

People & Places

Tech

Quibi shutting down

T-Mobile offers cheap TV streaming service

NEW YORK, Oct. 29, (AP) — Yet another service provider is jumping into the TV streaming wars. This time it's T-Mobile and its TVision service with live news, entertainment and sports channels, starting at \$10 a month.

T-Mobile says it's aiming to offer a simpler and cheaper service for people dissatisfied with cable. But it's entering a crowded field. And most similar streaming services have found it difficult to sustain low prices over time.

TVision will offer three branches of its service. TVision Live will have live news, entertainment and sports channels at three tiers priced at \$40, \$50 and \$60, depending on how many sports channels you want. The \$40 option offers around 30 channels including ABC, NBC, Fox, CNN, Fox News, ESPN, and Fox Sports Networks.



Katzenberg

Then there's TVision Vibe, which is \$10 a month and includes about 30 channels from AMC, Discovery and Viacom — but no sports. And TVision Channels, which lets you sign up for individual channel streaming services, starting with just three: Starz, Showtime and Epix.

A slew of new streaming services started to challenge traditional TV providers and dominant streaming services like Netflix over the past year, including Disney Plus, Apple TV Plus, HBO Max and Comcast's Peacock service. CBS recently rebranded its CBS All Access service as Paramount Plus, relaunching in 2021.

Platform

Some have already bitten the dust. Quibi, a video platform designed for people who were out and about to watch on their phones in "quick bites," launched in April and said last week it would shutter after failing to find its audience. T-Mobile had struck a deal with Quibi to offer the service free to subscribers on unlimited wireless family plans for one year.

Services offering more traditional cable TV-like bundles include Sling TV, FuboTV, YouTube TV, and others, were initially heralded as the future of TV as cable cord-cutting ramped up. They offered popular TV networks for less than you'd pay a cable company. Signing up and canceling were easy, with no need for a cable guy to come to your house.

But customer growth has slowed and even dropped for many of these services as prices rose and they added more channels. YouTube TV, for example, launched in 2017 at \$35, raised its price to \$50 last year and then again to \$65 in June as it added new channels and lost others. Sony's PlayStation Vue, one of the first such services, shuttered last year citing the high cost of content and the difficulty of reaching deals with networks.

A TVision app is currently available on the App Store and Google Play for phones and tablets, as well as third-party TV platforms such as Apple TV and Google TV. T-Mobile is also introducing its own HDMI device and remote for \$50, called TVision Hub, that works much like a Google Chromecast or Amazon Fire stick to let you play video from a variety of streaming apps.

T-Mobile had previously launched a more traditional version of TVision in 2019, one that required broadband and a set top box to get 150-plus channels for \$90 a month. But it was only offered in a handful of cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. When it launched, T-Mobile said the goal was to eventually offer the service nationwide over the Internet via apps and third-party TV platforms people already use.

The new version of TVision is available nationwide — but only for T-Mobile wireless customers — starting Nov. 1. It will be available for legacy Sprint customers Nov. 13 and next year for T-Mobile prepaid customers and non subscribers. T-Mobile acquired Sprint in a roughly \$30 billion deal that closed in April after a lengthy regulatory review, creating a wireless giant that rivals AT&T and Verizon in size.



Short-video app Quibi said it is shutting down just six months after its early April launch, having struggled to find customers.

The company said Wednesday that it would wind down its operations and plans to sell its assets. "Quibi is not succeeding," its top executives bluntly declared in a letter posted online.

The video platform — designed for people who were out and about to watch on their phones — was one of a slew of new streaming services started to challenge Netflix over the past few years, most of which were part of much bigger tech and entertainment companies, like Apple and Disney.

Struggled

Quibi, short for "quick bites," raised \$1.75 billion from investors including Hollywood players Disney, NBCUniversal and Viacom and its leadership were big names: entertainment industry heavyweight **Jeffrey Katzenberg** and former Hewlett-Packard CEO **Meg Whitman**.

But the service struggled to reach viewers, despite a 90-day free trial, as short videos abounded on the internet and the coronavirus pandemic kept many people at home. Part of the appeal of the service, which started at \$5 a month, was supposed to be that you could watch short videos while out, without access to a TV. Being stuck at home made TV more desirable than watching on a phone, and Quibi only later and slowly rolled out TV options. Katzenberg blamed the pandemic for Quibi's woes.

Katzenberg's connections helped line up stars to make and star in its videos, including **Reese Witherspoon**, **Steven Spielberg** and **Jennifer Lopez**. There was a short version of "60 Minutes" and reality shows. The shows never achieved big name recognition, although the platform scored some Emmys earlier this year.

Why did it fail? "Likely of one of two reasons: because the idea itself wasn't strong enough to justify a standalone streaming service or because of our timing," Katzenberg and Whitman wrote. "Unfortunately, we will never know but we suspect it's been a combination of the two."

