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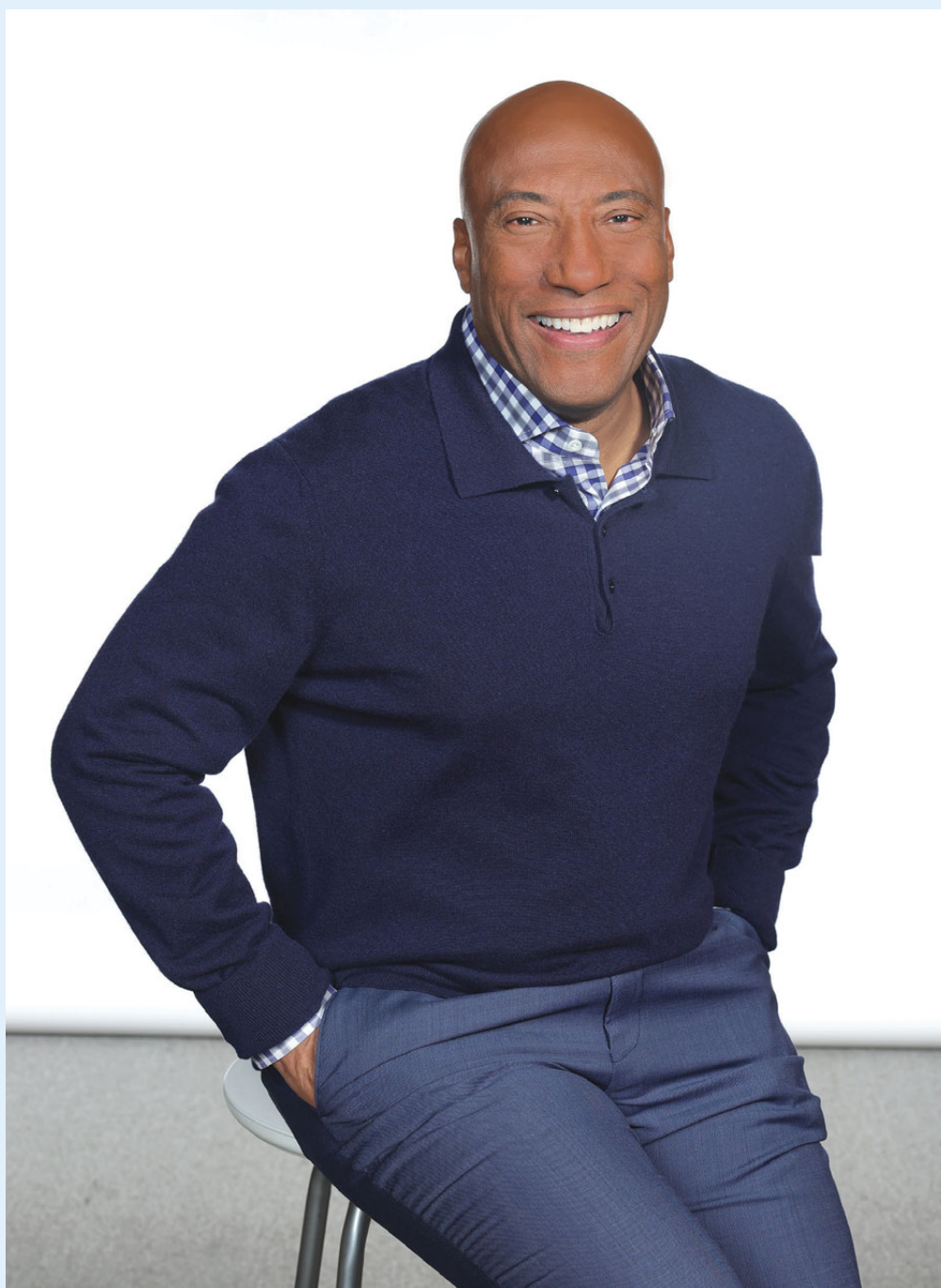
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FROM YOUR FRIENDS
AT VIDEOAMP



A Born Entrepreneur

Byron Allen climbs to new heights with AMG on its 30th anniversary • By Cynthia Littleton



←
Byron Allen
has built an
entertainment
empire over
decades of
hard work and
business savvy.

