

Interactive in spotlight at 2nd Home Media Expo

By Paula Parisi

The merger of high technology and the entertainment industries comes into focus next week at the second annual Home Media Expo, where producers and studio executives will be rubbing shoulders with computer jockeys from Silicon Valley.

"The melding of these two fields will revolutionize Hollywood programming of the future, and the future is only two or three years away," said Victor Harwood, president of American Expositions Inc., which is mounting the event, running from Tuesday through April 2.

"Imagine the impact Nintendo has on the mind of a 12-year-old being brought to bear on a 25-year-old, in terms of enjoyment level and desire to spend money on an entertainment product," Harwood explained.

"A 'JFK' interactive might be able to bring in \$30 (million), \$40 million for a studio. A Madonna interactive, ready to play on the next generation combi CD player-computer, that should generate some interest. It's going to be a whole new ball game."

Interactive's potential looms even larger than those of home video and cable TV when they were burgeoning industries, said Harwood, because interactive is "more than just a delivery system where goods will simply be repackaged. There will be whole new formats. Studios will be forming whole new divisions that will finance millions of dollars of production, and the same will be true for the music industry."

Harwood is offering up his expo at the Beverly Hilton as the ball at which the programmers and tech

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wizards will choose their partners for the ensuing dance.

Featured speakers are to include New Line Cinema president Robert Shaye, taking part in the "Studios, Independents, Networks and New Media" panel Wednesday with NBC Cable's Michael Wheeler and others.

Michael Nesmith, Charles Fleisher, Julien Temple and Timothy Leary will take part in a lively "Entertainment Artists Roundtable" Tuesday.

"The Business of R-Rated Interactive Media" on Wednesday features producer Mike Saenz, whose "Virtual Valerie" "has sold more CD-ROM software than any other program," said Harwood. "It's interesting to note that this market

wants R-rated material."

Keynote speakers featured at a morning session on Wednesday include media guru Trip Hawkins, head of Electronic Arts and SMSG; Bernard Lushkin of Phillips Interactive Media; and Commodore International's Nolan Bushnell.

Wood Knapp Video topper Betsy Wood Knapp will hold forth on "Developing Children's Entertainment & Learning Software" while her video cohorts George Feltenstein of MGM/UA Home Video, Glenn Ross from Republic Pictures Home Video and Al Cattabiani from Pacific Arts are to share thoughts on the "Feature Films & Home Video: The Next Generation" panel, where they are to be joined by Michael Nash of the Voyager Co. and Bruce Polichar of Bruce Polichar Associates.

Details: (212) 226-4141. □