

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Digital Entertainment World 2016

Catherine · Wednesday, February 24th, 2016



DEW 2016

The latest rendition of Digital Entertainment World was bigger and better than its two predecessors. Given an estimated 1800 attendees, the high energy schedule included extensive networking opportunities throughout all three days.

Media innovation was one of the most important ongoing themes that ran throughout many of the presentations. Discussions explored visionary perspectives, marketing to Millennials and Gen Z, consumer entertainment experiences and the future of eSports.

As it turns out, eSports may be one of the biggest trending areas in the digital space right now. For those of us who told our kids to stop playing video games and focus their time on something that would enable them to make a living, this may be the big oops moment in the annals of parenting. Owing its origins as a competitive sport to South Korea and other Asian markets, gamers compete in large arena venues for large cash prizes and gain enormous fan followings online. It is also interesting to note that some of the biggest followings are devoted to the “casters” who are the eSports gaming equivalent of sports commentators.

Continuing in the gaming mode, 2016 will be the year we remember for the onslaught of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality games. Many of the companies are tech-centric and the quality of the storytelling in these games is not remarkable. However, motion picture studios like 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox are looking to expand their properties like The Martian, which will appear on tethered Oculus VR headsets in Summer 2016. In this game, players get to be an astronaut on Mars. Fox is also prepping two more of their properties, but their resident futurist, Ted Schilowitz, kept the subject matter under wraps.

When it comes to marketing in the digital space, brands – and artists – have to be as fearless as the millennial audience they are chasing. Bite-sized content has become the standard, as has the need to relinquish control of your brand (or art) to enable the audience to share, comment, mashup and make it their own. Nobody will dispute the claim that Millennials have short attention spans, but few take into consideration the fact that they have been exposed to more content than any other previous generation.

Much like Millennials before them, Gen Z embraces differences among their peers because 94% of the cohort wants to be true to their unique expression of their self. While Millennials prefer real life experience to things, Gen Z has flipped the equation and prefers to acquire a product more than an experience.

Furthermore, Gen Z has redefined their relationship to culture. They don't just consume it – they take pride and ownership in creating it. 91% share their opinion on products with adults. Some of them are already working. Beth Reekles, author of Kissing Booth – a best seller in the YA category

– just signed a 3 book deal. She is 15 years old.



Another influencer in this space is YouTube star Lilly Singh, aka iiSuperwomanii, influences Lilly Singh, aka iiSuperwomanii. Like most of her more than 7 million Millennials and Gen Z's successful online peers, Singh started making with her videos videos in her bedroom, "talking about pimples and relationships and all the same things they were experiencing." That authenticity enabled the audience to feel that she was just like them. Over a period of years, her channel has accrued more than 7 million followers. The attraction to this space is that artists have complete creative freedom, which Singh describes as being "scary, challenging, exciting and awesome." At the same time, she has to write, produce, shoot, edit and upload all of her videos by herself – as well as maintaining an ongoing conversation with her followers on social platforms.

In the area of digital video content, there has been a decided shift from Multi-Channel Network (MCNs) to Multi-Platform Network (MPNs). Companies like StyleHaul are emerging to help brands sift through the clutter to identify influencers in specific audiences and on different platforms. Their method is to build the right content around four pillars: context, credibility, purpose and action. They help spread brand messages through story with product placement that makes complete sense in the context of the influencer's unique brand.



George Stropoulos has breathed new life into Fullscreen.

One of the more interesting MPNs to watch is Fullscreen. Founder / CEO George Stropoulos has been somewhat of an underdog in this space over the years. However, since he has joined forces with Peter Chernin and AT&T through their companies, Otter Media and Elation, he's become a dark horse whose company has "figured out what it wants to be when it grown up." Given the under-performance of Make Studios since it was acquired by Disney, Fullscreen has a clear opportunity to move into a front position.

While there was an abundance of conversation around the topic of Live Streaming, there wasn't much acknowledgement of the fact that it only works effectively if you have an audience on standby to tune in when you're ready to broadcast. Given the inability of traditional media companies to get audiences to tune in to regularly scheduled programming in a post-DVR world, live streaming may ultimately find its greatest value in live events or breaking news.

One of the more interesting sessions was built around the question, "What Would George Lucas Do?" In the creation of *Star Wars*, Lucas proved stories create products and that, through their use by consumers, products create stories. Who among us has not purchased a *Star Wars* branded item for ourselves or our kids? The prevailing theory is that people don't really care if content is branded – as long as the content is compelling.

Digital Entertainment World ([www.dewexpo.com](http://www.dewexpo.com)) has become one of the best conferences in the Los Angeles area. If you work or create in the digital space, you should consider putting this on your conference calendar.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 11:52 am and is filed under [Film](#), [TV](#), [Technology](#), [Visual Art](#)

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