Byron Allen made his mark on the media business from the moment he began producing first-run TV syndicated fare in the early '90s. It was a jackpot moment when wily producers turned series such as "Baywatch" and "Star Trek: The Next Generation" into billion-dollar global assets.

From his dining room table in Los Angeles, Allen parlayed his experience as a primetime personality and daytime talk show host to begin building the million-dollar cornerstones of the Allen Media Group empire. At the outset, Allen produced low-budget comedy game shows, panel shows, interview shows and standup specials.

From those green shoots came Allen's steady expansion into cable TV channels, broadcast TV stations, streaming and digital media, film production and distribution and video-on-demand distribution — and, most recently, distributing college sports TV packages for HBCU institutions. As he marks the 30th anniversary of his company this month, Allen's voice has never been louder or more influential.

"We love our position in the marketplace," Allen tells *Variety*. When pressed for a sum of the parts valuation, he demurs. "It's worth billions in my humble opinion. It's worth what someone is willing to pay. I'm having so much fun building and growing that I haven't really thought about is it worth \$1 or \$1 trillion."

Allen has been on a growth spurt the past dozen years, taking advantage of industry trends and opportunities to dramatically diversify AMG beyond its original core business of producing TV shows and cable channels. AMG has invested more than \$1 billion in buying more than 30 local TV stations since 2019 — without outside investors. Allen, the sole equity owner, has financed his numerous acquisitions in recent years through cash flow and bank loans.

AMG started by committing \$165 million to four stations owned by Bayou City Broadcasting. Today, it owns 31 stations covering 5% of U.S. TV households — a good-sized footprint for a startup.

"I am the only Black person in America who owns Big Four network affiliate stations," he says. "When you think about that — you've had a Black president. You've had a Black female vice president. I'm the only Black person in America who owns and controls Big Four network affiliates. Own-and-operate."

Allen points to the glaring absence of any other Black owners of TV stations and other key media assets, and points to the frustration that has driven his near 24/7 commitment to grow the business over the past four decades and counting.

"The greatest trade deficit in America is the trade deficit between white corporate America and Black America," Allen says. "And we cannot achieve one America until we close that trade deficit."

For Allen, a massive turning point for his mogul fortunes came in early 2018, when he surprised the industry with an aggressive run at a cable staple, the Weather Channel, for \$300 million.

"Getting that was a big deal," he says, noting the long-revenue and earnings before interest, depreciation, taxes and amortization. "When you buy companies like this, hopefully you're buying people that are smarter than you. And with the Weather Channel we did accomplish that. We bought a company with really good people, smart people, and they made us better."

True to form, Allen has used his own Rolodex to create new opportunities for Weather Channel. In 2021, after Disney/ABC alumna Wendy McMahon was tapped to lead the CBS TV station group, Allen rang his longtime industry associate to suggest a deal to put Weather Channel talent on the Eye's "CBS Mornings." It was done, and quickly.

"There's no analysis-paralysis around here," Allen says. "We have been really entrepreneurial, and we've kept that fire in our belly. And we really have said, 'Let's innovate and defy gravity. And that's where we live to do: innovate and defy gravity.'"

The move into local TV stations has been transformative for Allen Media Group. The company now has operations in more than a dozen states and about 2,300 employees in total.

The company has focused on buying TV stations affiliated with ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox for two key reasons: the NFL and local news. Each of the Big Four nets have deals with the NFL that run for 10 years. And local stations aligned with the major broadcast networks produce newscasts and other local programs with invaluable potential to the larger AMG eco-system. First-run syndication and TV production remains a profit center for the company, Allen says. He proudly notes that by volume of shows, his company is TV's largest producer of first-run court, game and talk content for local TV.

"It all works together in symphony," Allen says. "Our production arm is able to produce content that we are able to use in broadcast syndication and then able to use on our cable networks as well as our streaming platforms. A lot of big companies, they work in silos. If you

don't work together, I don't think you can achieve or maximize your synergies."

The NFL connection is also a boon to the company's latest major expansion initiative: HBCU Sports. Two years ago, AMG signed a series of rights deals for football games; this past year, they've expanded into men's and women's basketball.

