[**Variety Entertainment & Tech Summit**](https://entertainmenttechnology.splashthat.com/blast)

*Panel Discussion - “The Scene Stealers - Breakthrough Entertainment Innovations”*

*Pre-Recorded 9/9; Released on 9/23*

**Pre-Record Date:** Thursday, September 9, 2021

**Released:** Thursday, September 23, 2021

**Prep Session with Comms:** Wednesday, 9/8

**Panel Recording Time:** 2:00 - 3:00pm PT

**Format:** [**Zoom**](https://variety.zoom.us/j/82171577976?pwd=K0dTSzBqdDVndGZqQTVSc09udjBVZz09)

* **Directions**: The Zoom will be pre-recorded and you are not required to use a specific Zoom background.

**Moderator Information**

**Moderator:** Jazz Tangcay

**Email:** [jtangcay@variety.com](mailto:jtangcay@variety.com)

**Twitter:** [@jazzt](https://twitter.com/jazzt)

**Abstract:**

The Scene Stealers - Breakthrough Entertainment Innovations: With a largely captive audience – many new entertainment services and products saw explosive sampling over the past year. What new innovations are exciting the investment community? Which of the breakthrough products and services will find lasting rather than fleeting fame? Innovators converge to talk about what ideas will continue to move the business forward.

**Outline:**

Intro (Jazz):

* Topline overview of what we’ve
* Short intro from panelists (Christina)

Group Questions (Jazz) - Of note, each panelist should be prepared to answer each question, but may not get asked all; Comms weighed in on questions we wanted Roblox included in.

* (Christina) Tell us what innovation has meant to you and your teams over this past year? How did our current environment - I.e. uncertainty with the pandemic – play into some new ways of thinking?
* (Christina) How has media and entertainment served as inspiration for new innovations?
* Are there specific challenges or opportunities that you think make this area ripe or primed for advancement? In what ways?
* What products/services are you most proud of coming out of your own teams? Why are these highlights for you?
* Can you speak to trends that you’re following which have popped in the last year, whether tied to your companies or not. What sort of innovations do you think our industry should continue to keep an eye on? Some examples include NFTs, virtual production for entertainment
* (Christina) - Hit on trends in the space, What isn’t being talked about right now – but do you think should be? Why? What has the potential to make an impact in entertainment/tech/media?
* How might consumer behavior and trends influence possible new innovations? We saw a rush to new digital options at the start of the pandemic – spanning video games, social, streaming TV and more. How might these trends impact what you’d like to accomplish next?
* What strategies do you use to determine if a new trend/product/service will have lasting power in the marketplace?

**About Panel:**

* This will be a pre-recorded hour panel with five other panelists from Trioscope Studios, FilmTrack, Lucasfilm, Andreessen Horowitz, and Facebook Reality Labs, moderated by Variety’s senior artisan editor, Jazz Tangcay.
  + Jazz will give a brief intro of the discussion and ask each panelist to give a brief introduction, followed by a combination of questions.
* The panel discussion “The Scene Stealers - Breakthrough Entertainment Innovations” will focus on innovations in the media and entertainment space and how companies pressing forward

**Participants:** 

**Moderator:** [Jazz Tangcay](https://variety.com/author/jazz-tangcay/)

* Jazz is the senior artisans editor at Variety and covers all crafts below-the-line - TV, film and other entertainment productions. She is also on the Awards team analyzing the Emmys and Oscar races.
* Prior to joining Variety, Jazz worked at Awards Daily, where she covered film and TV, and wrote reviews and analysis on the Emmys and Oscar races. She is a member of the Gold Derby experts.

**About** [**Jason Kassin**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jason-kassin-8956788/)

* Jason is the CEO of FilmTrack, a rights management company, and is responsible for orchestrating the strategic development of FilmTrack products and solutions. He is a leading expert in rights and content management solutions for the media & entertainment sector.
* Prior to FilmTrack, Jason built his own successful software consulting business while also appearing in films and television programs; he also sold film and TV pilot scripts to DreamWorks, Fox, NBC, and Paramount. Jason obtained a degree in Film and Theater from Vassar College.



**About** [**LC Crowley**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/l-c-crowley-1421b914/)

* LC is the CEO and founder of Trioscope Studios and is a seasoned executive producer of innovative series for Netflix, Adult Swim and Discovery.
* Prior to Trioscope, he was the former advertising creative director on global brand content for AT&T, Mercedes and GE.



