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That's entertainment

Have a nagging tune in your head that you can't quite pick? In the future it will be as simple as singing a portion of the song (if you can hit the right notes) to the computer to receive feedback on the artist and song title

The link between entertainment and technology is strengthening as we approach the new century, with developments that will allow voice, data and even moving images to be transferred quickly on telephone lines. The next decade's entertainment choices will not be limited by the imagination — only by the user's hardware and software.

Video rental stores may be the first to feel the bite of new technology as video-on-demand bypasses the need to leave the home. Accessed through cable or telephone lines, video titles are listed on the television with the movie downloaded immediately for viewing. The Australian Bureau of Statistics says Australians spend more than \$1.38 billion a year on television and video goods and services — the savings on overdue video charges alone will be incentive to use the service.

Communications consultant Robin Whittle says the music industry is set to be transformed. "The increasing use of the Internet, and the move to electronic delivery, will change the conditions in which artists work — exposing them to a potentially vast range of music," he says. Armed with the latest personal computer and a capacity to learn, almost anyone will be able to create music and broadcast outside the confines of today's music industry structure.

For less than \$2000 artists will be able to record and mix their music and broadcast immediately via the Internet or other communication



Charlie Chan: Many artists are not taking advantage of cutting-edge developments

lines. "You can make a whole recording on the kitchen table," says Whittle of the equipment that is set to revolutionise the industry. And the Internet's ease of access — a modem and computer allow anyone to enter the domain — means more people will be able to listen to, and view, an artist's work.

With about 20 million people from more than 100 countries already accessing the Internet, contemporary music artist Charlie Chan has received more exposure than some of the world's most popular entertainers. Earlier this year her new album *East and West* was launched live on the Internet, with another performance scheduled for September direct from Chan's living room.

"People are daunted by the prospect of delving into technology," says Chan, one of the main reasons she claims many artists are not taking advantage of cutting-edge developments.

But the Internet is not the only performance tool Chan is using to her advantage. Her new album can be played on a standard CD player, but can also be run through a computer's

CD ROM drive for a combination of music, text, video and still pictures. Believed to be one of the first of its kind, Chan says the new format should increase the album's sales potential.

The next few years should also prove interesting for the industry as blank CDs and CD recorders become cheap enough for the retail market. Whittle predicts that blank CDs will retail for around \$5 by 1998. So the move towards recording music and pictures, either from computer or from the home stereo, may eventually make audio tapes and videos obsolete.

With the advent of multi-media, books may also appear to be moving towards bargain basement territory. With Australians reading for at least an hour a week the publishing industry believes most readers will still favor the written word printed on paper, but in the future a compromise may be reached to enhance the user's experience, incorporating a mix of book and CD that appeals to all the senses.

—Janelle Carrigan