"We are in investment mode there," he says of his enthusiasm for HBCU Sports. "We're really now campaigning for advertisers to lean in and support it. One of the most important things we can do now is to make sure we educate kids throughout America."

AMG got into the HBCU business in 2021, when Allen says he got tired of watching his longtime friend, former ESPN and BET Networks senior executive Curtis Symonds, struggle to gain traction with the HBCU Go platform that Symonds launched in 2012. Now, AMG carries the games on its stations and syndicates in other markets on stations owned by top broadcasters such as CBS, Nexstar, Scripps and Tegna.

"I saw he was out there and not having an easy time getting inves-

tors, getting the distribution, getting the advertising dollars," Allen says. "So, we put our team behind it and got the distribution and acquired the rights to produce the content. We are going to produce this at a high level, grow it and take HBCU sports to the next level."

There's a clear measure of pride in Allen's voice as he describes taking on the HBCU opportunity with resources that he had readily available. He's come a long way from his dining room table days — or the days when he had to run down to make sales calls at a pay phone because he hadn't paid his own phone bill for the month.

Three decades later, Allen says he is fueled by the same pressure to stay ahead of a fast-changing market as a wily independent who faces obstacles that institutional Hollywood never does.

"That feeling is always there, so you run the company every day by protecting it and growing it," Allen says. "That's just been the DNA of the company — running hard. Because this is a hard business and business is hard. Every day, you've got to wake up and adapt, because it is ever-changing." 🌀

↓
Byron Allen received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2021.



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– Skip, David, Jim, and the firm



A New Measurement

AMG's partnership with VideoAmp could set the bar for others to follow suit • By Brian Steinberg

The quest for a new way to measure TV audiences has taken years of tests, dozens of efforts to sample upstart technologies and hours of debates among big media companies, Madison Avenue buying firms and blue-chip advertisers. At present, no one seems to have devised a perfect solution.

So Byron Allen decided to try.

In June, the media entrepreneur's Allen Media Group unveiled a 10-year deal with VideoAmp, one of a handful of new vendors striving to replace Nielsen as the entertainment sector's go-to choice for audience measurement, as the backer of the audience data it would use to strike deals with advertisers.



AMG's assets, including HBCU football games, like this one between the Florida A&M Rattlers and the North Carolina Central Eagles, will benefit from its VideoAmp deal.

Nielsen and the TV networks have been increasingly at loggerheads in the last few years. The measurement giant is striving to build a new system that will consider views via streaming and digital means while the TV sector — one of its biggest clients — charges that the company is moving far too slowly. Linear ratings are in noticeable decline and the broader industry has yet to hit upon a single agreed-upon measure for tabulating broadband viewership.

"A lot of decisions are being made that should not be made based on the measurement not being as strong as VideoAmp, and

I think it's important that we get the scorecard right," Allen said during a recent interview. "We are all working hard, but we're not getting credit for what we put up on the board. Now the technology is in place to provide greater transparency, greater accuracy and we as an industry have to adapt."

Other media companies are also striking measurement deals with VideoAmp, as well as others including iSpot and ComScore. Dentsu Intl. said in October, for example, that it plans to utilize technology from VideoAmp to guarantee audience buys across the media portfolios of seven dif-

ferent media companies, including Paramount Global, Fox Corp., Warner Bros. Discovery, A+E Networks, Hallmark Media and NBCUniversal. Paramount, Warner and Hallmark are among the companies using VideoAmp to provide a sort of alternative measurement system to back actual transactions with advertisers.

None of them, however, have jettisoned Nielsen to the extent Allen Media Group has. The company still uses Nielsen to guide deals for its syndicated and local programming, but when it comes to national cable inventory, VideoAmp backs the advertiser transactions. Aside from its flagship property, the Weather Channel, Allen Media Group owns 36 TV stations affiliated with the nation's big broadcast networks and 12 HD networks. It also operates Local Now, an app that provides localized news, weather, sports, traffic and entertainment in more than 225 markets in the U.S.

