

## Foreword

# The Century of the **Video Game**

It's been said that the motion picture was the quintessential twentieth-century form of entertainment. It is very possible that it will be said that the twenty-first century belonged to the video game.

Both art forms strive to deliver an immersive experience that breaks down the barrier between the medium and the audience. But the result of this immersion is very different for each medium. With film, greater immersion makes the experience *voyeuristic* because you're always in third-person mode, watching. It's critical that you identify with someone or something on screen, but you don't control them. In games, though, greater immersion makes the experience *personal*. You control the action, you become a participant. It's arguably a more powerful personal experience.

For both games and movies, technology is a critical component of creating an immersive experience. Working with James Cameron, I have a healthy respect for the role of technology in entertainment. In our case, we constantly challenge ourselves to find technologies that we can apply to stories, e.g. *Titanic* and *Avatar*, that could not otherwise have been told.

But the danger, in both movies and games, lies in confusing technology with content. For all the attention you can grab with special effects, if the movie is poorly written, or the game is poorly designed, all you'll end up with is a good-looking (and expensive) flop. Let the technology enable you, but use it in service of the theme. I've learned that a successful movie must have a theme that's bigger than the genre. You leave the plot and the effects in the theatre, but the theme you take with you. You think about it as you walk to your car. You talk with your friends about it the next day. And just maybe it opens up a new avenue of self-discovery. The same is true for a successful game: the theme is bigger than the game. That only happens with great game design.

Hence this book and Deborah Todd. Deb is uniquely qualified to guide you through this topic. She's not just an entertainment-industry veteran—she's a veteran of *two* entertainment industries: Hollywood and video games. Throughout her career, Deb's constantly innovated new ways to deliver entertainment through gameplay. Along the way, she's targeted almost every conceivable demographic with almost every kind of property: from preschoolers to teens to CAD engineers, with original concepts and licensed franchises, from engaging educational content to pure entertainment. And from the start, she's spoken and written about the right ways to marry technology and entertainment to create great games.

As you immerse yourself in this industry, you'll find it both challenging and rewarding. It's a wide-open frontier, but Deb can guide you only so far; so always be thinking of new ways to create engaging, cutting-edge entertainment that makes a lasting impression on your audience. This is where hard work meets heady fun. It's where your collaboration with a team results in something that's far greater than the sum of its parts. Keep your wits and your will, and you'll be able to tell your grandkids that you were there at the start, helping make this the century of the video game.

—Jon Landau

*Jon Landau is an Academy Award®-winning producer and COO of Lighstorm Entertainment, Inc. In addition to producing James Cameron's Titanic, Landau is the former Executive Vice President of Feature Film Production at Twentieth Century Fox. Landau and James Cameron are on the board of advisors for The Multiverse Network, Inc., which is building the world's leading network of massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) and 3D virtual worlds.*