

Broadband Report: Urge opens

May 19 2006



This week Microsoft released its brand new beta of Windows Media 11, the beta will come bundled with the beta test of Microsoft's brand new URGE venture, which is Microsoft's long awaited answer to iTunes.

In partnership with MTV, Urge is an online music service that will offer more than 2 million tracks available for purchase at \$.99 or an all-you-can-eat subscription version that will cost \$9.99. It's not clear whether the \$9.99 monthly subscription service will allow you to transfer the music to portable devices. If it does, then it'll be cheaper than its rivals Rhapsody and Napster, which charge around \$15 to take your music "to go."

I had a sneak peek at the service at CES a few months ago and the interface does look slick. I can do without the additional MTV content, but who knows maybe MTV will actually deliver something other than

repackaged junk from their network and give Urge users some original stuff. Urge looks and seems promising, but not surprisingly, it's not going to be compatible with iPods.

In other news, Internet movie company Cinema Now recently became one of the first Internet video providers to offer day and date releases of high-profile DVD debuts. "Brokeback Mountain" was available for online download and purchase the same day the DVD was released. In addition to that, you can also download films like "Fun with Dick and Jane," "Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban" and others. With the service you can either rent a movie for \$3.99 for a 24-hour viewing window, or you can purchase a new release for \$19.95.

I love the idea of being able to download a movie the same day it hits the DVD shelves, but I'd like to see how large the file sizes are and how long it'll take to download a film. Those are two questions I'll give you an answer to in the coming weeks as I take the service for a spin and kick the tires a bit.

What better way to push a product than through an infomercial? That's the logic behind Internet electronics retailer Buy.com, launching a brand new half-hour television show called BuyTV. The show covers the latest in new technology. It's shot in HD and is hosted by some woman and guy, the quality of the show is obviously low budget, and sort of "over produced" cable access level, with a slick opening and transitions but stiff hosts and a boring set. But it's a good watch; the nice thing is it's a rare broadband show where they include chapter points, so you can easily click around to the segments that you are interested. The interface is beautifully designed, so go to Buy.com to check it out.

Has Sony given up on the idea of the Playstation Portable being a gaming device? A lot of their recent announcements regarding the PSP -- camera and GPS add-ons, may lead you to believe that. The PSP was

always meant to be and is marketed as a true multimedia device, but with the pending death of Sony's UMD movie format they appear to be pushing the device's other multimedia functions. So it comes as no surprise that the new firmware upgrade (2.7) will enhance the PSP's ability to handle more and more broadband content. The new upgrade includes the long-promised Flash Player support, giving users the ability to view videos and other multimedia content on their PSP. Currently you have to use a memory stick or UMD. The new firmware upgrade also gives the PSP better RSS feed support.

Now we're to the point where we can't even call telephones, telephones -- shameless marketing hyperbole to follow. This week Nokia introduced the Nokia N93, the ultimate mobile device for spontaneous video recording. Offering uncompromised digital camcorder, telephony and rich Internet communication functionalities, the Nokia N93 features a 3.2-megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss optics, DVD-like video capture and 3x optical zoom. You can connect the Nokia N93 directly to your TV for a widescreen movie experience or upload your images and video to online albums or blogs. Moreover, you can create high-quality home movies and burn them to DVD with the included Adobe Premiere Elements 2.0 software.

Gary Oldman and other Hollywood types will be creating video using the new phone -- excuse me, multimedia computer. Most of the video will then be featured on Nokia's new www.nseries.com Web site.

MSN recently announced that it is renewing and enhancing its relationship with Mark Burnett Productions by again providing exclusive programming online for the second season of CBS' "Rock Star," the reality show that revived the fortunes of international rock band INXS. For the first time, weekly behind-the-scenes episodes containing all original footage will be streamed exclusively on the Web on MSN.

ITV was tried in the past and failed but there's new excitement surrounding adding more and more broadband features. "In the early days, ITV was expensive to deploy by the cable operators and required content providers to do a lot to enable interactivity. And it was trying to force a new viewing paradigm on users," said a spokesman for Microsoft's MSN Service. "Now anyone with a PC and a broadband connection can experience great video content online, and interactivity can be provided through tools that millions of users are already familiar with -- like rich Web sites, instant messaging, blogs, etc."

Just as in season one, four types of content will be available each week: extensive and immersive behind-the-scenes unscripted drama (produced exclusively for MSN); one performance show and one results show (both produced exclusively for CBS); and, as last year, extensive original wireless content (produced exclusively for Verizon's VCast service.) The MSN behind-the-scenes unscripted drama will allow viewers to learn what it takes for the contestants to choose their songs, prepare for their weekly performances and follow their characters as they develop and grow under enormous pressure. It will be available at rockstar.msn.com, enabling on-demand viewing via streaming.

MSN has always had some form of broadband content, but now it really seems to be investing heavily in it. Microsoft thinks it has the right formula to be successful.

Broadband Report is a weekly look at broadband communications, covering business deals, content news, and hardware. The report is a compilation of news releases, interviews, and analysis.

Copyright 2006 by United Press International

Citation: Broadband Report: Urge opens (2006, May 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-05-broadband-urge.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.