There may be obstacles ahead. None of the new measurement technologies has been backed by the Media Rating Council, the industry body that validates audience tabulation methods. That could pose a sticking point for media companies eager to move away from Nielsen, which regained certification for its national ratings service in April after a period of going without it due to a probe of its service during the coronavirus pandemic. Nielsen further inflamed passions earlier this year when it had to recalculate its measurement of the audience for Fox's broadcast of Super Bowl LVII — which, it turned out, set a new viewership record.

Allen believes others will follow his maneuver, but also notes he enjoys a greater degree of flexibility than some of his bigger rivals. "I own my company 100%. There is no 'analysis paralysis.' It's not a coincidence I was able to make that decision and move first," he says.

He expects to see more TV companies doing something similar by the fall of 2024. 📺

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Entertainment Celebration

Allen Media Group leans into comedy for upcoming specials • *By Zoe Hewitt*

Thirty years ago, as Byron Allen sat at his dining room table working on the brainchild startup Allen Media Group (AMG), he had already been part of the entertainment space for years, writing and performing as a comedian and host.

As AMG grew into a major company, purchasing and establishing networks, producing shows and connecting with people via theGrio website, Allen has been able to take his ideas for events and specials and make them a reality, bringing audiences a wealth of additional content in a variety of formats.

It seems there's no better way to honor industry friends and amplify Black talent than to

establish an awards show. "Byron Allen Presents TheGrio Awards" provided that opportunity. "You cannot be what you cannot see," Allen says of the show and his goal of making sure young audiences have examples of Black achievement in front of them.

The magnitude of the recognition is apparent to those watching, as well as those on stage. This year's honorees included Eddie Murphy, Kevin Hart and Mariah Carey. Geraldine Moriba, senior vice president and chief content officer of theGrio, says they honor "the most accomplished and successful African Americans in the country."

"What's most clear about the speeches, when you listen to

what every person says," notes Moriba, "is this award, for them, is different than any other award they've received because it's for us, by us. It's recognition by your own community, and that makes it ultra-special."

For top performers, that recognition may come frequently and convincing honorees to attend yet another event isn't always easy. That's not the case for this show, though, since the Allen Media Group has a not-so-secret weapon.

Dick Roberts, executive vice president of brand marketing and corporate synergies, says he's been in the room as Allen books people — by picking up the phone and calling them. "He's got a direct line to all this amazing talent,"

Roberts says of watching Allen perform his magic.

As for why the website is the basis for the special event, Moriba recognizes the power and consequence of journalism. She calls it a "natural progression" from one to the other, especially since storytelling is a forceful medium.

In addition to the awards show, Moriba oversees multiple major televised and digital events each year.

In February 2023, the "Byron Allen Presents the Comedy and Music Superfest" kicked off on both theGrio's cable channel and streaming platform. As the name suggests, the program showcases a slew of entertainment with recognizable artists across multiple generations. Among this year's performers were Toni Braxton, Gladys Knight, John Legend and Kenan Thompson. Between the music and the laughter, audiences were entertained by the best in the business.

In April, theGrio's cable special "A Seat at the Table" showcased the red carpet arrivals for theGrio's after-party for the White House Correspondent's dinner. For the second year running, the event was at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Diana Ross performed.

New this year was the special "Byron Allen Presents June-teenth: Celebrating Centuries of Black Excellence." Available on both theGrio's cable channel and streaming, the event commemorated the emancipation of enslaved people. Moriba says that it will return again next year.

The streaming-only special "TheGrio Heroes" recognizes everyday heroes who audiences may otherwise never hear about. All of the honorees are members of local communities.

In the midst of history and awards, Allen remains true to his comedy roots. Ongoing special series "Funny You Should Ask" pairs comedians with contestants in a game-show format where comedians answer trivia questions with jokes, ultimately helping earn their partners a cash

↓
Patti LaBelle
lent her talents
to 2nd annual
theGrio Awards in
October.



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prize. The show's celebrities have included Tiffany Haddish, Sherri Shepherd, Jon Lovitz and Howie Mandel. Kevin Hart appeared as a relatively unknown comic when Allen wanted to help provide him with a bigger platform.

