

STAYING **ahead** OF THE GAME

Conferences can help executives keep in touch with the latest developments in new technology

Whatever they may think privately about new media, record company executives have had no choice but to come to terms with it in a very short time.

Indeed, they are now obliged to keep abreast of technology, which is changing so fast that there is every danger they may well lose grip of the traditional reins of power.

The clearest threats to the status quo come in the shape of net-distributed product, electronic copyright protection of catalogues and in the form of powerful new players in the industry such as telecommunications giants AT&T or MCI.

The past 18 months have witnessed a rise in the number of conferences and seminars organised specifically to keep the record industry abreast of the latest trends in new media. In the main, most conferences assume academic formats and have, until recently, been part of generic events such as Multimedia 20, held in May, which addressed the relationship between design, animation, film, TV, music, publishing, advertising and broadcasting.

Another conference specifically designed to tackle the music industry's relationship with new media and technology was Musicom International, which made its European debut in London on June 9 and 10. Musicom, which is organised by the New York-based World Research Group, already has a sterling



Alex Boyesen: getting the most out of the internet

reputation in the US and attracted a high calibre of delegates from the music industry. A quick headcount on day one of the event showed that 75% of the visitors were from record and publishing backgrounds, 20% from multimedia companies and a handful from telecoms companies.

Most attendees at London's Musicom seemed impressed with what was on offer. "I think these events are very important," says Mark Foster, vice president of marketing at Warner Music Europe. "We are quite concerned about potential changes in the industry and need to know about things like artists' rights in these new media, promotional possibilities and how best the internet can be exploited commercially."

Phil Murphy, senior vice president at

Sony Music, is also interested in both the opportunities that new media offers the industry and the threats it presents.

"Music, entertainment, and telecommunications are now crossing over into each other so much, there are going to be some very interesting alliances in the future," he predicts. "We need to be aware of the possibilities."

US-based Kiku Loomis of BMG International's strategy planning department is a seasoned conference visitor: "I've seen and heard most of this before at other conferences especially as a lot of the technology originates in California," he says. "I am here just for that one new idea or cool marketing trick which could make all the difference."

Most of the panelists at Musicom were from multimedia companies anx-

ious to set out their stalls and promote their products and services. Alex Boyesen, chairman of interactive solution provider Fibberghasted Multimedia, says "I don't think I've learnt anything I didn't already know. But these conferences are very good for networking and getting yourself known."

Two new events combining music and technology will appear this autumn. Music Technology & Distribution is scheduled to take place on September 29-30 at Planet Hollywood in London. Organised by *Marketing Week* and *NewMediaAge* magazines in association with *Music Week*, it will attempt to analyse the impact on the music business of the latest multimedia products and new technology as well as examining what ways they can be harnessed to exploit traditional and new distribution channels more effectively.

That will be followed by IQPC's *Exploiting the Commercial Opportunities for the Music Industry in the Digital Age*. This will cover topics from creative design for music web sites to club promotions on the internet, and the event will be held at the Ministry Of Sound in London on October 21 and 22.

Yinka Adegoke