

Las Vegas: NC-17 at AEE 2008

by Doug Waters and John Miller
Images by D. Massarik



Cassie Young

The V is for Video, not Visual, although neither were in short supply at the 2008 AVN Adult Entertainment Expo. The convention closed last week with nearly 30,000 industry professionals and fans having attended the annual trade show at The Las Vegas Sands Expo Center. The 2008 four-day Expo featured over 350 industry related exhibitors and almost 500 leading and up and coming adult entertainers including the biggest names in the business from the USA, Europe and Asia and those that will be the next big names of the Adult Entertainment world.

The Adult Video News (AVN), sponsor of the Adult Entertainment Expo, annually presents the largest showcase of adult talent, exhibitors, and products in the world. Not coincidentally, the AVN Expo overlapped with the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas that same week. While the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo is not affiliated with CES, smart CES attendees wisely schedule a stop at the ANV Expo to note trends and opportunities in technology that would never turn up on the CES floor.

And it doesn't hurt the cause a nano-bit that the AVN Expo exhibitors utilize the visual drawing power of their Adult Talent to bring attendees to their booths. But this is no simple case of window dressing and eye candy. These women (mostly women, although there is a subsection, the GayVN, catering to male interests) are phenomenally attractive and exceptionally friendly, but also understand their business, their products and their industry, and market the hell out of it.

Like it or not, the Adult Video industry is massive in terms of influence and finance, and with almost \$4 billion in video sales and an estimated \$2.5 billion in online revenue in 2007, is quite a profitable industry. It's also an industry that continues to thrive by being an early adopter of new media technology.

The 2008 Expo exhibitors included booths promoting online privacy products, advanced virtual reality products that linked video images (DVD, PC) to mechanical output devices, Internet Rights Advocates, as well as a special B2B area for buyers and manufacturers. The focus on technology was the most prevalent theme throughout. Adult Video technology is leaping forward in two areas -- new avenues of content distribution and High Definition video.

The 2008 AVN expo featured many vendors that have moved from experimental stages in 2007 to fully engaged in new methods

for recording and distributing content. According to industry representatives, nearly all content will be recorded in high definition format and a huge push in 2008 will be made in going 'mobile' given the recent boom in iPhones™ and similar devices—distributing content directly to these devices. Exhibitors also were showing off their developments in web/internet distribution (downloads), Video on Demand (via cable and satellite) and a rapidly evolving cutting edge technology, IPTV. which blends the Internet(IP) and cable(TV) for yet another avenue for distribution.

High Definition Video was all the rage at AVN Expo 2007. The battle of Blu-ray versus HD ended, ironically only days before AVN 2008 kicked off, when several major Hollywood studios withdrew support for the HD format. A spokesperson for Digital Playground asserted that the format (Blu-ray or HD) was of lesser importance, as they have filmed all of its productions in high definition since mid-2004 and would accommodate whatever distribution method was most prevalent. While visual distractions abound, the emphasis was business—the AVN Expo connects manufacturers, distributors, retailers and the talent. AVN also presents panel discussions on various industry related topics. Particularly entertaining was a panel discussion on Video Piracy. The panel consisted of several attorneys, industry consultants and the heads of two production companies: John Stagliano of Evil Angel Productions and Jules Jordan of Jules Jordan Video. The discussion covered the multi-million dollar court award that Evil Angel and Jules Jordan won against a video (DVD) pirate, but in a post-panel discussion, Stagliano offered a revealing remark and Jordan acknowledged: "Next time we'll settle out of court. The only people that won were the lawyers...we'll be lucky to cover our expenses from this".

Again for 2008, the Expo continued with a unique approach that many trade shows do not: allowing public access to the show. It may seem like a nice gesture on the part of the organizers, but it's also a shrewd maneuver that helps identify trends at the consumer end of the industry, gives a quick sampling of fan/purchaser demographics, and allows for on-the spot testing of sales and marketing concepts. Controversies aside, there's no denying the exciting, carnival-like atmosphere the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo brings to Las Vegas each year, as consistently as CES brings electronics.



[To see live video interviews from AVN 2008, visit www.ML1media.com or search YouTube for ML1media]