

FX chief: Even peak TV can be a 'sideshow' to internet

January 6 2018, by Lynn Elber



In this Aug. 9, 2017 file photo, John Landgraf, CEO of FX Networks and FX Productions, participates in the executive panel during the FX Television Critics Association Summer Press Tour at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. Landgraf says an investigation into sexual misconduct by Louis C.K. found nothing involving his work for the company over the past eight years. The investigation followed a published report of misbehavior, Landgraf told TV critics Friday, Jan. 5, 2018. The network cut ties in November with C.K. after he admitted wrongdoing. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP, File)

Television keeps churning out record numbers of original series but is being overshadowed by the internet's dubious distractions, FX Networks CEO John Landgraf said Friday.

Technology entrances people with "hourly doses of bite-size half-truths and click bait come-ons," Landgraf told a TV critics' meeting.

"To be honest, as incredible as television's become, it sometimes feels to me like a sideshow in what has become a daily three-ring media circus," he said.

Given concerns over society's shrinking attention span and "dwindling intolerance for dissent," he's glad when even his competitors' worthy and enlightening shows draw viewers, he said.

The veteran TV executive, who has made FX the unofficial accountant for so-called "Peak TV" numbers, said that the total number of cable, broadcast and streamed series hit an estimated high of 487 in 2017, a 7 percent increase over 2016's tally of 455. The 117 streamed series from outlets including Netflix and Amazon last year represented the biggest increase, 30 percent, over 2016.

Landgraf was asked about the future of FX Networks as one of the elements of Rupert Murdoch's media empire that would be sold to Walt Disney Co. in a deal facing regulatory approval.

Last month, Disney said it was buying a large part of the Murdoch family's 21st Century Fox for about \$52.4 billion in stock, including its film and TV studios and cable and international TV businesses. The deal doesn't include the Fox Broadcasting [network](#) and stations, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, FS1, FS2 and Big Ten Network.

In a "lovely conversation" with Disney CEO Robert Iger, he was

reassured that FX Networks is seen as something unique, Landgraf said. Disney has proven a "very good steward" of other brands it's acquired with distinctive creative cultures, such as Pixar and Marvel, which seem to be thriving under the new ownership, he said.

Given that Disney is making the acquisition to compete with the changing media market and rapidly expanding streaming services, FX will be a good fit as the "adult scripted component of their larger plans," he said.

Pressed about how he and FX Networks would fit into Disney, Landgraf said Disney has yet to discuss that with him and it may yet be undecided. The deal faces a year to 18 months of scrutiny and for now it's business as usual for him and FX, he said.

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