Allen came up with the concept when he was just 14 years old. He was writing for Jimmie Walker at the time, getting paid \$25 per joke. Allen reminisces about working with now-known names like David Letterman and Jay Leno and their writing processes. They decided to ask questions together as an exercise prompt knowing there would be funny answers. That planted the seed for what ultimately became the show.

Allen delves into a formula relating to the comedians, their time in each episode and number of

laughs that audiences can anticipate. "I call it our ROI [return on investment] TV return," says Allen. "If you give us two hours of your time, our goal is to give you 80-plus laughs, so ROI TV," he explains.

Audiences can catch "Funny You Should Ask" on Dec. 9 on CBS.

Another of Allen's ongoing specials is "Comics Unleashed." Both established and up-and-coming comedians have been featured since its premiere. "I'm proud of that show," he says. "It's a great way to showcase comedians who have dedicated their lives to making people laugh."

Roberts says, "Byron is the kind of leader that inspires all of us."

Allen, for his part, is clearly proud of all that his vast holdings have produced — and not without hard work. "Our goal," says Allen, "was to build the world's largest



John Legend performs onstage during "Byron Allen Presents: The Comedy & Music Superfest" in February.



media company to help effect change for the greater good."

Looking ahead, the lengthy list of specials and events will continue to grow, shepherded by Allen's ambition and intention.

In the year to come, audiences can anticipate their favorite specials and events returning for another year, as well as new ones, like "Byron Allen Presents a Merry Soulful Christmas." Originally slated for this year and pushed

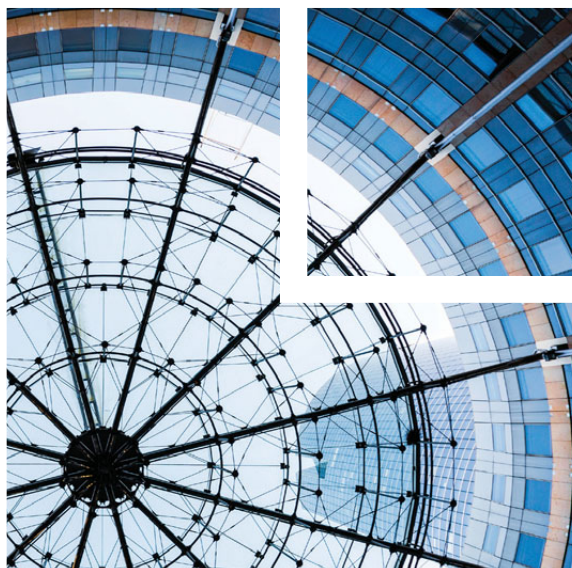
in order to give it time to come together, the musical special will provide audiences with a contemporary way to celebrate the holiday season. It will have the same finish and pizzazz as the other productions on the slate.

"Byron is the guy who bridges the classic old Hollywood with the future of tomorrow," notes Roberts of the roots of their organization.

Hard work — and laughs — help fuel the upward Allen trajectory.

Congratulations to **Byron Allen**, our good friend and client, on the 30th anniversary of his flourishing entertainment business enterprise, Allen Media Group.

Loeb & Loeb is delighted to join *Variety* in commemorating this milestone, applauding the significant contributions of one of Hollywood's important pioneers in opening doors for minority entrepreneurs.



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with these groundbreaking projects.



Booming Broadcast

For Allen Media Group, the opportunities are endless • By Stuart Miller

When Byron Allen was just 14, he started doing stand-up comedy. Four years later, in 1979, he became the youngest comedian to appear on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson." It was a launching pad for an entertainment career that included a stint on "Real People," a lead role in "Case Closed," a TV movie he co-wrote and a syndicated late-night show bearing his name.

But all along, Allen had his eyes on a much bigger prize. "Growing up in Detroit, I was fascinated by Berry Gordy and Henry Ford," says Allen. "I read about them and about John D. Rockefeller and

Andrew Carnegie. They were my heroes. I studied them and knew I wanted to build something big and iconic. That was always my desire."

