

Verizon Blacks Out WPXI & Others

People in Pittsburgh, Boston, Syracuse and Providence (Rhodes Island) who subscribe to **Verizon Communications'** Fios service woke up on the morning of New Year's Day to find some of their local channels blocked.



According to an email sent to subscribers explains that the owner of WPXI-TV and the other stations "has demanded we pay increases of over 70% [in retransmission fees] so you can continue watching their channel. This is like the price of gas going from \$2.99 a gallon to over \$5 overnight."

The email doesn't name the owner, which is Cox Media Group (which is itself now owned primarily by **Apollo Global Management Group**).

Verizon's email also claims that the owner "has refused to accept our reasonable offers and won't let us carry these channels.

We are committed to reaching a fair agreement with them so that they can restore your access to their content."

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's Samson X. Horne writes that "Cox said it will continue to pursue negotiations to resume its spot in Verizon's cable TV lineup. The media conglomerate said that it will continue negotiating "in good faith" with Verizon. It urged WPXI customers to contact Verizon directly at 1-800-837-4966."

Adding to Cox's local woes, **ComcastNBC** has dropped The Pittsburgh Cable News Channel (PCNC). Horne quote a statement from WPXI-TV's Kevin Hayes that the station "has offered Comcast an extension, including a temporary one that would avoid interruptions while terms were

worked out, but 'Comcast has refused all such offers while failing to respond with a counterproposal.'"

Hearst Communications stations such as WTAE-TV may also be subject to a black-out. Horne's article has more details and is available by clicking <https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheeny/pittsburgh-area-stations-removed-from-cable-providers/>

No resolution had been announced when *Pittsburgh Applause* published this issue.

In what may or may not be related news, Verizon announced in December a second round of layoffs at its various media properties including HuffPost and Yahoo. Read more at <https://www.thewrap.com/verzon-media-lays-off-more-workers/>

The **Federal Communications Commission** (FCC) has approved a new ownership arrangement for **Cox Enterprises'** media group division.

Among the assets affected is Pittsburgh's WPXI-TV.

Cox Media Group (CMG) is now owned primarily by equity firm **Apollo Global Management Group**, which also purchased the assets of the Michigan-based Northwest Broadcasting. Cox Enterprises retains a minority stake.

CMG may eventually be renamed Terrier Media

Chabon Novel Going To TV

Pittsburgh author Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Cavalier and Clay* is finally coming to the screen, reports Deadline.com's Nellie Andreeva.



Published in 2000, *The Amazing Adventures of Cavalier and Clay* is the story of two Jewish cousins who, starting as teens in 1939,

begin life-long careers in the comic book industry. Many events in the novel are based on the lives of actual comic-book creators.

The miniseries will be produced by a division of **ViacomCBS** (owner KDKA-TV) for another division, Showtime. Chabon will be writing and co-producing. Read Andreeva's full article at <https://deadline.com/2019/12/the-amazing-adventures-of-kavalier-clay-limited-series-showtime-michael-chabon-ayelet-waldman->

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Arts Funding Rises In 2020 Federal Budget

In sessions on December 17 and December 19, both houses of the US Congress passed spending bills for the next year.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) are funded at just over \$162 million and the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting** (CPB) at \$485 million.

The Trump Administration has repeated proposed the elimination of the NEA and similar agencies in its annual budget proposal. Each time, enough Republican lawmakers joined with Democrats



to keep them in business (with funding increases). Nevertheless, Mr. Trump signed the budget into law --- which includes a \$7.25 million bump for the NEA.

Meanwhile, reports Scott Horsley for **National Public Radio** (NPR), the nation's debt load continues to grow. The main reason: continued spending increases in tandem with the Trump Administration's 2017 tax cut. Horsley explains that "the tax cut, along with increased government spending, did give a short-term lift to the economy and businesses temporarily boosted investment. But the rocket fuel burned off quickly. Business investment declined in the last two quarters." Read more at <https://>

www.npr.org/2019/12/20/789540931/2-years-later-trump-tax-cuts-have-failed-to-deliver-on-gops-promises

The federal deficit for 2019 reached just under one trillion dollars. Should a recession hit in 2020 or 2021 (as some economists predict), arts funding could be among the first target of cuts.