**About** [**Sarah Malkin**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarah-malkin/)

* Sarah is the Head of Media at Facebook Reality Labs where she drives all aspects of the content business across digital and emerging platforms. She is seasoned in launching new initiatives at the intersection of entertainment and technology.
* She is also a producer and actress, known for Camp, Wonder Quest, and Born to Brunch.

**About** [**Janet Lewin**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/janet-lewin-b9818a7/)

* Janet is the SVP and GM of Industrial Light and Magic at Lucasfilms A 27-year veteran of Lucasfilm and Industrial Light & Magic, Janet is returning to ILM after serving as Lucasfilm’s VP, Visual Effects for seven years. Janet oversees all aspects of the visual effects business for ILM and Lucasfilm, including Production and operations across the global organization. She will also oversee the company’s burgeoning virtual production StageCraft business.
* Prior to Lucasfilms, she worked across a wide range of production and executive roles at ILM, ultimately serving as Head of Production, with oversight of global production as well as capacity and expansion planning.

**About** [**Chris Lyons**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/christophermlyons/)

* Chris is a General Partner at Andreessen Horowitz where he oversees the firm’s Cultural Leadership Fund (CLF). CLF launched in 2018 with the mission to connect the world’s greatest cultural leaders to the best new technology companies and engage, empower, and elevate Black builders and creators on their journey towards excellence in the technology industry.
* He started his career in the music industry working for Grammy-Award-winning producer Jermaine Dupri as a sound engineer at his Atlanta studio. He then launched his first startup with mobile app, PictureMenu, a digital menu offering that also invited patrons to rate dishes.

**Key Messaging:**

**Christina Intro**

* Hi, I’m Christina Wootton, a VP at Roblox overseeing brand partnerships, and have more than a decade of entertainment experience working with Fortune 500 companies and studios including Netflix, Warner Bros., Universal Pictures, Disney, and Gucci to name a few.

**Metaverse Messaging**

* Roblox (and the Metaverse itself) is bigger than gaming - it is the place to be when you can't be in-person. Whatever you see in real life, we can imagine it in digital life.
* We’ve been building our platform and bringing the vision of the Metaverse to life for over 15 years. We are an experience platform and our experiences are unique in that they are fully user-generated (more than 8 million creators/devs), powered by a shared fabric including a common engine, social graph, economy, and safety.
* With these capabilities on the platform, we have grown a global community spanning 180 countries that’s very engaged. In July of 2021, there were 46.6 million daily active users engaging 3.8 billion hours on the platform.
* This community is building their social networks on Roblox, making meaningful connections and creating memories together through their shared experiences on the platform which presents a unique opportunity for brands. Brands can quickly reach a global fan base in an authentic way, offer experiences and collectible items that might not be attainable in the physical world.
* The Metaverse is a massive opportunity, we focus on key tenants and approach: identity, friends, immersive, low friction, variety, anywhere, economy and civility.
* We don’t see any limitations on what Roblox can be and what people will use it for - **We are ushering in the Metaverse and this new category of human co-experience. We believe Roblox is the future of how we will play, work, learn and share experiences together.**

**VR Messaging**

* We make it a priority to be on whatever device users are on and while it's still early technology and mass usage is low for AR/VR at the moment we do have the capabilities to support this technology on our platform.
* Given the size of our platform, we are already one of the biggest VR platforms available.
* As technologies like AI, avatars, VR and 3D spatial audio mature, our experiences of the Metaverse will only become more immersive and more frictionless, but already, we’re getting close.

**Aging Up**

* Our ultimate goal is to be a platform that serves all ages.
* We believe there is significant potential for us to increase our user base across all age demographics, and we are making numerous investments to widen our user demographics.
* For instance, as a result of platform extension, developers and creators are now able to build higher quality experiences and content that appeals to an older age demographic, such as more realistic avatars.
* In Q2 2021, 50% of our DAU hit 13+ for the first time.

**(Christina) Tell us what innovation has meant to you and your teams over this past year? How did our current environment - I.e. uncertainty with the pandemic – play into some new ways of thinking?**

* We believe that COVID-19 has permanently shaped the future of human-to-human interactions and behaviors. To that end, we are at the very beginning of experiencing what is possible for brands in the Metaverse.
* We have been building this platform for 15 years. We don’t see any limitations on what Roblox can be and what people will use it for - a place for people to have shared experiences, be it entertainment and play or fashion, music, work, learning.
* And we’ve been solving some of the broadest sets of technical challenges:
  + Our vision is that these immersive 3D experiences should be accessible on all devices, both for viewing as well as interaction, and we’re continuing to invest to improve scale, performance, as well as realism and fidelity of how we interact online.
  + Roblox has invested to make it possible for anyone (we have over 8M active developers) to create content that, when pushed to our cloud, runs on phones, tablets, PCs and the Xbox console, and auto translates into multiple languages.
  + Another example is avatars, which are important because they allow users to fully express themselves with a virtual identity that reflects who they want to be in the Metaverse. We are working to provide users with a wide range of identity options so they can select not only what appeals to them, but what reflects who or what they want to be.
* Last year’s events (still continuing with the pandemic) underscored the importance of our mission and social aspects of the platform. People come to Roblox to be who they want to be (online identity), socialize with friends, use it for creative expression, etc.