Quibi doesn't release subscriber figures. Mobile research firm Sensor Tower estimates 9.6 million installations of Quibi's mobile app since its launch; that doesn't mean those are actual users. Other streaming services have benefited from having customers stuck at home during the pandemic. One of the most successful new services, Disney Plus, has more than 60 million subscribers. Netflix has had a blockbuster year.

"While we have enough capital to continue operating for a significant period of time, we made the difficult decision to wind down the business, return cash to our shareholders, and say goodbye to our talented colleagues with grace," Whitman, the CEO, said in a statement.

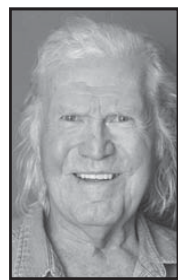
The company said that money from the sale of its assets will go toward paying off liabilities and whatever remains will be returned to investors.



In this Feb. 13, 2011 file photo, singer Whitney Houston performs at the pre-Grammy gala & salute to industry icons with Clive Davis honoring David Geffen in Beverly Hills, Calif. The late Whitney Houston has earned her third diamond certified album, becoming the first Black artiste to achieve the feat. (AP)



In this Feb. 15, 2016 file photo, Adele arrives at the 58th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. Adele is among several musicians who are objecting to their songs being used at President Donald Trump's campaign rallies. Adele made her objections clear when she learned her songs, "Rolling in the Deep" and "Skyfall," were playing at Trump rallies. (AP)



Shaver



Kelly

Variety

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Outlaw country singer songwriter **Billy Joe Shaver**, who wrote songs like "Honky Tonk Heroes," "I Been to Georgia on a Fast Train" and "Old Five and Dimers Like Me," has died he was 81.

His friend **Connie Nelson** said he died Wednesday in Texas following a stroke.

Born in **Corsicana, Texas**, Shaver was among the original group of outlaw country artists in the early '70s, penning songs for **Waylon Jennings**, **Bobby Bare**, **Kris Kristofferson**, **Tom T. Hall** and **Willie Nelson**.

Shaver's lyrics reflected his hardscrabble upbringing in Texas, where he lost part of two fingers while working at a lumber mill. He came to Nashville in 1968 and was signed as a writer to Bare's publishing company.

His big break came when Jennings recorded several of Shaver's songs for his 1973 album "Honky Tonk Heroes," which helped popularize the outlaw country genre and turn the maverick country artists into legends. "There weren't another way to be/For lovable losers, no account boozers/And honky tonk heroes like me," Shaver wrote in the title track.

"When Waylon did 'Honky Tonk Heroes' and all those songs in the early 1970s, I couldn't have possibly sang those songs as he could. The songs were bigger than my talent as a singer and I knew that, too," Shaver told The Associated Press in 1993.

Shaver wrote songs that were covered by **Elvis Presley**, **Patty Loveless**, **George Jones**, **Tex Ritter**, **Tennessee Ernie Ford** and **John Anderson**.

Anderson had a No. 4 country hit with Shaver's "I'm Just an Old Chunk of Coal," and **Johnny Rodriguez** took Shaver's song, "I Couldn't Be Me Without You," to No. 3 on the country chart. He wrote "Willie the Wandering Gypsy and Me" about Nelson, who was such a fan that Shaver was often invited to play at his annual Fourth of July picnics.

Other songs he wrote include "Ride Me Down Easy," "Live Forever."

Music

Halen's hometown plans memorial to guitarist

Houston makes history with '3 diamonds'

NEW YORK, Oct. 29, (AP) — The late Whitney Houston has earned her third diamond-certified album, becoming the first Black artiste to achieve the feat.

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and Legacy Recordings announced Wednesday that Houston's 1987 sophomore album, "Whitney," has reached diamond status, which is equivalent to selling 10 million albums. Her self-titled 1985 debut album and 1992's "The Bodyguard" soundtrack were already diamond successes, selling 13 million and 18 million units, respectively.

"Whitney" featured four songs that topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart: the Grammy-winning "I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)," "Didn't We Almost Have It All," "So Emotional" and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go." The single "Love Will Save the Day" peaked at No. 9 on the chart.

Garth Brooks holds the record for most diamond-certified albums, with nine. Others with three or more albums that have reached diamond status include The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Shania Twain and the Eagles.

The RIAA awards diamond plaques to albums and singles that reach 10 times platinum status. That once was the equivalent of selling 10 million songs or albums, but has changed since 2016, when the RIAA began incorporating streaming from YouTube, Spotify and other digital music services.

Wednesday's announcement comes a week before Houston, who died in 2012, will be posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's

2020 class. The ceremony will air on HBO on Nov. 7 at 8 p.m. ET.

Eddie Van Halen's Southern California hometown will memorialize the late guitar legend, but it's still unclear what form the tribute will take.