Symphony Ups Heinz Hall Security

A new security process at Heinz Hall begins this month, the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** (PSO) has announced.



Starting January 17, patrons and other visitors will enter through state-of-the-art screening equipment designed by Massachusetts-based security firm **Evolv Technology**. The press release explains that the PSO has selected "a 'free-

flow' system which allows patrons to simply walk through unimpeded. Patrons will proceed through the screening machine, keeping all items on their person. There is no need to remove coats or bags; cell phones and keys can remain in a person's pockets. Patrons using wheelchairs and mobility devices will be directed to enter via a door adjacent to the screening equipment where alternative screening will occur. Other current security policies, such as reserving the right to search any bags entering the facility, will remain in effect."

The new system is obviously in response to the increased violence in recent years at "soft targets"

such as schools, churches, stores and performance venues.

For details, visit https://pittsburghsymphony.org/psso_home/press-room/press-releases/2019-2020/psso-announces-new-security-procedure-for-heinz-hall



Anti-Flag Releases Anti-Trump Song

Pittsburgh punk band **Anti-Flag** has never shied from politics, but *Billboard's* Gary Graff reports that their new album takes aim at a specific target --- President Donald J. Trump.

Anti-Flag's new album is called "20/20 Vision" and its 11 tracks begins with a disturbing sound bite Trump made at a rally in 2016 (before the election) where he encouraged punishing protesters.

"Normally we've never named a president. We wanted our songs to stay relevant in the future," the band's Justin Sane tells Graff. "But with this record we were like, 'Look, Donald Trump IS the

problem, so we have to go directly at the problem.' You could say he's a symptom of a larger problem and I believe that's true, but he IS the symptom. He's a symbol of authoritarianism the country has moved towards, trying to roll back civil rights, LGBT rights. That's why the first track, 'Hate Conquers All,' opens with a sound clip of Donald Trump and from there we tried to move forward with the record and present a different kind of vision."

Also among the songs is "Unbreakable," a very personal piece written by Sanes during his late mother's battle with cancer. The video for "Unbreakable," was produced in collaboration with a

group of Nigerian teen video artists called The Critics Company. It was made public on December 5 [watch the video by clicking the YouTube link below - ed.]

"20/20 Vision" is scheduled for release on January 17. Read Graff's full article by clicking <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/rock/8545407/anti-flag-unbreakable-video>



KQV Back

One Pittsburgh's most iconic radio stations, KQV-AM, is back, reports Fern Siegel for *MediaPot.com*.

The all-talk/news station went dark in 2017 after more than four decades of broadcasting. The license was later assumed by **Broadcast Communications Inc.** (BCI) after buying the station for a mere \$55,000 from former owner **Calvary Inc.**

Fans of the old KQV may be disappointed: the format is now easy-listening music.

Viacom Buys Into Miramax

The owner of KDKA-TV, **ViacomCBS** has taken a 49% ownership stake in Miramax Films.



Miramax was founded in 1979 by Robert Weinstein and his now-disgraced brother, Harvey Weinstein. The company went through different owners until being acquired in 2016 by the Qatari entertainment giant **beIN Media Group**. Among the film Miramax has produced or co-produced include "Sex, Lies and Videotape" (1989), "The Grifters" (1990), "The Crying

Game" (1992), "Shakespeare in Love" (1998), "Gangs of New York" (2002) and "Chicago" (2002).

Upcoming films include director Guy Ritchie's "The Gentlemen" and Brad Furman's "City of Lie."

The deal calls for ViacomCBS to invest a total of \$375 million. In addition, the company's Paramount Pictures division now has an exclusive distribution deal for Miramax's vast library of content.

In a press release, ViacomCBS' Bob Bakish explains: "We look forward to working closely with the Miramax management team as we explore new ways to deliver its titles across a variety of platforms and create new, compelling projects."

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Aviary's New Space

On December 19, the **National Aviary** broke ground on what will be a 9,000-square-foot event space and a new entry.



A press release explains that the new facility, called The Garden Room, "is a purposefully designed, versatile event space that will host weddings, corporate events, and meetings with access

to beautiful outdoor amenities, and provide ample space for the National Aviary's growing education programs. The entryway, The Charity Randall Foundation Eagle Hall, will transform the National Aviary's west entrance and offer interior connectivity between National Aviary habitats and The Garden Room. This area will also include a new lobby with a gift shop and restrooms."

