

SXSW 2011

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SXSW Screenburn Arcade Provides Stage For Startups

By Nathan Bernier



RockLive's Sam Shahidi poses with Mike Tyson to promote his startup's second iPhone game, Mike Tyson Main Event. Photo by Nathan Bernier for KUT News

Would you pay \$10,000 and set up a boxing ring in the Austin Convention Center to promote an iPhone game? For Sam Shahidi with RockLive in Irvine, California, it was a no brainer.

"Because South by Southwest is such a social media phenomenon, we wanted to get people more connected other than just playing the game," Shahidi said. He's at SXSWi to promote his company's second game "Mike Tyson Main Event" and he hopes to capture a slice of the \$27 billion Americans spend on videogames.

Shahidi rented a boxing ring from a company in Florida and had an employee dress up in a Mike Tyson costume to take pictures with attendees. The real Mike Tyson is coming in to meet and greet fans on Sunday from 3 p.m to 6 p.m.

"The Screenburn Arcade is friendly for startups," Shahidi said. "Some of the other [video game exhibitions] have rules and we can't follow them. [Screenburn] is very flexible with what we wanted. Everything we've asked for they've done, which is amazing."

The Screenburn Arcade is located on the first floor of the Austin Convention Center. Unlike many SXSWi events, this one is free and open to the public. People are invited to come in and play the latest videogames on consoles spread out across the floor of Exhibit Hall 2.

But not all the games are intended for home use. One booth was occupied by Austin-based Multimedia Games, a developer of video slot machines.

"We're the only ones here for the casino market," said Multimedia Games' Andy Brown, who explained part of their purpose of attending Screenburn was to recruit new software developers.

"Especially since this is open to the public, we're able to promote our company and get the word out there that we're here in Austin," he said.

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