**(Christina) How has media and entertainment served as inspiration for new innovations?**

* Millions of people are already coming together in the Metaverse every day to socialize and experience entertainment, play, learn, share adventures and explore new destinations.
* At its core, Roblox is about co-experience and we are experimenting with different formats, from virtual concerts (Lil Nas X, Twenty One Pilots) and movie/TV experiences (In the Heights, Bakugan), to persistent spaces like our recently launched Vans World or Stranger Things and Wonder Woman.
* These experiences are all supported by the ability to reach millions of people in creative ways and contextual ways, draw in new audiences, and create new revenue streams.
* Brands that allow themselves to experiment and collaborate with our community and creators will flourish in the real world.

**Are there specific challenges or opportunities that you think make this area ripe or primed for advancement? In what ways?**

* When brands learn about the reach of Roblox and how engaged our community is (46.6 million with 3.8 billion hours of engagement in July 2021), they get really excited.
* The opportunities in the Metaverse are limitless and are constantly evolving. You can literally build anything you want without having the restraints you would in the real world.
* An untapped opportunity for brands is **building persistent immersive worlds** that can offer fans evergreen spaces to enjoy their favorite content, help maintain and even increase their emotional investment, as well as draw in new audiences.
  + These spaces are the natural evolution of interactions in social media, allowing fans to connect with their favorite brands, celebrities, artists and content curated specifically for them in immersive 3D environments that are open to them at all times.
* Examples of these persistent immersive worlds include:
  + [Wonder Woman](https://blog.roblox.com/2020/06/dc-wonder-woman-themyscira-experience/), which was launched in June of 2020, is a persistent space with more than 31 million visits to date:
    - Users can take on adventures and quests, unlock special gear featuring Wonder Woman’s most iconic outfits and accessories, and wear each item outside the experience.
  + [Stranger Things: Starcourt Mall](https://www.roblox.com/games/5853107391/Stranger-Things-Starcourt-Mall) experience that leveraged a persistent space in collaboration with the creator community which has seen 30 million visits to date:
    - Much like the local mall back in the 80s where teens came together, the virtual Starcourt Mall is a similar setting reimagined for the Metaverse, opening up unique possibilities for one of Netflix’s top franchises to engage and grow their global audience. It offers quests to earn Stranger Things-inspired gear, play mini-games, compete in rotating leaderboard challenges, and purchase additional avatar items.
* Claiming a spot in the Metaverse is a low-risk way to keep a brand’s existing audience highly engaged while simultaneously reaching out to new segments. At the same time, simply having some sort of presence in the Metaverse may not be enough—if the experience doesn’t make sense to the community, it will fall flat. The ability to collaborate with community developers lowers the barrier to entry when ideating a persistent world so brands can focus on what matters most for them: keeping fans engaged year-round.