Construction is expected to be completed by fall 2020.

SBG Drops Boris' Show

One of the more controversial policies of the **Sinclair Broadcasting Group** (which owns two Pittsburgh television stations) maybe over --- at least for now --- reports Wayne Friedman for MediaPost.com.



Sinclair is controlled by the family of founder Julian Sinclair Smith (1920-1993) who are well-known for their conservative political outlook. Among the ways this outlook has been exercised as be "must-run" segments the company's local news divisions are required to broadcast. Boris Epshteyn, a former campaign official for Donald Trump, is perhaps the most high-profile of these segments. But now his Bottom Line

With Boris" has been dropped. Sinclair says that the segment could not be properly monetized.

The decision does not directly affects Pittsburgh as Sinclair's has an agreement with **Cox Media Group's** WPXI-TV to produce its newscast.

Read more at <https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/344592/sinclair-says-goodbye-boris-hello-advertising.html>



Teens Win Film Fest

An installment of **Steeltown's** "Reel Teens: Pittsburgh" has been named the Best Student Documentary at the Boston International Kids Film Festival (BIKFF)



BIKFF is a project of **Filmmakers Collaborative**, a non-profit organization founded to encourage the making of films by people of all ages and levels of experience.

The 7-minute episode entitled "Kung Fu Joe" was directed by an Oakland Catholic High School senior named Violet Wright and a young filmmaker named Doria Focareta. The installment offers a brief profile of colorful South Side resident Andrew Anthony.

It can be viewed online by clicking below.



AOG Grant Recipient Named

Five local artists will receive \$10,000 total in awards as part of the Artist Opportunity Grants program, announced the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC).

GREATER PITTSBURGH
ARTS COUNCIL



Arts loud and clear

- Tuhin Das received \$2,100 to assist with fees to translate his short stories, essays and children's stories from Bengali to English.
- Max Gonzales received \$2,020 to assist with travel, lodging and food while attending a graffiti art and muralism residency in Chicago under the guidance of Nicole Marroquin, an interdisciplinary artist, researcher and teacher educator at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- Centa Schumacher received \$1,880 to assist with residency fees for the Can Serrat residency program in El Bruc, Spain.
- Harriet Steinbrock Smith received \$2,000 to assist with fees for the Arquetopia Foundation's printmaking residency in Puebla, Mexico, which is a self-guided production residency that allows artists to work on-site at Arquetopia and the Erasto Cortés Printmaking Museum.
- Peter Roduta received \$2,000 to assist with transportation and fees to take person piano lessons with Nik Baersch, Zurich-based pianist, composer and producer, in Zurich, Switzerland, as well as attend a "Music Training, Meditation and Aikido" workshop

Details about the program are available at <https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/aog>

Awarded three times each year, the grants provide financial support for artists to access professional development opportunities to support their creative careers.

The December 2019 recipients are listed at left under the GPAC logo.



**Channel
Pittsburgh**

January 2020



"The Stranger" airs on January 2 at 9:00 p.m.

Rapper's Online Antwon Rose PSA

Philadelphia rapper Robert "Meek Mill" Williams has released an online public service announcement (PSA) related to a shooting near Pittsburgh, reports Michael Saponara for *Billboard*.

High school honor role student and community volunteer Antwon Rose was out with two friends on June 19, 2018 in the suburb of East Pittsburgh. Reports of a drive-by shooting led the suburb's police to stop the trio who were driving a similar looking car. Frightened, the unarmed Rose fled the scene (although a gun was found in the car later). Police man Michael Rosfeld (who was sworn in just three hours early) shot the youth who died shortly afterwards at the age of 17. Rosfeld was charged with criminal homicide but was acquitted on all counts after a four-day trial. Public protests understandably followed.

"My hope is this PSA will inspire people to come together and create change in our communities," Saponara quotes Mill's official

statement. "Our country needs more communication and understanding --- not hate and division --- so it's important that we collectively start the conversation and work to leave a lasting impact for future generations."

Read the full article at <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/hip-hop/8545374/meek-mill-antwon-rose-psy> and the PSA can be seen by clicking the YouTube link at right.



Images



CMU alum Philippe Arroyo stars I "The Little Shop of Horrors" this month at the O'Reilly Theater.



