



Comcast an early 'Sleeper': showtime series bows on demand; Web portal to also offer previews.(Showtime Networks Inc.'s 'Sleeper Cell').R. Thomas Umstead. *Multichannel News* 26.44 (Oct 24, 2005): p6(1). (479 words)

Full Text:COPYRIGHT 2005 Reed Business Information, Inc. (US)

Showtime's new drama series *Sleeper Cell* debut the night of Dec. 4--and if Comcast Corp. digital-cable subscribers who watch it stay up late, they can also catch episodes two and three on-demand.

The top U.S. cable company's video-on-demand service will stream the second and third installmenst of the terrorism-themed thriller to its Showtime subscribers 24 hours before the premium cable network delivers them to other affiliates--part of a multiplatform deal between Showtime and Comcast.

The arrangement--which also includes a proprietary Internet video package--continues the Philadelphia-based MSO's aggressive push for exclusive programming to help boost the value of its digital-cable and high-speed Internet services.

Comcast's Showtime On Demand offering will air the second and third episode of *Sleeper Cell* at midnight on Dec. 5, two hours after the premiere episode's debut. Showtime's linear network will air those episodes at 10 p.m. on Dec. 5 and Dec. 6, respectively.



Comcast's on-demand viewers can use their menu to access episodes two and three of *Sleeper Cell* on the same day episode one debuts.

All Comcast on-demand customers--even those who don't subscribe to Showtime--will have the opportunity to watch episode 1 beginning Dec. 5.

An Comcast will make the first episode available to all of its high-speed Internet users as part of its "The Fan" Internet-video service, a component of its Comcast.net portal.

Comcast's broadband and on-demand platforms will also offer teaser programming, including promotional clips, three weeks before the show's Showtime premiere.

Comcast On Demand vice president and general manager Page Thomspson called the agreement a coup for the operator. Showtime's subscription VOD service, which features original network content like the comedy series *Weeds* and *Barbershop: The Series*, has generated 50 million views to date, he said.

"When Showtime has hit shows, it's popular with our on-demand users," Thompson said. "So the opportunity to premiere one of their new shows is great."

Comcast this year has struck similar VOD-broadband deals with such networks as Home Box Office, Noggin/The N and VH1.



"That's how we like to complement the lean-back viewing experience with the more active, lean-forward interactive experiences," said Liz Schimel, senior vice president of content development for Comcast's high-speed services.

Showtime sees the broadband play as a potential avenue for reaching nonsubscribers within Comcast's universe.

"It's an opportunity for viewers to take this show and sample it," said Showtime Networks Inc. executive vice president Mark Greenberg. "I think we have to get people to the TV set to see that this is compelling television, which we're able to do through this multiplatform, multidimensional, fully integrated promotion."

Showtime has taken this promotional path before. In August, MSN Video streamed the premiere episode of its series *Barbershop* for eight straight days after its Aug. 14 premier episode. And in March, Showtime and Yahoo simultaneously delivered the premiere episode of Showtime reality show *Fat Actress*.

For now, Greenberg views Internet Streaming mostly as a promotional outlet, he said. "Today [AOL, Google, Yahoo!, MSN] are not the purveyors of video programming and clearly serve as a promotional device."

Named Works: *Sleeper Cell* (Television program) Marketing

Source Citation: Umstead, R. Thomas. "Comcast an early 'Sleeper': showtime series bows on demand; Web portal to also offer previews." *Multichannel News* 26.44 (Oct 24, 2005): 6(1). *General Reference Center Gold*. Gale. Redondo Beach Public Library. 21 Nov. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com/itx/start.do?prodId=GRGM>>.

Gale Document Number: A138178405

© 2008 Gale, Cengage Learning.