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Welcome to the latest edition of K7's Digital Download, your essential weekly destination for the most interesting digital news through the lens of the TV world. This update features news on platforms, creators, AI, FAST, podcasts and more, accompanied by our insights on the latest trends in the digital space.

1. SPORTS: YouTube and Netflix expected to split select NFL games

YouTube and Netflix are reportedly set to expand their NFL coverage for the 2026 season through a new multi-game rights package. **The proposed deal would see the platforms split a group of Monday night fixtures previously held by ESPN** and have the option to showcase other potential standalone games. The move would further fragment the NFL's coverage across streaming services, with Prime Video, Peacock, and Paramount+ already holding some form of rights packages.

K7 Says: *The reported expansion follows strong early results for both platforms in live sports. **YouTube's exclusive NFL game last season drew major global audiences** and helped position it as more than just a place to watch highlights, while **Netflix has steadily increased its live sports ambitions via the WWE, its own boxing and tennis events, as well as the recent MLB Opening Day stream.** However, the continued fragmentation of rights is also creating growing pushback from fans and regulators, who have voiced concerns about rising costs and accessibility. (DT)*

2. VERTICAL: TikTok experimenting with UK ad-free subscription

TikTok has launched a £3.99 monthly ad-free subscription in the UK for users aged 18 and over. The new tier, **TikTok Ad-Free**, will gradually roll out over the coming months, **allowing subscribers to remove adverts served directly by the platform.** Users who continue with the free version will still receive 'personalised' ads. Sponsored creator posts and branded content will continue to appear in users' feeds, regardless of subscription.

K7 Says: *The move mirrors the "consent or pay" model that's already being used by ad-supported platforms like Instagram and YouTube, with some suggesting that the shift is as much about regulatory compliance as it is about subscription revenue. The problem here is that, unlike the interruptive pre-roll ads on YouTube, **TikTok's adverts are already embedded natively into the scroll, often resembling creator content itself.** Crucially, as **TikTok Ad-Free does not remove sponsored creator integrations, TikTok Shop videos or influencer-led product promotions, this means that***

simply getting rid of 'official TikTok ads' won't make it feel like a true ad-free experience. (DT)

3. **VERTICAL: Indie anime platform Ryuu launches in early access**

Vertical anime streamer **Ryuu has launched in early access ahead of its official release this summer.** Founded by New York-based anime fan Aga Palka and available internationally, the platform is focused on developing, funding and publishing **independent original premium anime series from internet-based creators**, released in weekly two to three minute episodes. Six creators are behind Ryuu's initial slate of content: Tezeze, Alindraws, Shar, No Sam, Prin and SpacearTEAst, who collectively boast over one billion views online. Ryuu's anime series are built from the ground up for mobile viewing in the 9:16 format; **the company promises "No cropping. No Compromise. No AI."**

Quarterly and annual subscriptions can be pre-ordered for US\$39 and \$96 respectively, with only the latter including early access. There is also the option for an annual subscription that includes "exclusive Granite Waves Season 1 merch for superfans", which is priced at \$469.

K7 Says: *Ryuu has joined a short list of new platforms that are trying to gain footholds as dedicated spaces for the emerging vertical niche within the broader anime boom; others on our radar include Shortcat (also international) and Anyme (targeting Indian audiences). **Ryuu's stance on AI should appeal to its target audience**, with the indie animation community featuring many vocal critics of the technology. As major corporations like Meta and iQiyi enthusiastically lean into AI-generated content, **being anti-AI has become rather trendy when it comes to promoting new vertical platforms**; Jack Dorsey's recently launched **Vine successor** and Susan Rovner and Jana Winograd's **aTwist** are also promoting themselves as prioritising human-made content.* (JC)

4. **VERTICAL: Sky piloting microdrama filmed at Isle of Wight Festival**

British broadcaster **Sky is to film a non-Tx microdrama pilot this June.** Filming will coincide with Sky's presence at the Isle of Wight Festival, with production handled by CC Lab, which also oversees the festival coverage for Sky Arts. A spokesperson for Sky stated that **this is "early-stage experimentation" for the media company, and that it is "exploring new ways to tell stories" for its audiences.**

K7 Says: *Sky has been **diversifying from its central satellite subscription model for years**, both through its standalone streaming service Now and its growing social video presence, most recently exemplified by the online success of Saturday Night Live UK. Perhaps microdramas could be next!? **It's smart of Sky to utilise its presence at a music festival to trial the format's fast-paced production, allowing for inexpensive experimentation.*** (JB)

5. **SVOD: Amazon to combine Prime Video with MX Player in India**

Amazon has announced that it will **integrate its Indian AVOD platform Amazon MX Player directly in to Prime Video** to create a unified Amazon-branded streaming platform in the country. Amazon claims that the newly combined service will have the largest streaming catalogue in India. It will see the free ad-supported MX Player titles sit directly alongside the paid subscription and rental titles offered on Prime Video.