**What products/services are you most proud of coming out of your own teams? Why are these highlights for you?**

* [**Ready Player One**](https://blog.roblox.com/2018/03/roblox-ready-player-one-adventure-begins/) was a massive, first-of-its-kind event in partnership with Warner Bros. The Roblox Ready Player One Adventure challenged players across the world to discover three hidden keys and unlock a series of gates across four secret games. Whoever completed the entire adventure first would be declared the winner and the recipient of a unique, highly coveted digital item - golden “Master of the Hunt” hat.
  + And the [Ready Player Two Roblox hub](https://www.roblox.com/games/5967514178/Ready-Player-Two-Hub) with author Q&A and quests garnered over 37 million visits, likely making it one of the biggest book launch events ever.
* [**In the Heights**](https://corp.roblox.com/2021/06/roblox-warner-bros-pictures-bring-heights-launch-party-roblox/), which is the first-of-its-kind Launch Party on Roblox brings the music, dance, and Latin American culture of the film’s iconic Washington Heights neighborhood to life.
  + Users could participate in the virtual dance flash mob, take part in a Q&A and watch an exclusive clip before the movie premiere.
* [**Wonder Woman**](https://blog.roblox.com/2020/06/dc-wonder-woman-themyscira-experience/) (persistent world - more than 30 million visits to date) - Users can take on adventures and quests, unlock special gear featuring Wonder Woman’s most iconic outfits and accessories, and wear each item outside the experience. It was one of our first persistent spaces on the platform.
* [**Stranger Things**](https://corp.roblox.com/2021/06/stranger-things-branded-world-launches-roblox-metaverse/) (persistent world - also with more than 30 million visits to date) - Netflix launched a persistent space to immerse fans year-round for it’s Stranger Things franchise. The mid-80s, neon-soaked Starcourt Mall (location for the Season 3 finale) persistent space lets anyone explore the mall, complete quests to earn Stranger-Things inspired gear, play mini-games, compete in a rotating leaderboard challenges, and purchase additional avatar items.
* We recently launched “[Vans World](http://www.roblox.com/Vans)” which is an interactive 3D persistent experience developed in partnership with Roblox community developers The Gang Stockholm.
  + The space is inspired by Vans’ signature locations such as House of Vans, the Vans Off the Wall Skatepark in California, Vans retail shops and revered skate destinations from all over the globe.
  + In this persistent space, users have the ability to use the Vans shoe customizer to create their own unique style, and the full skate shop to build their perfect board.
* Another highlight is our [Gucci Garden](https://blog.roblox.com/2021/05/gucci-garden-experience/) experience that we launched in May.
  + For Gucci, we used the latest off-the-shelf developer tools and lighting technology to create a truly awesome experience for the virtual Gucci Gardens.
    - For example our team used a series of high-fidelity environments with dynamic, personalized textures and patterns for each visitor’s mannequin.
    - And with the newly released developer avatar editor gives visitors freedom to purchase and wear exclusive Gucci virtual items directly in the experience.
  + The Garden also hosted a store where visitors could purchase exclusive, limited edition avatar items created by Roblox creator Rook Vanguard that memorialized the Gucci Garden Exhibition and can be used across the Roblox platform.
    - ~20 items, half of them limited, meaning they were for sale twice a day in two time zones for 1 hour only.
    - Users were able to try on exclusive and limited merchandise right in the lobby before purchase (we developed this purchase flow for Gucci)—a blueprint for how developers can implement similar systems in their games using the newly released developer avatar editor.

**Can you speak to trends that you’re following which have popped in the last year, whether tied to your companies or not. What sort of innovations do you think our industry should continue to keep an eye on? Some examples include NFTs, virtual production for entertainment.**

* An Economy where goods and currency flow freely among in a safe and secure way is one of the fundamental characteristics of the metaverse. By providing unforgeable proof of ownership, NFTs create trust in the system and make users comfortable spending real-world money to acquire digital goods. They also allow all participants in the Economy (including the original creator) to make money from primary and secondary sales of the same virtual goods and eliminate the need for intermediaries.
* A form of this is already taking place on Roblox: we already have “limited” items offered as part of events on the platform. Users then can sell or trade these items on the platform, creating a vibrant marketplace for valuable virtual goods. The recent Gucci garden experience was a good example of that, with virtual goods selling in-experience and then being resold among users for amounts higher than their real life counterparts. The main differences with NFTs is that proof of ownership is not decentralized, but guaranteed by Roblox Profits and that R$ proceeds from these transactions cannot be cashed out (but can be reinvested into the platform).

**(Christina) - Hit on trends in the space, What isn’t being talked about right now – but do you think should be? Why? What has the potential to make an impact in entertainment/tech/media?**