That something proved to be Allen Media Group, which encompasses Entertainment Studios (founded 30 years ago as CF Entertainment) and its expanding portfolio — the company owns 10 cable networks, including the Weather Channel, JusticeCentral.TV, Cars.TV and Pets.TV, a theatrical movie distribution company and, most recently, a growing stable of broadcast stations, with a special emphasis on stations affiliated with the Big Four broad-

cast networks. (The company is now in 21 markets, with 28 Big Four channels.)

AMG, which has nearly 2,300 employees, is, according to Allen, the largest provider of first-run syndicated shows for broadcast stations; it has more than 70 total, including nine court series in production.

And Allen's nowhere near through, eyeing larger broadcast markets, especially on the East Coast; in September, he made his biggest splash when he publicly declared he wanted to shell out \$10 billion for ABC, eight local TV stations as well as FX and National

Geographic Channel, which are also Disney-owned properties. (Disney is not ready to sell and Allen has since narrowed his focus to the network and owned and operated stations.)

"When he says he wants to build the biggest media empire on the planet, he means it," says Princell Hair, president of Allen Media Broadcasting, who joined the company last year.

In other words, Allen is Logan Roy... if Roy were warm and friendly, with an emphasis in the company on cooperation and open communication. "He is just as driven," Hair says of his affable boss.

Allen was so intent on learning about the business side of his new field that he went to his first NATPE in 1981, before he even turned 20. TV producer Al Masini — who created and sold series like "Entertainment Tonight" and "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," among other blockbuster shows — became "like a second father" to Allen. Allen was hooked and became "the Cal Ripken" of NATPE, never missing a year.

Allen was confident that behind-the-scenes experience, combined with his on-air exposure, would pay off when he went into business for himself. "I was able to meet with people and get my phone calls returned," he says.

But early on, most of those returned calls were people saying no to Allen's innovative ideas. "When I started calling stations from my dining room table asking them to carry my weekly television show for free, I had to work through about 50,000 nos to get



↑ Series "Real People," with hosts, clockwise from left, John Barbour, Bill Rafferty, Skip Stephenson, Sarah Purcell and breakout Byron Allen



← Producer and Byron Allen's wife, Jennifer Lucas, far left, and Allen with their children at Allen's Oscar Gala at the Beverly Wilshire

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← In the early 1980s, a busy Byron Allen also co-hosted "Midnight Special" with Skip Stephenson.

the 150 yeses that became my lineup," he recalls, explaining that he was offering seven minutes of local advertising while he'd keep the seven minutes of national advertising.

It took a year to build the lineup but then he couldn't find advertisers to buy his national slots.

"My home went in and out of foreclosure many times over a five-year period," he says. "My phone would get shut off, and I'd be calling people from pay phones."

Allen survived off direct response ads for products like spray-on hair, while hustling to get movie production junkets to give him access to the stars and spaces to shoot his interviews, eating a lot of popcorn instead of more substantial meals. "I was literally starting with less than nothing, but all this came out of that burning

desire to create something and to own something."

Despite the early struggles, Allen continued to forge a unique career path. His big step forward came after reading that Verizon was investing billions to bring 150 HD channels to their subscribers. He went to them and offered them 10 channels. "And they said, 'How many do you have now?' and I said, 'Zero.'"

But he sold them on his vision. "I brought Berry Gordy's and Henry Ford's mentality for making music and cars efficiently to making television content — that hadn't been in the television ecosystem," he says, explaining that he'd send camera crews to shoot a car show for one network but while there, they'd also film at the resorts for the travel channel and in the restaurants for the cooking

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channel and the visiting celebrities for the entertainment channel. Verizon was impressed enough to give him seven networks. “With the stroke of a pen, we launched more networks than anybody’s ever launched in a single day.”

As the company has continued expanding its production lineup and adding media assets through the years, Allen has pushed to make sure his leadership team “works together like a symphony to unlock the true value of each asset. What’s unique about our company is that no one is in a silo and that helps our culture.”

Hair says there are at least three touchpoints for the executive leadership team each week. “Everyone in every part of the company knows exactly what’s going on in the other parts of the company. If the company is going to be suc-

cessful, then we all have to be in sync, and we believe in that.”

Allen wants to continue growing “organically,” making “strategic acquisitions,” which Hair says will involve a few key focal points — stations affiliated with the Big Four are crucial because they carry the NFL, a major revenue driver, while those in purple

states have extra value because they draw oceans of political ad revenue.

