

The Buzz: MIP @ the Produced By Conference

By Kevin Sanson

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MIP spent June 9 and 10 in Culver City where the fourth annual “Produced by Conference” brought a sold-out crowd, more than 1200 attendees, to the Sony lot. Presented by the Producers Guild of America, in association with International CES, the conference [hails](#) both rookie and veteran producers for a series of panel discussions about “current and evolving trends in production, distribution, finance, marketing, branding, and media strategy.”

Yet, with registration [costs](#) reaching upwards of \$1000, the conference clearly favors more established ranks than outright newcomers. In fact, when I asked a number of participants about their reasons for attending, I repeatedly heard one of two responses: they either came to the conference to network with other producers or they were lured by the thrill of seeing high-caliber professionals, like Christopher Nolan, discuss their craft. Typically, the latter group stood next to me in the standby lines; we had secured donated tickets through professional contacts or educational affiliations.

I bring up this anecdote because it underscores the rather tenuous role of the [panel](#) discussions themselves—the conference’s primary offering, at times, played second fiddle to wine receptions and star power. Accordingly, the event engendered some predictable media coverage of its biggest names making well-rehearsed revelations: Christopher Nolan [dismisses](#) digital filmmaking; Marc Cuban [promotes](#) traditional television; and Lionsgate [embraces](#) its indie status.

Likewise, I heard similar disclosures during the panels I attended: “mega-producers” rarely sleep, talent unions are the gateway to first-class talent, and Hulu is willing to pay for genre-bending original content (though they refused to reveal how much money they’ve slated for development).

As an academic exercise, the conference offered a fascinating glimpse into the trade show as cultural space, an arena where interactions with colleagues and potential partners help producers shore up their collective identity in largely affirmative terms (See: [John Caldwell](#)). Of course, there were professional insights to glean from the discussions, too, even if cutting through the spin sometimes required listening across panels, picking up on silences, and cornering people on the sidewalk after the session ended.

Below you'll find my major [takeaways](#). Anne Thompson at Indiewire provides another thoughtful [list](#). I also [tweeted](#) throughout the conference if you’re interested in perusing my initial reactions.

And if the PGA is reading, here's some friendly advice for next year: mix it up a little. Seeing panels that address film, television, and new media at this year's conference was great, but keeping those conversations separate made the discussions too insular. Why not put a reality television producer on the same panel as a union representative or a development executive from a cable channel next to a development exec from Hulu?