* **Co-creation: G**en-Z expects ability to co-create content as various research points out. And we believe creators play a crucial role in building the metaverse - bringing limitless creativity, diversity of cultural backgrounds/experiences to Roblox. We are fully UGC: anyone can design, build and publish immersive, interoperable experiences, and metaverse items for others to consume.
  + Brands reach out directly to our community (or we connect them) to co-create experiences (i.e. Scoob/Adopt Me). There are over 8 millions of active developers and creators from 180 countries on Roblox, and brands can easily tap into this globally distributed creative talent with in-depth knowledge of their respective online communities to accelerate the creation of really engaging, authentic experiences from the get-go.
* **Interactivity** is another trend. We are seeing experiences being built with this in mind. From being able to watch an exclusive episode or clips with friends (In the Heights/Bakugan) to choosing your own adventure (Twenty One Pilots) or even having a one-of-a-kind piece of art at the end of an experience (Gucci Garden).
  + Take [**In the Heights**](https://corp.roblox.com/2021/06/roblox-warner-bros-pictures-bring-heights-launch-party-roblox/), which is the first-of-its-kind Launch Party on Roblox brings the music, dance, and Latin American culture of the film’s iconic Washington Heights neighborhood to life. Users could participate in the virtual dance flash mob, take part in a Q&A and watch an exclusive clip before the movie premiere--there were over 900,000 participants in our virtual flash mob event on a single day in June.
* **Twenty One Pilots,** we announced our new virtual concert for the Grammy Award-winning [Fueled By Ramen/Elektra](https://www.elektramusicgroup.com/) artist’s sold out *Scaled And Icy* tour. V2 of our Virtual Concerts: The non-linear set is huge and you can choose your own adventure (different experience every time!). Other cool things:
  + Two avatars this time vs one for LNX (team innovating with this genre evolution, interaction between the two Avatars!). Having them both in the same space feeding off one another is very immersive and more complex in terms of technology involved.
  + Big theme of this show: Immersive, interactive, participatory. Lots of Twenty One Pilots references (i.e. Easter Eggs will be all over the space that their fans will know and love).
  + Alternate Reality Game (ARG): Partnering with top experiences on platform to offer an interactive scavenger hunt. Portals will take users to/from these experiences while still in the event space; first time we’re doing something like this w/ community for a concert event.
  + Great partnership with Warner Music Group to bring these kinds of opportunities to life on the Roblox platform and create an experience where Twenty One Pilots can engage with fans from around the world in the metaverse.
* [**Gucci Garden**](https://blog.roblox.com/2021/05/gucci-garden-experience/) (branded experience - 20 million visits in two weeks)- Launching at the same time as the unveiling of the of Gucci Garden Archetypes - an immersive multimedia experience in Florence, Italy - Gucci’s virtual experience on Roblox utilized the latest Roblox technology to create a hyper-immersive space where users avatars became a neutral mannequin. Wandering through the different rooms, mannequins absorbed the elements of the exhibition and with everyone experiencing the rooms in a different order, each retained a different fragment from the space, ultimately emerging at the end of their journey as a one-of-a-kind creation.

**How might consumer behavior and trends influence possible new innovations? We saw a rush to new digital options at the start of the pandemic – spanning video games, social, streaming TV and more. How might these trends impact what you’d like to accomplish next?**

* It’s always evolving - the opportunities in the metaverse are limitless. You can literally build anything you want without having the restraints you would in the real world.
* When we speak with brands that are looking to extend their presence into the Roblox Metaverse, we recommend that they try to enhance our community’s shared experiences, without interrupting what they are doing and come up with native, immersive ways of experiencing their products or touchpoints.
* Our creators have amazing ideas that brands, and even us, couldn’t even imagine. Brands who listen that allow themselves to experiment and collaborate with creators will flourish, both in the real world and online.
* Our community spends billions of hours on the platform every month, and there are many ways to make their time even more exciting and fun. It’s not just about having a known IP, but rather how that IP makes shared experiences in the Metaverse better, more engaging.

**What strategies do you use to determine if a new trend/product/service will have lasting power in the marketplace?**

* For brands to breakthrough, an experience needs to be authentic, natural, and creative. Our users expect a blend of physical and virtual experiences.
* Just like 15 years ago when brands were building teams to advertise on Facebook and Twitter, and now platforms like TikTok, every brand will need a metaverse strategy in the future and the ones that have them now are at the forefront.

**+++**

**Roblox Company Facts**

* Founded by David Baszucki and Eric Cassel in **2004**
* Key milestones and dates:
  + Roblox Studio Launch (used for creating UGC games): 2006
  + Started selling digital currency: 2008 (Robux conversion: Roughly $1.00 to 100 Robux)
  + Game monetization introduced in 2013
  + Avatar Shop launched in 2019
  + Premium Payouts launched in 2020 (monetization based on engagement; awarded consistently to developers, regardless of their player base scale)
* Team: 1,234 employees (80% in product & engineering), and over 3,000 trust and safety agents
* Location: San Mateo HQ

**Updated Stats** (As of Q2 ending June 30, 2021)

* In Q2, 43.2 million daily active users (DAU), spanning 180 countries and 9.7 billion hours engaged
  + *In the month of July*, DAU were 46.6 million with 3.8 billion hours of engagement, the highest in any month to date.
* In Q2, users over the age of 13 grew at 29% compared to the last quarter
* In Q2, 27% growth in engagement in markets outside of the US/Canada compared to Q2 2020
* Over 8M active developers and creators on the platform, earned $329 million in 2020 and we are on track to share half a billion dollars in 2021 with the community (top creators have earned millions of dollars, thousands are making a living).
* Millions of experiences and creator-built virtual items available on the platform.