties in place, including one with Brazil," she said. "They are official government-to-government legal agreements, signed by ministers from both countries that lay out the foundation of co-productions. Under the treaties, we have opportunities to access tax credits and other soft money in co-productions."

Regardless of what happens with Brexit, she said, "We know that people all over the world love British content. There's a big demand, and we hope there always will be."

Apparently, language is no barrier either. McCarthy-Simpson observed that 50 years ago she might have said that a "typical Brit audience" was quite different from a "typical American" or a "typical Brazilian audience," but with worldwide streaming and social media, audiences' tastes are far less opposed.

"If you look at global audience reports, you see that, among the top 20 downloaded shows, there are a lot of similarities, regardless of the country." Encouraged that people in Taiwan are as interested in British drama as people in Yorkshire, she said, "We're all fascinated

by other cultures. We want to see how things are done and how people act in other areas of the globe. Ultimately though, we're more alike than we are different."

Shane Allen said "When you find a new favorite TV show, it's like watching a new family move into your neighborhood. At first, you might be a bit standoffish, then you go over to say hello, then you meet at a neighborhood party, finally, they're part of your family and you have them over for Christmas dinner."

The UK has been exporting creative talent and great programming for years. "From Peter Sellers to Judy Dench to Sacha Baron Cohen to Phoebe Waller-Bridge and others, we've proven that the whole world loves British people and British programs. We're hoping to forge more international relationships at NATPE and continue our partnership with the world," he said.



Mrs. Brown's Boys is a modern British Comedy from BritBox.



There She Goes, from Big Talk Productions, is co-produced by Amazon Studios.

ket and ran for nine successful seasons on NBC. The show is now available on Netflix.

But wait. What about Brexit? What will happen to co-productions when Great Britain leaves the European Union? No one knows for sure, but UK execs say they're not worried.

"We may have additional paperwork with work visas for people coming into our productions from the U.S. and other European countries," Kenton Allen said, "but beyond that, it's not really clear."

"There will certainly be changes, but they probably won't affect TV production as much as they will other businesses," said Dawn McCarthy-Simpson, Director, International Strategy for PACT-UK, a trade association for independent producers in the UK. "We're not importing or exporting hard goods the way some businesses are," she said. "We can literally push a button

# WHAT TO DO?

## CRITICS' CHOICES RIPPED FROM MIAMI BEACH HEADLINES

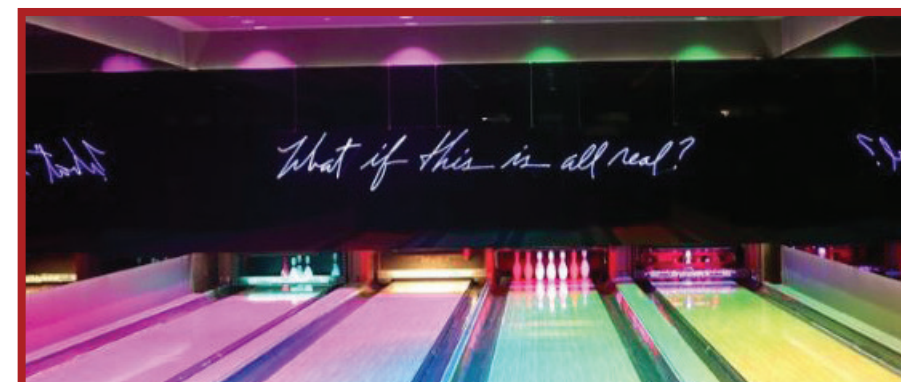
Editor's Note: NATPE 2020 returns to the Fontainebleau Resort in Miami Beach for three action-packed days of distinguished keynotes and insightful panel sessions. Make sure to carve out some time to relax, unwind, and enjoy the surrounding area. *EXTRA EXTRA* went behind the local critics' headlines to curate insiders' favorites, delving into some well-known and hidden gems unique to the Magic City.



### GITANO AT CASA FAENA

Imported from Tulum, Gitano at Casa Faena is chief executive officer and chef James Gardner's new Miami sensation. The Mexican fare restaurant (located across the street from the Faena Hotel) opened during Art Basel in December. It occupies the 40-room Casa Faena boutique hotel, which features a rooftop terrace and a lounge. The menu offers dishes found at several of their other locations and includes offerings such as the Oaxacan Truffle Quesadilla (\$21), Brook Trout in Banana Leaf (\$28), Crispy Duckling Barbacoa (\$32), and Churros con Chocolate (\$12).

GRUPOGITANO.COM/GITANO-AT-CASA-FAENA



### BASEMENT MIAMI

Head to the Basement at the Edition Hotel for some subterranean fun. This is not your grandfather's basement either. Basement Miami offers activities you won't find anywhere else. Want to go ice skating? Too skitish for ice skating? Try your hand at bowling. Adjacent to the rink is Basement Bowl, a four-lane bowling alley with massive LED screen displays and interactive lighting that syncs to each bowler.

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### LINCOLN ROAD MALL

The Lincoln Road Mall has changed a lot in the past year. It has become a major shopping destination for locals and tourists alike. Stores such as H&M, Sephora, Nike, Apple, Original, and Anthropology join hundreds of others in this outdoor pedestrian mall, also known as the Lincoln Road District. The arrival of the Lincoln Eatery just off the main road has also put a spotlight on the growing number of dining concepts in recent months. The Lincoln Eatery features 16 fast-casual restaurants.

LINCOLNROADMALL.COM



### MIAMI BEACH BOTANICAL GARDEN

Miami Beach's flourishing art scene means there are no shortages of exhibitions. The Miami Beach Botanical Garden's current exhibit, The Secret Garden, is on display now until Jan. 26. Don't miss out on the opportunity to experience "a celebration of the joy of creativity and the splendor of nature, in spite of its many possible meanings." Tuesday through Sunday, 9 am-5 pm.

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# CABLE HALL OF FAME

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## TOP 5 REASONS TO ATTEND THE CABLE HALL OF FAME

1. It's the **best party** of the year.
2. It's the **best opportunity** to see all your friends in one night.
3. It's the **best excuse** to stay out late on a Thursday night.
4. It's the **best people** in the **best industry**.
5. **Open bar.**

- Jana Henthorn,  
Cable Center President & CEO

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