

Digital Savant: How Vine won me over during SXSW Interactive

March 29 2013, by Omar L. Gallaga

The chatter going into and coming out of the South by Southwest Interactive festival this year was that there were no real breakthrough apps or products to win over attendees.

Sure, there were lots of neat [emerging technologies](#) to see. 3-D printing, which probably won't go mainstream for a few more years, was much-discussed. And the Leap [Motion controller](#), an inexpensive little USB module that allows you to play games by moving your hands around in the air in front of your computer, got some attention.

But, some complained, there was no lightning bolt of inspiration like [Twitter](#) (SXSW class of 2007) or Foursquare (2009) or Highlight (2012). Instead, the attention of festival goers seemed to shift this year to hardware, more ephemeral concepts like "Big data" analysis and, as usual, beer and barbecue.

Personally, I was too busy to give the avalanche of new apps and marketed gadgets much of a try. But one app I was already using bubbled up as my favorite tool of the festival; it got a good [stress test](#) during those five crazy days at SXSW.

Vine, which I've written briefly about before, proved itself to me as an excellent companion on the go, an app for posting quick, lightweight videos and sharing them instantly over social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

The app, which is owned by Twitter, has a lot of limitations that have turned off some potential users. The biggest drawback is that it's currently only available on Apple iOS devices like iPhones, leaving [Android](#), BlackBerry and [Windows Phone](#) users out in the cold. The other limitation is that you can only use it to post six-second videos. You can't edit the videos with the app after you shoot them, though it saves a copy of the footage to your phone that you can manipulate with other software later.

And the [video quality](#), truth be told, is not spectacular. This is quick, dirty video, not the kind of HD gorgeousness you'd want to view on a big-screen HDTV in 10 years. It's low-resolution, impressionist video, like animated GIFs with sound. They provide a glimpse of something rather than a lingering stare. The videos automatically loop and the way Vine works - you press the screen to shoot, let go to pause recording and press again to shoot more - allows for easy stop-motion or time-lapse video.

In my experience during South by Southwest, most of the knocks against Vine as a tool for shooting video turned out to be huge virtues.

For a lot of what I saw at the festival, from crazy robots with faces of women on them, to a Republic Park filled with glowing electronic step pads at night, six seconds is all you need to capture something weird or magical.

Especially for some of the SXSW music shows our staff attended, six seconds of footage are all you need to convey the vibe of a performance. Nobody wants to sit through four or five minutes of cell phone footage with blown out sound from a live show. But six seconds, it turns out, is a large enough taste.

The low-quality of the video also works in Vine's favor for situations like SXSW. The video file sizes are so small that they upload almost

instantly, even in places where cell phone networks are spotty or congested. I never could have uploaded a two- or three-minute HD video from my phone outside of a Wi-Fi network during the fest, but Vine videos could be posted online just fine in seconds. Only once or twice did I have to attempt more than once to get a Vine video to go through. These are videos I would have never found the time to sit down and edit later. Video is easy to overthink and overproduce.

Like Instagram, another app that favors simplicity and speed over high-resolution imagery and unnecessary editing tools, Vine works well as a mobile app because it's so stripped down, so easy to use and so fast.

I felt free to post videos whenever I wanted, without worrying about what I would do with the footage later or whether my phone had enough memory left to store lots of raw footage. I've been thrilled to see Vine users make the most of the stop-motion features, creating hilarious animations out of household objects or compressing a vast amount of time into a series of quick, arresting images.

The complaints about the short length of Vine videos sound a lot like the complaints I heard about Twitter back in 2007 and 2008. People argued that a communication medium based on quick-hit messages of 140 characters or less could never be used for thought-provoking discussion, to break real news or to connect people. We've found that not only is Twitter able to do all those things, but it's proven more versatile than even its creators could have imagined.

Vine only being available on iOS is still a huge obstacle, but I anticipate it'll spread to other devices sooner rather than later and that more people will fall under its spell. It's not for everyone and adding too many new features of it could easily kill its magic. But especially for something that's only been around since January, it has already passed a major test with me.

DIGITAL SAVANT MICRO: WHAT IS 'FEEDLY' AND CAN IT REPLACE GOOGLE READER?

(In this space every week, we'll define a tech term, offer a timely tip or answer questions about technology from readers. Email ogallaga@statesman.com)

When Google announced this month that it will shut down its Google Reader service in July, many loyal users of the service began immediately hunting for alternatives.

One of them, Feedly, seems to be emerging as a top pick for Reader refugees. It gained about a half million new users in the days after Google made its announcement. Like Google Reader, Feedly allows users to browse new posts from blogs and other kinds of websites using "RSS," a standardized web publishing format. Instead of visiting web sites individually for updates, readers can see all new content in one place.

Unlike Google Reader, Feedly takes all that content and formats it into an attractive, magazinelike style. Visually, it resembles another news aggregator called Flipboard, and it's not the only game in town. Zite, Reeder and Pulse are other news-browsing alternatives to Google Reader.

Feedly, which can run in web browsers as well as on iOS, Android and Kindle devices, is expected to clone Google Reader's functionality before the July shutdown and so far seems to be the front runner among the RSS-reading competitors.

(c)2013 Austin American-Statesman, Texas

Distributed by MCT Information Services

Citation: Digital Savant: How Vine won me over during SXSW Interactive (2013, March 29)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-03-digital-savant-vine-won-sxsw.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.