Progressive Networks launches the first commercial audio-on-demand system over the Internet

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Body

April 10, 1995--Progressive Networks (PN), an interactive communications company focused on the delivery of real-time audio on demand over the Internet, was launched Monday.

The company also introduced its RealAudio audio-on-demand development and delivery system (*http://www.RealAudio.com/*) and announced that its first two content partners are the American Broadcasting Co. (ABC) and National Public Radio (NPR).

Leading-edge website providers Metaverse, HotWired, GNN and RadioNetHuman/Factor, among others, will also be producing audio entertainment and news using RealAudio technology that can be enjoyed by their users at the touch of a button.

The RealAudio system enables users equipped with conventional multimedia personal computers and voice-grade telephone lines to browse, select and play back audio or audio-based multimedia content on demand, as easily as using a standard video cassette player/recorder.

PN's RealAudio system makes it possible for providers of entertainment, information and news content to deliver audio-on-demand services that can be accessed and played back immediately.

This is a real breakthrough compared to typical download times encountered with delivery of audio over conventional on-line methods, in which audio is downloaded at a rate that is five to ten times longer than the actual program -- e.g., the listener must wait 25 minutes before listening to just five minutes of audio.

Progressive Networks was founded by Rob Glaser, formerly vice president of Multimedia and Consumer Systems at Microsoft Corp. Progressive Networks' lead outside investor is Mitchell Kapor, founder of Lotus Development Corp. and the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

"We recognized an immediate opportunity for content providers to develop and offer exciting on-demand services today, years ahead of the infrastructure investment needed for video on demand. We are bringing one of the oldest and most popular forms of electronically transmitted entertainment -- sports, music and news programming, called radio -- into the next century," said Glaser.

"We can now help audio content providers make a wealth of programming available to Internet users and enable users to access this material for the first time on demand."

"Our involvement with PN is part of ABC's continuing commitment to using today's innovative technologies to bring news, sports and entertainment programming to our audience," said ABC's Kathryn Dillon, vice president of Production and Technology in the Capital Cities/ABC Multimedia Group.

"Our audio library consists of hundreds of thousand of hours of great entertainment as well as memorable news and sporting events. RealAudio affords us an opportunity to make this programming available to today's Internet and on-line users as well as an ability to create innovative new multimedia programming that will attract new users."

"Real Audio provides NPR listeners with a unique new way to hear selections from their favorite NPR programs. This opportunity will be especially important for listeners whose crowded schedules cause them to miss over-the-air broadcasts by our member stations," said Del Lewis, president of NPR. "We are eager to continue working with Progressive Networks to use their innovative new Internet technology to provide improved services to our listeners and member stations."

"We are excited to offer RealAudio programming that our customers can instantly access," said Adam Curry, president, Metaverse. "This will greatly expand our audio programming opportunities for an even richer Internet experience."

PN's RealAudio Product Line

In order to build the market for audio on demand, PN is introducing three RealAudio products, each designed for a specific market segment: RealAudio Player for consumers, RealAudio Studio for content creators and RealAudio Server for on-line publishers. The products work together to provide a comprehensive distributed client/server system.

RealAudio Player is client-based software that enables Internet and on-line users to access existing audio for instant playback. Available free over the Internet for Windows, Macintosh and select UNIX workstations, the RealAudio Player can be used either in a standalone fashion or through integration with the standard Internet Web browsers.

RealAudio Studio, the second RealAudio product being introduced, enables multimedia on-line creators to develop their own programs delivering audio-on-demand or audio-based multimedia streams.

Studio will available in three forms: a trial version that can be downloaded freely for evaluation purposes, a standard version and a professional version. The standard and professional versions will be available first for Windows, with other versions to follow as market demand develops.

RealAudio Server, the third product, enables major media content providers to distribute audio or audio-based multimedia streams over the Internet to a broad base of consumers and end users. RealAudio Servers will be available for Windows NT and a range of UNIX-based server platforms.

Beta versions of the RealAudio Player, Studio and Server products are available now on a limited basis. Production versions of the RealAudio Player for Windows and Server for UNIX and Windows NT will be available by mid-year. Production versions of the RealAudio Player for Macintosh and the RealAudio Studio will be available in the third quarter.

Content Delivery Using PN's RealAudio Products

PN plans to work with content and media partners in two ways: by providing RealAudio Server software to media companies that already have an on-line presence, and by selectively distributing content from media partners and providing it directly to consumers on Internet sites managed and maintained by PN.

PN is working with independent content publishers such as Metaverse, HotWired, GNN and RadioNet, who are interested in using RealAudio to enhance their own Web sites. They will be offering two RealAudio entertainment and information programming for their users.

The ABC and NPR relationships are examples of cases where PN will be involved in the distribution of content. ABC's initial offering will consist of RealAudio-based news content, to be updated on an hourly basis.

NPR is licensing content from four of its popular programs to Progressive Networks, including "All Things Considered" and "Morning Edition," which will be accessible to users on the RealAudio Internet site.

About Progressive Networks

Progressive Networks, based in Seattle, develops and markets software products and services designed to enable users of personal computers and other digital devices to send and receive audio and audio-based multimedia services using the existing infrastructure.

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