Channel
Pittsburgh





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NBC's Burke To Retire

Steve Burke, the CEO of NBCUniversal will retire this August shortly after the Tokyo Summer Olympics.



"I cannot thank Steve enough for the incredible impact he has had on this entire company," **ComcastNBC's** Brian Roberts said in a press release. "I will miss Steve's trusted partnership, and I know I speak for both myself and my late

father Ralph when I say that we will be forever grateful to him for shaping first Comcast and then NBCUniversal into the great companies they are today. When Comcast acquired NBCUniversal in 2011, I never imagined it would become the fastest growing media company. Steve's leadership and the team that he built has had everything to do with this outstanding performance."

Burke will be succeeded by Jeff Shell.

Opera Board

Three professionals have been named to the **Pittsburgh Opera's** board of directors.

PITTSBURGH OPERA

These are: attorney Renée Cavalovitch, who is general counsel at **Robert Morris University**; Christopher Pritchard, an executive at **PNC Financial Services**; and Dr. Karen Roche Galey, a former plastic surgeon who is now with regenerative medicine firm **PolarityTE**.

"It's truly a great day for Pittsburgh Opera when we can welcome three such accomplished individuals as Karen, Chris and Renée to our Board," says Pittsburgh Opera Board Chair Michele Fabrizi in a press release. "We couldn't be happier to add them as leaders of this wonderful organization."

Row Eyes Regent Buy

Three potential buyers appear to be interested in acquiring the Regent Square Theater from the floundering **Pittsburgh Center for Arts & Media**, reports the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Most prominent of these is **Row House Cinema**, which operates a popular specialty theater in the city's Lawrenceville neighborhood. Row House's owner, Brian Mendelsohn, tells the newspaper that his firm "is in a position to invest in The Regent and bring it back to its former glory while also fixing the mechanical system and the roof.

The other two parties were not named in the article.

Mac Money

The foundation created in honor of Pittsburgh rapper Mac Miller is donating \$100,000 to a branch of the **YMCA of Pittsburgh**, reports Mitchell Peters for *Billboard*.

Malcolm "Mac Miller" McCormick died of an accidental drug overdose in 2018 at the age of 26.

The Homewood-Brushton YMCA will use the donation from the **Mac Miller Fund** for an apprenticeship program that trains young adults on becoming sound engineers.

"He cared very much about working to make the world a kinder place and we will continue to do just that," Peters quotes from the family's press release.

Waiver Update

Online producers and their performers take note: **SAG-AFTRA** has been updated its Low Budget Digital Waiver. The union made the announcement on



The waiver applies to productions with a daily budget under \$100,000. Its designed to make it feasible for union members to work on these relatively smaller projects. Download a PDF of the adjusted waiver by clicking <https://www.sagaftra.org/files/2020LowBudgetDigitalWaiver.pdf>

THU
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FRI
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FRI
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THU
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FRI
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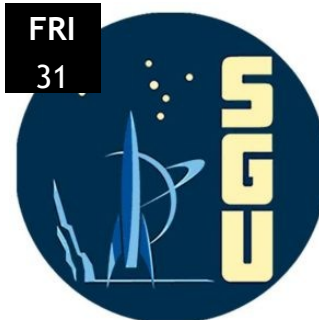
THU
30



SAT
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FRI
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Opportunities

Several opportunities are being offered by the local chapter of **Women in Film & Media** (WIFM). These include the \$1000 Amy Lamb Memorial Scholarship (request an application via email to wifinsch@gmail.com); an "Actor's Boot Camp" on February 29 and a short film showcase in March. Learn more by clicking <http://www.wifmpit.org/>

Producers of various levels are being sought by **ViacomCBS'** local station, KDKA-TV. This includes a web editor. Learn more at <https://viacomcbs.careers/cbs/new-jobs/?location=Pittsburgh%2C+PA>

Openings for viola and violin are now available at the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**. Auditions are scheduled for March and April. Details at https://www.pittsburghsymphony.org/psa_home/web/about-landing/career-opportunities/auditions

The Carnegie Museum of Art, part of the **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh**, is seeking a professional to design exhibit. Full information is available by clicking <https://usr57.dayforcehcm.com/CandidatePortal/en-US/car/Posting/View/2082>



Silver Eye Announces Fellowship Winners

Winners of this year's Fellowship Awards have been announced by the **Silver Eye Center for Photography**. Winners receive a cash honorarium as well as a solo exhibition at Silver Eye this summer.

