

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

NewFronts West Makes Sequel Appearance in Hollywood

Catherine · Wednesday, September 25th, 2019

In the world of broadcast advertising, the UpFronts have always been the biggest game in town. Television networks would show their finest offerings, promote the entertainment product that was available for sponsorship and create a friendly atmosphere that let every brand on the planet know that they were open to do business with them. Meanwhile, network ad sales teams were meeting with media buyers to close as many deals as possible before the start of the new season.

When “New Media” burst onto the scene in a way that could not be ignored, it had to be invited into the room as a full-fledged player. Out of that acceptance, the UpFronts expanded to include the NewFronts. For most of recorded history, the advertising rituals were limited to New York City, the once and future home base of the advertising industry. But last year, the UpFronts came to Los Angeles and found that it was beneficial for the two worlds to collide in the land of palm trees and pink sunsets.

It should come as no surprise that the brand world wants to focus on either the big name stars or the shiny, new, “emerging talent” that they will then build into the next big name stars. NewFronts West shattered any doubt that this trend was here to stay.

The biggest star to fill the stage wasn’t even on the stage—but her presence and influence is larger than life: Ellen. The Ellen Digital Network boasts 29 original series with over 1 billion views; 12 to 15 unique content pieces are produced every day—with plans to expand that amount. All of this comes under “Ellen’s halo of acceptance and belonging.” It’s no surprise that Ellen is the #1 most trusted personality on television—or that her brand recognition is extending into the digital world.

As remarkable as Ellen is, the biggest hit of the event was Rainn Wilson and his Soul Pancake team. Wilson is one of the most interesting people in the entertainment industry. Soul Pancake’s slogan—“We make stuff that matters”—is emblematic of his vision for a better world. He believes that consumers want to do something with brands that stand for something big. “But it’s not what you do—it’s why! We have to stop pretending to be woke and actually wake the hell up!” Wilson is so proud of the fact that Soul Pancake’s brand is all about joy and human connection that he unleashed a “Joy Bomb” on the audience by demonstrating his real talent—playing the bassoon. Before long, he was joined onstage by a marching band. Nothing else in the two days topped that as an attention getter.

Clear trends emerged from the NewFronts West conference—many of which afford an opportunity for artists and content creators to become part of this growing market for brand sponsored content.



The Score performs their hit song LEGENDS (Credit Photo: IAB)

Trend #1 Live Music as a brand driver will continue to grow.

LiveXLive brings brands together with LIVE music and social causes that matter to their target demo of 18-34 year-olds. The Live Music Awards will be accompanied by a series of original content that brings the fans into the day of the performer. It begins with the Live performer waking up and getting ready, then follows them through to the performance and afterward. The LiveXLive audience is doubling year over year. The presentation ended with a performance by The Score, one of LiveXLive's featured bands. There was no bassoon.

Vevo thinks of itself as music television through a digital delivery system. The art form has been part of our cultural DNA for more than 40 years, leaving us with one of the richest, deepest content libraries that will never expire. The Vevo platform delivers music that is about sight, sound and emotion that can be searched and discovered 24/7. There is also great advantage in the fact that none of this programming will ever be "cancelled" in the traditional sense, so brands can perpetually wrap themselves around the evergreen content.

Trend #2 Influencers (and their causes) will receive strong brand support for mutual benefit.

Levi Strauss Co. wants to reshape the creative world around stories about women who have overcome adversity to explore the ways that their stories are part of a larger movement within the fashion industry and the creative community. Their recent content play is a micro-documentary about Parkland shooting survivor Delaney Tarr and her next chapter of life in college. Levi's wants to give female creatives an opportunity they wouldn't otherwise have, the goal being to create a deeper engagement with women.



Sinead Burke and Jamie Lee Curtis talk to Matt Bellamy of The Hollywood Reporter about the importance of being seen. (Credit Photo: IAB)

Trend #3 Podcasts are the new big thing.

Jamie Lee Curtis shared a moving discussion with podcast host, fashion blogger and disability rights activist, Sinead Burke. As they discussed our innate, human drive "to be seen," Burke explained that "The power of podcasts is that we don't feel alone." Podcasts were explored during both days of the event, but Burke set the tone and established a functional definition for brands: a podcast has the ability to reach people with really big ideas.

ART19 launched as podcast enterprise hosting service in 2015. A year later, they introduced their proprietary system of Dynamic Ad Insertion that allows brands to advertise on evergreen podcast content without being perpetually attached. Podcasts enable brands to reach micro-targeted audiences at the time of their choice, which suggests a deeper level of auditory focus. These two opportunities will definitely serve as growth drivers for brand involvement in podcasts.



Frank Maguire of ShareThrough reveals the biggest secret about ad success online. (Credit Photo: IAB)

Trend #4 Content may be King, but DATA is the Queen of every day (and night).

ComScore believes that the average consumer has 6+ daily opportunities for exposure to ads on multiple devices. Their methodology provides seamless coverage “from soup to nuts” without any holes in their data. They focus on speed, scale and accuracy.

ShareThrough focuses their efforts on understanding cognitive change in consumers. Their 5 year study on how to change the perception around your brand focused on a sequence of steps including exposure, human attention, comprehension of message and behavioral change. Recently, their research demonstrated the fact that an ad with a headline will perform better than an ad without a headline and that online ads are significantly influenced by reading comprehension.

SambaTV may have found the most effective way to get direct data from viewers. They are now built-in to certain Smart TVs. The consumer has to deliberately Opt-In to the data collection and the system has to determine exactly how many households that specific TV represents. They then weight that information with the US Census data to make sure that there is equal representation in their results.



Tessie Lieberman, VP Digital Marketing at Chipotle discusses their recent campaigns with Ross Martin of Blackbird (Credit Photo: IAB)

Trend #5 Doritos is not going away.

Food Products are going to become known more blatantly as media product and their influence in the brand world will keep expanding. Chipotle has already positioned themselves in this category to the point where some are referring to it as a content company that also makes burritos.

Trend #6 VR, AR and eSports will be increasingly significant players.

One of the easiest ways for content creators to venture into this brand-driven segment is to go through the VR/AR aspect. This is because the field is populated by tech folk and the focus of any good content will always come from creatives. No matter how good the visuals are, eventually you need to tell a story. Even if it's just the brand story, you need professional storytellers.

On the other hand, eSports is already exploding. It is estimated that in 2020 eSports will become the biggest sport—surpassing all of the reliable, old school 20th century sports that have brought brands to this point. ProGuides is upping the ante in this area by providing opportunities for gaming fans to purchase actual connections via training sessions or conversations with their favorite players. The world that formerly belonged only to the geek has transitioned to being one of the most reliable indicators of cool-ness from middle school through college. A pro-gamer just won \$3M for placing first in the Fortnite competition. A 13-year-old kid placed second and took home a cool \$1M. Expect the influx of kids and brands to explode here.



The Pet Collective offer a Puppy Powered Networking Space for Attendees (Credit Photo: IAB)

Trend #7 There will always be puppies.

Because. Just because.

*(Featured image: The Soul Pancake Marching Band featuring Rainn Wilson on the Bassoon.
Credit Photo: IAB)*

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