

In Tech: Mobile app, mobile phone, online TV

May 8 2015, by Barbara Ortutay



This Dec. 17, 2014, file photo shows the BlackBerry Classic, on display during a news conference, in New York. After a high-profile breakup, the BlackBerry Classic will again be available from T-Mobile beginning May 13, 2015 for online

orders, and in participating T-Mobile stores beginning May 15. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews, File)

The iconic designer behind the simulation video games "Sim City" and "The Sims" wants people to tell stories visually on their mobile phones.

Will Wright has created a [mobile app](#) called Thred. The idea is to "explore and share visual ideas with friends"—through "threads" of images and links. For some, this can mean a collection of Internet jokes; for others, travel photos and articles. If you give Thred permission, it will access your phone's photos and track your location so that you can post a thread of the day's meals, or the snapshots of flowers you shot on a Sunday trip to the botanical gardens.

It's a bit like Instagram-deluxe. Instead of just one photo, Thred lets you share a bunch. Instead of just filters, you can add text, links and stickers to your pictures.

"I'm fascinated by how much this has become a part of my life," said Wright, 55, holding his iPhone as he showed off the app recently in a Manhattan coffee shop.

Thred joins Storehouse and other, more complex visual storytelling apps that hope to appeal to your creative side and seek to go deeper than one-off snapshots. Whether Thred will soar in popularity like "The Sims" did or fade away like "Spore," remains to be seen.

Thred works on iPhones and iPads. There's no Android version yet.

Elsewhere in the world of technology:



This image provided by Roku shows the "My Feed" screen from the built-in Roku streaming TV service on a Sharp television. Some TVs from Sharp and Insignia will come with Roku's streaming TV offerings built-in. Roku is now adding 43- and 50-inch screens from Sharp and 32- and 55-inch models from Insignia, which is Best Buy's in-house brand. (AP Photo/Roku)

MAKING UP

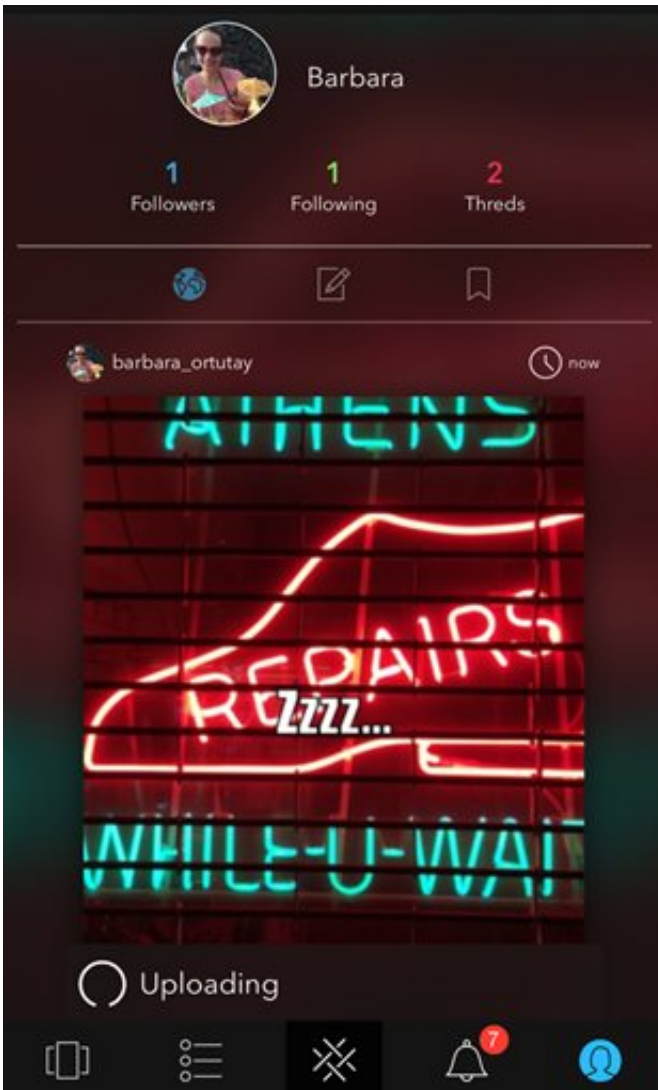
After a high-profile breakup, T-Mobile is offering BlackBerry phones again. The BlackBerry Classic will be available in U.S. stores and online next week for \$440, payable in installments.

This comes a year after BlackBerry decided not to renew its U.S. licensing deal with T-Mobile, saying the companies no longer had

complementary strategies. BlackBerry CEO John Chen complained then that T-Mobile had emailed BlackBerry users an offer to switch to a competitor's smartphone.

The companies didn't address their fallout in Thursday's joint announcement. Rather, they said they are "in the business of listening to their customers."

Just recently, T-Mobile began targeting business customers. BlackBerry is popular with some businesses for its security features.



This screen shot made Thursday, May 7, 2015 shows a photo enhanced with text using the Thred app for iPhone. Thred lets users create multipaneled photo stories that can contain Web links to locations and topics and can be shared via social media. (AP Photo)

Earlier in the week, T-Mobile launched a promotion aimed at luring customers from Verizon, the No. 1 U.S. wireless carrier.

ONLINE TV ON TVs

Some TVs from Sharp and Insignia will come with Roku's streaming TV offerings built-in. That means owners of these sets won't need a separate streaming TV device, such as Roku 3 or Apple TV, to watch Netflix, Hulu and other online services on their TVs. Separate subscriptions with those services are still required, though.

Initially a maker of streaming TV devices, Roku has been working with TV manufacturers to get its software included with the set. This allows manufacturers to offer smart, Internet-connected TVs without having to write their own software. Manufacturers are also able to make more online services available this way. Roku has more than 1,000 apps.

So far, Roku's software is on sets from TCL and Hisense. Roku is now adding 43- and 50-inch screens from Sharp and 32- and 55-inch models from Insignia, which is Best Buy's in-house brand. Roku sets from Haier are also planned.

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Citation: In Tech: Mobile app, mobile phone, online TV (2015, May 8) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-tech-mobile-app-online-tv.html>

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