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'TV Guide' Off "Endangered Species List"

by J. Max Robins

Glad to hear that some industry watchers believe that *TV Guide* is showing signs of life.

After all, *TV Guide* is where The Robins Report launched almost 15 years ago, and it was the place I called home for seven great years. Circulation may be down drastically from the 15 million-plus we had in the '90s—it's pegged at 2 million—but the cognoscenti are claiming it's off "the endangered species list" and headed toward profitability after a lot of needed bloodletting in circulation, production and editorial costs.

Under the able leadership of magazine industry pro Jack Klinger, what was once a mass title is now taking a niche approach targeting the television "enthusiast," as The New York Times puts it, comparing it to aspirational hobbyist titles like *Car and Driver*. Editorial focused on big stars and buzzed-about shows has lured back such advertisers as CBS and VH1 after prolonged absences. The current Fall Preview issue, while a far cry from the tomes published back in *TV Guide's* heyday, has the most ad pages the brand's had in three years.

Long-term, I believe *TV Guide* can not only survive, but thrive. Key will be its digital strategy. A big step in that direction was the recent deal that restores *TV Guide* magazine content to TVGuide.com, which is owned separately, along with TV Guide Network, by Lionsgate (the magazine is owned by Open Gate Capital and previously used TVGuideMagazine.com as its online outlet).

Far beyond that, potential upside exists for the brand in an iPad-driven mobile video universe. What better title is there to own that nexus of text and video on devices that increasingly co-mingle the two? Think *TV Guide* apps and alliances with the video concierges already out there. I hope for Klinger and Co.'s sake that Hulu, Boxee, Apple TV, et al. are on speed dial.

J. MAX ROBINS is vice president and executive director for industry programs at The Paley Center for Media.