“We’ve invested in the stations we have, in the infrastructure, personnel and research and we want to continue that, but we want to get into bigger markets, especially ones that are adjacent to our current station groups or

where we have no assets,” Hair says, adding that the Weather Channel and syndication content provide cost effective programming for any station they buy.

Currently, the company’s largest market is 65th in the nation so the short-term goal is to break into the Top 50. But ultimately, they want into the Top 10 markets, maxing out the FCC’s 39% limit. (They currently serve 5% of the country.)

Allen knows he has a long way to go but he remains optimistic. “I haven’t yet done what I set out to do — we’re tiny and while we’re growing exponentially, we’re still in our infancy,” he says. “The goal is to build the world’s biggest media company and use it to effect change for the greater good.”

“

I brought Berry Gordy’s and Henry Ford’s mentality for making music and cars efficiently to making television content.” — Byron Allen

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**Congratulations to Byron Allen
for the 30th Anniversary of
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The Power of Inclusivity

Allen Media Group spotlights the talent of Black student athletes with HBCU Go • By Jaden Thompson

Byron Allen's media company Entertainment Studios, also known as Allen Media Group (AMG), is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, a major milestone for one of the most visible Black-owned media companies in the U.S. AMG has championed several diversity-related initiatives over the years, including the recent launch of the streaming service HBCU Go. The free, ad-supported streamer delivers sports content to audiences from the country's 107 historically Black colleges and universities.

Allen, a preeminent Black entertainment mogul, has upheld equality and inclusivity as core values of his company for decades. Some of AMG's assets include the Weather Channel, the Weather Channel en Español, Local Now, HBCU Go, TheGrio, comedy.tv and sports.tv, among other networks. Allen's umbrella also includes the distribution banner Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures.

Though Allen Media Group has significantly expanded in the past three decades to include thousands of employees, Allen's

goal of reaching economic parity across racial groups remains the same, says chief revenue officer Darren Galatt, who has worked alongside Allen for over 20 years and identifies himself as "employee number eight."

"If [Black people] represent 14% of the of the population, then they should get 14% of the budget," says Galatt. "And that equity and parity is what drives all of our communication to the industry."

HBCU Go, which can be accessed via the HBCU Go app, cable packages and Allen Media Group's net-

work TheGrio, specifically targets Black viewers. Through TheGrio, HBCU games reach between 56 million and 60 million households on the weekends, per Galatt's estimate.

Galatt says many of Allen Media Group's central tenets can be traced back to the story of Allen's mother, Carolyn Folks. Folks had Allen when she was 17 years old and raised him as a single mother. The pair moved to Los Angeles when Allen was a young boy, and Folks was accepted to UCLA, where she studied film. Folks con-

↓
Variety exec VP, global content, Steven Gaydos, left, with Byron Allen at Variety's 2017 Inclusion summit.



vinced NBC to start an internship program for her, which exposed Allen to the entertainment industry as he watched comedy greats like Johnny Carson and Flip Wilson host their shows.

Folks' success proved an invaluable source of inspiration to Allen, who recently referred to her as his "very first blessing" at the UCLA Neurosurgery Visionary Ball in October, where he was honored.

"Seeing what she was able to do with all of that struck Byron in such a way that, at this point in time, he looks back and knows full well that education is the key to the lion's share of our problems and issues in this country," Galatt says. "If you fix the education problem, then you're going to fix the incarceration problem. I think that a lot of those things go together. And it starts at the very beginning with education. I think Byron is very, very serious about that initiative."

He goes on to explain how HBCU Go is connected to Allen's education-centered goals. While promising college athletes might have the chance to go pro, athletic departments at HBCUs don't always receive the same attention that other colleges and universities do. HBCU Go allows for a wider audience to watch Black student athletes and potentially change their futures.

"The fact is, the more just due the athletes in HBCUs get, the more you will see them being drafted," he says. "The talent is there. It's just that the marketing of these student athletes has not been there. If their desire is to go into

professional sports, they should have just as much of a chance as any of these other kids. So, again, [it's] an inequality thing, a parity thing, an opportunity thing."