The Pasadena City Council on Monday directed officials to come up with ideas and report back on how to best remember the rock icon who died of cancer Oct. 6 at age 65.

The city might consider renaming a street or alley near one of Van Halen's 1970s rehearsal spaces, the Pasadena Star-News reported.

Other considerations are building a statue, installing a plaque or rechristening a city building, the newspaper said. A memorial has grown outside the home just northeast of Los Angeles where Eddie Van Halen and his brother, **Alex**, grew up. Some fans want the house designated a historic landmark.

Preserve

One person pressed the city to preserve the concrete where a teenage Eddie Van Halen wrote his name in the sidewalk outside a liquor store.

The Van Halen family moved to Pasadena after emigrating to the U.S. from The Netherlands in 1962. The band Van Halen formed about a decade later with singer **David Lee Roth** and bassist **Michael Anthony**. They all grew up in the Pasadena area.

With his distinct solos, Eddie Van Halen propelled his band to the top of the charts starting in the late 1970s with their self-titled debut album and then with the blockbuster record "1984," which contains the classics "Jump,"

"Panama" and "Hot for Teacher."

Van Halen is among the top 20 best-selling artists of all time, and the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2007. Rolling Stone magazine put Eddie Van Halen at No. 8 on its list of the 100 greatest guitarists.

Also:

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Trailblazing country music star **Charley Pride** will get a lifetime achievement award at the CMA Awards in November.

The rich baritone singer became the genre's first Black superstar, charting 29 No. 1 hits between the 1960s and 1980s, with songs like "Kiss An Angel Good Mornin'" and "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone."

Pride, 82, will accept the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award on the CMA Awards on Nov. 11 on ABC.

Pride was named CMA Entertainer of the year in 1971 and won male artist of the year in 1971 and 1972. He has three Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000.

Often cited as paving the way for many others to follow, Pride was also the first Black country artist to co-host the CMA Awards in 1975, alongside **Glen Campbell**.

Other recipients of the award include **Nelson**, **Kenny Rogers**, **Johnny Cash**, **Dolly Parton** and **Kris Kristofferson**.

"Few other artists have grown country music's rich heritage and led to the advancement of country music around the world like Charley," said **Sarah Trahern**, CMA CEO, in a statement. "His distinctive voice has created a timeless legacy that continues to echo through the country community today. We could not be more excited to honor Charley with

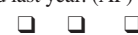
But he didn't just write about heartfelt lyrics about hardened men, he lived the outlaw life as well. At the age of 70, he was acquitted of aggravated assault in the 2007 shooting of a man at a Waco bar. Shaver contended he shot the man in self defense.

His debut album in 1973 was produced by Kristofferson and he put out over 20 records over his career. His last record was released in 2014.

He was well respected by his peers, including Nelson, who considered him one of the best songwriters in Texas, and Bob

Dylan, who name-checked him in a song and would do covers of "Old Five and Dimers Like Me" in concert.

He received the Americana Music Award for Lifetime Achievement in Songwriting in 2002, and was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2004. He was given the Academy of Country Music's Poet's Award last year. (AP)



HAMMOND, Ind. — A convicted gang member who said he beat up jailed R&B



This image released by PBS shows Hugh Laurie as a heedless British politician beset by scandal in the four-episode series "Roadkill," premiering on MASTERPIECE, Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020 on PBS. (AP)

singer **R. Kelly** in a **Chicago** cell in August has been sentenced to life in prison for a racketeering conviction that involved two 1999 murders.

A federal judge in Hammond, Indiana, sentenced Jeremiah Farmer, 39, on Tuesday during a hearing in which Farmer represented himself and appeared combative, at times raising his voice and frequently interrupting the judge.

Farmer, a Latin Kings street gang member, had faced a mandatory life sentence following his conviction last year on conspiracy to commit racketeering activity in a drug-related case that involved the killings of **Marion Lowry**, 74, and **Harvey Siegers**, 67.

Lowry and Siegers were beaten to death in June 1999 with a hammer at their Hammond business, Calumet Auto Rebuilders — a business where an indictment stated that employees "had repeatedly had conflicts with members of the Latin Kings," the Chicago Tribune reported.

Farmer made headlines by claiming in court records that he attacked Kelly on Aug. 26 in downtown Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center — a federal detention center — because he wanted to shed light on wrongdoing by the government in his own criminal case.

Farmer was able to slip away from an employee at the center, enter a cell and repeatedly hit Kelly in the head, according to a US Bureau of Prisons report. A security officer used pepper spray to stop the attack.

Kelly, 53, faces several dozen counts of state and federal sexual misconduct charges in **Illinois**, **Minnesota** and **New York**, from sexual assault to heading a racketeering scheme aimed at supplying him with girls.

The Grammy Award winning singer has denied ever abusing anyone. (AP)