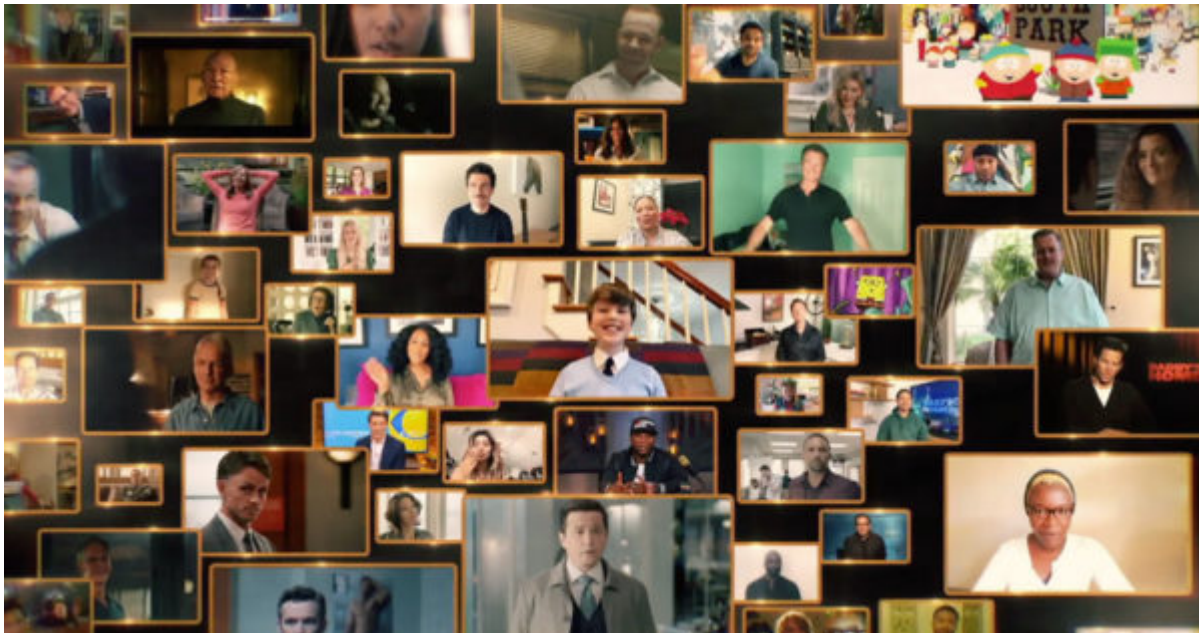


ViacomCBS Offers Optimistic Outlook on Fall TV's Return in Day 2 of Upfront Event



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2 hours ago
Key insights:

- CBS is making preparations to turn around episodes quicker than usual to account for production delays.

ViacomCBS wants marketers to be optimistic about the return of CBS' usual fall television lineup, even though production challenges remain an ongoing pain point for the television industry during the pandemic. Today, the media company pitched media planners and buyers on CBS' fall schedule, but the entire lineup hinges on the hope that production, which shut down in March, will resume shortly and that new episodes will be ready to air later this year.

In the second presentation of the combined company's two-day virtual upfront, ViacomCBS continued its business-as-usual message. On Monday, the company focused on its Viacom cable brands in a brief presentation underscoring the power of the

combined portfolio in a prerecorded video that was focused on being “efficient and entertaining,” as ViacomCBS ad sales chief Jo Ann Ross previously told Adweek.

As opposed to Monday’s video, Tuesday’s presentation was absent of any ViacomCBS executives and instead showcased programming highlights from CBS properties. The 23-minute collection of sizzle reels and extended trailers for the new offerings from CBS and streaming service CBS All Access sent the message to marketers that CBS is optimistic its fall schedule will be largely unaffected by the production shutdown.

“Obviously, nobody knows for sure when things can get back to ‘normal,’” CBS Entertainment president Kelly Kahl told Adweek earlier today. “We are making preparations so that when we do get a green light to go into production, we will be ready.”

Some of those preparations include making sure shows are ready to turn around episodes quicker than normal to account for any delays. While there’s a contingency plan in place, according to Kahl, the details weren’t noted in today’s presentation.

The broadcaster is pitching two freshman series that will air this fall: the sitcom *B Positive* from *Big Bang Theory* co-creator Chuck Lorre, the pilot of which was completed prior to production shutdowns; and a reboot of the ’80s series *The Equalizer*, starring Queen Latifah. Other highlights pulled from a variety of tried-and-true returning series, as well as the new crime drama *Clarice*, a *Silence of the Lambs* sequel series that will begin airing midseason.

Adweek has detailed CBS’s entire fall schedule [here](#).

ViacomCBS’ pitch to marketers also featured CBS News, whose reporting on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the upcoming 2020 election was highlighted in a sizzle reel. And in a segment for CBS Sports, longtime sports broadcaster James Brown made a remote appearance to pitch marketers on upcoming

live events including the PGA Tour and Super Bowl LV, which will air Feb. 7, 2021.

Those also come with an asterisk, though: The logistics around live sports remains unclear, although Brown emphasized audiences' appetite for a quick return. "This season is our season, and CBS is ready to prove it," Brown said.

The pitch this afternoon also highlighted existing and upcoming programming on streaming service CBS All Access, which is slowly bulking up its slate of originals for both ad-supported and ad-free viewing. The sizzle reel centered on hits like *Star Trek: Picard* and *The Good Fight*, but also included first-time footage of the upcoming Stephen King miniseries *The Stand*, which is slated to appear on the service later this year. CBS All Access is due for a revamp and refresh, which ViacomCBS CEO Bob Bakish has said will begin sometime this summer, but details on that effort remain under wraps.

It was ViacomCBS' second presentation in as many days to marketers to emphasize that advertisers and CBS were "simply stronger" together, and represented the company's best efforts at replicating the packed-hall upfront presentations that have been the industry norm.

The pitch, though, comes amid an incredibly difficult time for the television advertising market. Advertisers plan to spend about one-third less during this year's upfront, according to a recent survey; at ViacomCBS, first-quarter ad revenue in its television entertainment segment decreased 30% year over year—a loss of \$586 million due to a combination of CBS not airing the Super Bowl this year and the Covid-19-related cancellation of March Madness.

But as with the company's optimism about its fall programming schedule, Ross is optimistic ad sales will improve. In a previous interview with *Adweek*, she expressed hope that the

scatter market will pick up speed in the second half of the year as marketers right their ships.

Ross's ad sales team is conducting follow-up roundtables with clients and agency partners in the coming weeks.

<https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/viacomcbs-offers-optimistic-outlook-on-fall-tvs-return-in-day-2-of-upfront-event/>