The top honor, the Fellowship Award, has gone to Canadian artist Rory Doyle. His "Delta Hill Riders" is a continuing series of images exploring the subculture of African-American cowboys in rural Mississippi.

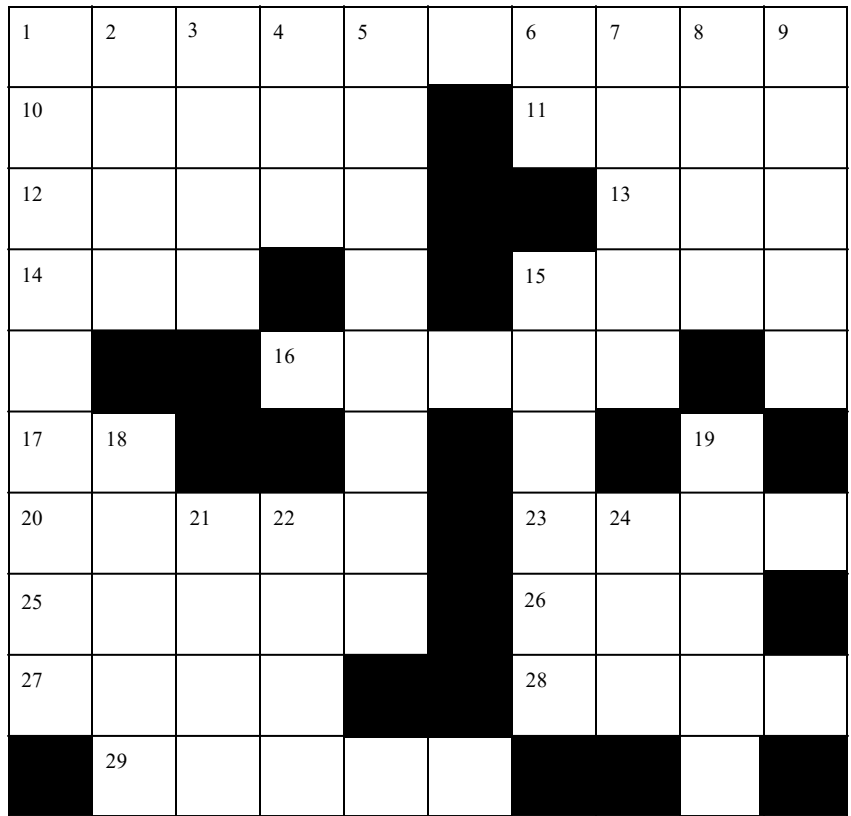
Erik Hagan was named winner of the Keystone Award. His "Team Work" series is comprised of both photography and text exploring the psychological effects of working in corporate retail.

Honorable Mentions went to Alex Christopher Williams, J. Houston, Louie Palu, Sarah Kaufman, Philip Cheung, Will Harris, Michael Darough and Zora J. Murff.



Across

1. Half of a “British Invasion” duo
10. Final resting place
11. Soccer superstar
12. See 26-Across
13. Symbolized by ♂
14. Directional letters
15. One online message passed from one person to another then another . . .
16. Diva and subject of a Greer Cabaret show starting this month (with 15-Down)
17. UFO pilot
20. South-of-the-border cheese
23. Catcher’s handy wear?
25. Check for size
26. Top card inn? (with 12-Across)
27. Reach
28. Actress Campbell, to pals
29. A spy’s action



Down

1. Jim Richards’ activity-filled web site
2. Son of Aphrodite and Ares
3. London’s Modern mueum
4. Eden’s lady
5. Cousin, grandparent or sibling
6. Brazil’s biggest city, initially
7. Controversial 2012 Dutch film
8. Character actor Jack
9. Subscribe again
15. See 16-Across
18. Coverings
19. TV icon Allen, to pals
21. Greenish-blue color
22. Sharpen
24. Chilled water

Last Month’s Solution

E	L	V	E	S		T	Y	P	O
L	I	E		C	I	A	O		
I	V	E		R	O	K	U		
T	E		B	O	N	E			
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