

# Sony uniting strengths at online network

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An attendee wears 3-D glasses to watch game demonstrations at the Sony Playstation media briefing in Los Angeles, California, June 2011. Sony on Tuesday rolled out a new way to explore online video as the Japanese entertainment titan battled to be the preferred Internet venue for games, music, films and television.

Sony on Tuesday rolled out a new way to explore online video as the Japanese entertainment titan battles to be the preferred Internet venue for games, music, films and television.

Video Unlimited software available for Sony PlayStation 3 consoles in the United States and Canada follows up on the company's vow to combine its strengths under the new banner of the Sony Entertainment Network (SEN).

Sony consumer products and services group Kazuo Hirai last month promised to create a synergy with the company's gadgets, televisions,

music, films, and videogames in SEN.

"For the first time in the history of the company, all the services in our group are under one umbrella, one guy, and that's Kaz," said Sony vice president of global digital video and music services Michael Aragon.

"He asked us to come up with a common user interface to tie all the services and devices together," Aragon said while giving AFP an early look at Video Unlimited.

Video Unlimited search incorporates technology from media management company Gracenote, which Sony bought three years ago for a reported \$260 million.

Searches "pivot" on movie themes, actors, directors, keywords and other input with the program using hints to home in on what kind of film or television show people seek.

For example, a search on the name of a film will let people click right to a movie trailer or jump to collections of movies featuring any or all of the same actors.

"There is a ton of content, so it has to be easier for people to search," Aragon said. "We want you to be able to lose yourself as you might in a bookstore, but then be able to find your way back out easily and right to the movie you want."

SEN boasts more than 6,500 films and 45,000 television episodes.

Part of the challenge for Aragon's team is to differentiate SEN from rival online entertainment networks operated by major players such as Microsoft and Apple as well as Internet hotshots such as Spotify or Netflix.

Gracenote specializes in identifying and organizing digital files.

Sony envisioned Gracenote technology spreading throughout SEN and eventually powering features such as clicking to download a soundtrack while watching a film or playing a videogame.

Gracenote technology for identifying digital content could one day let SEN users who enjoy a song quickly find all the films or television shows that featured the music.

"There are so many cool things you can do with that technology," Aragon said. "We want to create a more interactive platform."

Sony's campaign for synergy at SEN comes as Facebook begins packing movies, music, news and digital books into overhauled profile pages crafted to serve as online homes for members of the world's largest social network.

Major changes being rolled out in coming weeks will let Facebook members discover and share media content in real time. Aragon spoke of the potential for film searches that pivot on what Facebook friends watch.

"Facebook has told us we are welcomed," Aragon said. "I think that the way we are going to do social video is pretty cool."

Activity on the Sony PlayStation network has climbed 10 percent since it was revived in the aftermath of a lengthy outage caused by an embarrassing cyber attack, according to the company.

The number of accounts has grown to 80 million from 77 million before the outage, Aragon said.

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