AMG would potentially expand the scope beyond sports to further highlight other areas of Black student life.

"There is a cultural aspect to it, but I think that right now, to really start to grow the brand, sports is the focus," Galatt says. "Certainly, we would love to be on campus at so many of these schools and promoting all of these programs and even supporting these programs. But I think at this moment, the majority of the attention is being placed in the area of sports — which is football, men's and women's basketball and Olympic sports."

In addition to launching HBCU Go, Allen recently saved the network Black News Channel from bankruptcy, spending \$11 million to add the company to his portfolio. Subsequently, he merged Black News Channel with TheGrio in a continued effort to connect with Black audiences.

"Black News Channel, unfortunately, went into bankruptcy because of the lack of ad dollars. And again, that goes back to the parity conversation, where there's a network in 50-plus million homes that's getting so very little in advertising from corporate America," says Galatt. "They're on CNN and they're on Fox News, and all these other entertainment outlets, but they're not on the Black News Channel."



Byron Allen with his 2023 UCLA Neurosurgery Visionary Award in October



Recently, Allen has also made it known that he is keen on acquiring ABC from Disney for a hefty price tag of \$10 billion. "When they're ready I'm going to chase it down like a lion chases down a gazelle," Allen said at the UCLA Neurosurgery Visionary Ball.

He told *Variety* at the same event, "The one thing that needs to be in the shopping cart to keep my interest is ABC and the ABC owned-and-operated stations — and I wouldn't mind if they threw in 'Kelly and Mark' and 'Tamron Hall.'"

So, what would an ABC acquisition mean for AMG's DEI-related efforts?

"There are just that many more possibilities for folks to lean in and spend with Black-owned," says Galatt. "We're making it so very easy with [Allen's] acquisitive nature and taking on more and more assets that are strategic within the portfolio for advertisers to spend more and get to that parity level with Black-owned media."

It's extremely important to examine where money is being invested in the entertainment

industry, as Galatt highlights a difference between investing in media aimed at Black audiences and investing in companies owned by Black individuals.

"It's always been a positive attitude in terms of 'spend with everybody,'" he says. "But make sure that in this area of Black-owned media and diversity, that you count the dollars and the percentages that you spend truly with Black-owned and not Black-targeted — that's a very big distinction to be made."

Ultimately, Allen Media Group's diversity initiatives are about uplifting and improving the industry for everybody's benefit.

"It's to make us all better. ... In the midst of communicating our dissatisfaction with where people are on their journey to parity and equity, [our message is] 'I'm going to help you make us better,'" says Galatt. "And I think that that is super important because people think when they see us coming, 'It's these diversity pioneers'... it's a tough conversation a lot of the time, but tough conversations are what make us better." 🗨️

“

There is a cultural aspect to it, but I think that right now, to really start growing the brand, sports is the focus.”
— Darren Galatt

Teen Seen

A young Byron Allen grabs

Hollywood's attention

While still a teenager, comic turned multi-media mogul Byron Allen was already making entertainment industry waves, as evidenced by this full-page *Variety* advertisement from 1981. Before he turned 20, the fast-rising young talent was repped by the William Morris Agency, getting buzz from his appearances on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" and co-hosting comedy show "Real People" while also co-hosting the popular music show "Midnight Special," all on NBC. And it was clearly only the beginning.

— Steven Gaydos



Above: Byron Allen co-hosted hit show "Real People" in the early 1980s. Right: John Barbour, Byron Allen, Sarah Purcell and Skip Stephenson in a 1980 taping of "Real People"; far right, Byron Allen was only 19 when his agency took out a full page ad for him in *Variety* touting his "Tonight Show" appearance

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TONIGHT 11:30 P.M. NBC

COMEDIAN
BYRON ALLEN
on
"THE BEST OF CARSON"

Co-Host — "REAL PEOPLE" Wednesdays, 8 P.M., NBC
Co-Host — "MIDNIGHT SPECIAL" Friday, March 27, 12:30 A.M., NBC

XXX

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industry dish from both behind
and in front of the camera
with today's biggest stars in
film, television & pop culture

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