

Known for his role in the development of such shows as "Dawson's Creek" and "7th Heaven" at WB Network and "Home Improvement," "Blossom" and "Boy Meets World" at Disney, Jordan Levin now focuses on creating youth-oriented content across multiple platforms as founding partner at Generate. With projects like VH1's broadband series "Home Purchasing Club" as part of an ongoing deal with MTV Networks and a first-look film deal with a major studio on the horizon, the company is making strides in content creation and talent management. **The Hollywood Reporter technology reporter Carly Mayberry** recently spoke with Levin, who was the featured speaker Wednesday at the Museum of Television & Radio's Industry Forum, about the mission at Generate.

The Hollywood Reporter:

How would you describe Generate as a company?

Jordan Levin: We are, at our core, a company that's about developing and producing content, and the reason we're in the new-media space is because increasingly, younger audiences and younger creators are turning toward new-media platforms as a way to tell stories and consume entertainment. A lot of people say, "Wow, you're in a lot of places," but I feel like we're in one place. We're a very simple company. We're a pure-play content company, and we simply recognize that you have to go to a lot of places now to create value for content.

THR: Why did you choose to be involved in a start-up that creates content for new-media platforms?

Levin: I've always found the challenge and reward of start-ups to be something that I'm drawn to. Looking at the media landscape overall, I felt that after countless decades of the control being in the hands of the production infrastructure, the studios and the distribution outlets — and with the barriers of production and distribution falling — that the power is shift-

ing toward those people that can create compelling content. The idea of working more closely with those people as a producer and manager was appealing to me and felt like the right side of the fence to be on looking five to 10 years out.

THR: How does Generate make its money, and does the company ever look for funding?

Levin: Our revenue generation is largely twofold. Like most management and production companies, it is fee based. We make management fees and commissions and we make producer fees. We also have an ownership position in the content we create, and in some of the businesses, we develop both with our clients and other partners like brand sponsors. We are also developing a number of content-based Web sites, which we think could develop into stand-alone businesses. We work with advertising brands. (One project) that has made it to market has been "The AE Campus Comedy Challenge," done with (retailer) American Eagle. As far as funding, we initially chose to bootstrap (Generate) ourselves among the six partners, and that's what we've done. Now, at a little over 13 months old, we're starting to get stabilized, and (outside funding) is something worth exploring.

dialogue

with Jordan Levin

THR: What about the new-media landscape has caught you by surprise?

Levin: New-media content invites a degree of user interactivity that is immediate and far greater than anything linear-based media can offer. A community of users can quickly not only take ownership of a site but contribute to that site, and I think that is an exciting opportunity for someone who has an idea or wants to capture a specific point of view. It becomes a creation that you share with a community — and that's something that accelerated more quickly than I expected. I thought we were a couple years away from that, but it is occurring right now, and that is the basis for why we are in the Web site development business, because there are certain ideas that demand that degree of community interaction and contribution.

THR: What in the entertainment industry has digital media

affected the most?

Levin: Simple laws of supply and demand have dictated a large pool of talent that was always trying to funnel through relatively few distribution outlets: a couple of broadcast networks, a few cable networks and some film studios. There was always a larger supply of talent against the demand for that talent. I think the reverse is starting to occur. There's a greater supply of distri-

manner that affords the greatest creative integrity? How do you protect the point of view of that idea or talent?"

THR: What is it about Generate that you most appreciate?

Levin: What's particularly appealing is not having to say no to anything that I think is a good idea simply because it wasn't part of my mandate to sell, as I had at Disney, or part of my



Generate founding partner Jordan Levin is generating new-media content on multiple platforms that is targeted to the youth audience.

but ion and there's still a relatively finite supply of talent, while the need for content is increasing. The demand is shifting toward the talent, and that's the side I've placed my bet on.

THR: How does the content development process work at Generate?

Levin: We develop internally and go out and pitch, but the process for me is different than I've ever had because it is completely open; there is no preconceived set of parameters by which we have to filter any ideas. If it's something I or we like, we go into: "Who is the audience for the idea? What is the most efficient way to reach that audience? How do you do so in a

mandate to buy, as I had at the WB. It now is first and foremost, "Is it an idea that we get excited about?" It's a position that affords me the opportunity to get more involved with the creative process from the inception of the idea which I like doing very much.

THR: How do you feel about Generate's progress thus far?

Levin: It's been a busy year, and we're in the midst of a transformative time in our industry, and whether we can take advantage of it quickly enough in a way that is financially rewarding enough remains to be seen. ... I think that fortunately, we've seen the industry trend in the directions we anticipated. ■

'Prom'

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ting laid, Lauren tries to jump Josh in her car, Lauren's mom comes on to Ben, and Chad gets off-camera oral sex in the boys' locker room. Typical "Degrassi"-style titillation, but somehow the MySpace tie-in makes it feel more transgressive. ■

That's why the show compels: This could be your high school. Or your kid's high school. Each segment feels like a synopsis of daily drama, a "Max Headroom" blipvert for an oversexed cohort. It is among the first mainstream online video dramas, and it demands your attention. On that very important level, "Prom" succeeds. ■