

TV watchers don't want 100-channel packages

By Meg James, Los Angeles Times

VH1 Classic, with music videos from the 1980s and '90s and movies like "The Breakfast Club," was designed as a nostalgic stop for channel surfers.

Viacom Inc. launched the channel 15 years ago during the last big boom in cable programming. Back then consumers were hauling home high-definition big screens, and cable and satellite TV operators were eager to offer cutting-edge lineups with hundreds of channels.

Media companies laid claim to the channel space. Viacom figured it could milk its valuable MTV and Nickelodeon brands by creating offshoot channels such as Nicktoons, MTV Hits, MTV Jams and others. VH1 Classic was a hot ticket, featuring footage from old Led Zeppelin and Rolling Stones concerts and documentaries on the Beatles.

But the world has changed.

American TV viewers receive an average 194 channels, and most people watch only about 17 – a number that has not budged despite the proliferation of networks, according to measurement firm Nielsen.

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