K7 Says: *India continues to be one of the most important streaming markets in the world, with **Amazon MX Player boasting close to 300 million monthly users alongside Prime Video's 20 million paid subscribers.** Combining these entities – just like it did elsewhere with Freevee last year – not only helps Amazon to condense its streaming efforts into a **stronger entity to compete against current market leader JioHotstar**, but also to maximise its advertising potential. Amazon Ads India Head Girish Prabhu called the move **“a gamechanger for advertisers in India”** that will let it operate **“on an unprecedented scale”**. (JB)*

6. **GAMING: Hit mobile game Wordle is coming to TV**

Five years after its creation, the hit *New York Times* word game **Wordle is coming to primetime television, with NBC having announced a game show adaptation.** Hosted by *Today's* Savannah Guthrie, it will follow the game's format of setting a random five-letter word that players must guess in six tries or less. The series will be produced by Universal Television Alternative Studio, and has Jimmy Fallon attached as an executive producer.

K7 Says: *Wordle reached dizzying heights of popularity in 2022, with approximately **1.2 million Wordle results being shared on Twitter** between January 1 and 13 alone, according to [Buzzfeed News](#). The word game also brought an unprecedented **tens of millions of new users** to *The Times* in 2022, according to its press release. With all that said, when it comes to capitalising on that popularity, **creators have beaten broadcasters to it.** Between 2022 and 2023, “WordleTok” garnered millions of views for creators across platforms, and saw them solve custom Wordle puzzles with friends. Bigger creators benefitted massively from that moment, with [Savannah DeLullo](#) quitting her corporate job to create Wordle-themed content full-time. Though many of these creators have now moved beyond Wordle, the game still draws millions of daily users [according to The Times](#) – a strong indicator that the fanbase is ready for more content. (EM)*

7. **DEALS: Byron Allen acquires majority stake in BuzzFeed**

TV and media entrepreneur **Byron Allen is acquiring a majority stake in BuzzFeed for US\$120m** and will become CEO, replacing founder Jonah Peretti, who will move into a new role as President of BuzzFeed AI. Allen plans to expand BuzzFeed and HuffPost into free-streaming video, audio, and user-generated content. The company will also prepare for a significant

restructure that will involve cost-cutting and establishing **BuzzFeed Studios and Tasty as a new independent entity**.

K7 Says: *BuzzFeed's sale marks another major turning point for the once dominant social media publisher, which **at its peak had a valuation of \$1.7bn and helped define millennial internet culture** through formats, subsidiary channels and viral videos. The question is, **has the deal come too late? BuzzFeed has struggled to maintain relevance with its core audience**, while also failing to meaningfully connect with younger viewers, as attention has shifted towards newer creators, collectives and even brands operating in the more formatted digital space. The acquisition and shakeup could be just what the company needs, with **Allen's strategy reportedly set to heavily focus on AI-driven content**. However the wider reaction has been one of skepticism over whether the legacy digital brand can successfully reinvent itself in this ever-evolving creator economy.* (DT)

8. **FAST: CBC to wind down Documentary Channel in favour of FAST**

Canadian public broadcaster CBC has announced that it will be **closing its Documentary Channel at the end of August in favour of a documentary-focused FAST channel**. The move has been made to to modernise its offering for viewers amid “*significant shifts in linear television consumption*”. CBC will also be **increasing its investment in documentaries by CAD\$7m** (~USD\$5.111m) to facilitate the new service, focusing on offering a diverse range of storytellers “*dedicated pathways and new initiatives*” to tell their stories.

K7 Says: *Broadcasters around the world are noticing **the long tail impact of factual programming in the streaming space**. Take for example the UK's Channel 4 which, even though a new episode hasn't launched for a month, sees **24 Hours in Police Custody** still in its Top 10 Most Watched shows. Shuttering a pay channel to meet consumers in the digital space more openly, and then being able to increase its production output serves as **a net-positive for both viewers seeking more programming, and the production companies struggling against the downturn of commissioning**.* (JB)

9. **AI: Spotify releases AI Personal Podcast feature and expands DJ**

Spotify has announced a **new beta feature** that **allows users to save AI-generated podcasts directly into their Spotify library** using a new companion tool. The feature is designed for audio created by external AI agents such as OpenAI Codex, Claude Code, and OpenClaw, which turn notes into customised podcast episodes.

Additionally, the platform announced a **major expansion** of its **AI-powered “DJ” feature**, rolling it out to more than 75 markets worldwide and adding support for four new languages. The Spotify DJ acts as a personalised radio station, and includes commentary between tracks from an AI-host. These

changes are part of Spotify's broader push to become a central hub for audio across platforms.

K7 Says: Spotify is tapping into the demand for personalised, accessible audio experiences. *AI-generated podcasts are rapidly gaining popularity, with NotebookLM creating 1 million podcasts in its first month alone. Additionally, by allowing users to export cross-platform, Spotify avoids the need to create its own custom agents or force avid users to transition to a fresh agent. This allows the platform to become a **central point for all audio needs**, coinciding with Spotify's ongoing push for video content as well as audiobooks. (EM)*