

# MTV Networks Unveils URGE Digital Music Service on Microsoft's New Windows Media Player 11 Platform

*Handcrafted music programming, first-rate editorial and innovative features create an immersive entertainment experience and guide music discovery; Windows Media Player 11 offers a completely overhauled experience that includes elegant visual navigation and improved music service and device integration.*

**NEW YORK and REDMOND, Wash., May 17, 2006 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/** -- MTV Networks, a division of Viacom International Inc., and Microsoft Corp. (Nasdaq: MSFT - News) today unveiled the public beta of URGE and the new Windows Media® Player 11 beta. URGE, MTV Networks' new digital music service, is seamlessly integrated with the new Microsoft® Windows Media Player 11, and builds upon MTV Networks' renowned music heritage, offering rich, handcrafted programming, first-rate editorial and innovative music discovery features to create a truly immersive entertainment experience. URGE is the recommended digital music service in Windows Media Player 11 beta, which offers enhanced search and media management capabilities, a visually driven user interface and optimized portable music player support. MTV Networks and Microsoft collaborated closely on the development of URGE and Windows Media Player 11, creating a unified and integrated user experience.

Just as MTV, VH1 and CMT are recognized for their ability to curate music, URGE offers unparalleled context to all styles of music, as well as rich music programming to guide users through a world of virtually infinite music choices. Innovative features also bring music discovery to the fore, exposing users to new artists and genres they might not otherwise encounter.

"When we first set out to design URGE, our goal was to create an immersive experience that surrounded fans in all things music," said Van Toffler, president of MTV Networks Music/Logo/Films Group. "URGE distinguishes itself through handcrafted programming, innovative music discovery features and unique integration with Windows Media Player 11. It's an important pillar of MTV Networks' overall digital strategy, and as our audience continues to embrace digital music delivery, URGE will serve as a vital vehicle to connect fans with all the music they love."

"We wanted to create a media player that delivers the most powerful features in a program that is intuitive and fun to use," said Mike Sievert, corporate vice president of Windows Client Marketing at Microsoft. "So in designing Windows Media Player 11, we incorporated a significant amount of feedback from music fans and worked hand in hand with MTV Networks. As a result, Windows Media Player 11 truly revolutionizes the way we enjoy music and provides a test drive of the breakthrough entertainment capabilities people will experience in the forthcoming Windows Vista(TM) operating system."

## **URGE: Rich Programming, Features and Musical Discovery**

URGE allows users to simply buy music by the track or album, and yet goes well beyond the concept of a storefront through music subscriptions, promoting the twin concepts of exploration and discovery, such as these:

- **Informer music blogs.** The service's marquee editorial franchise written by leading voices in music, Informer blogs celebrate nearly every genre of music -- pop, hip-hop, country, children's, classical, jazz, electronic/dance, world, inspirational and more. And each blog is accompanied by a dynamic playlist, enabling users to simultaneously listen to or download the music they are reading about.
- **More than 500 custom-made playlists.** URGE offers programmed playlists such as "Must-Haves" (the best in given style), moods, decades, cities and more. URGE's "This Week In . . ." series features new music each week across all genres, which a user can save to an automatically updating Feed. "Super

Playlists” offer hundreds of songs in a given genre or to fill up a portable music player in one click. Popular on-air programs including MTV’s “Total Request Live,” VH1’s “Best Week Ever” and CMT’s “Top Twenty Countdown” all have dedicated and regularly updated playlists. Celebrity Playlists include offerings from such artists as Green Day, Rihanna, Rosanne Cash, Tony Hawk, T.I., Mike Myers and many others.

- **Feeds.** Feeds allow music fans to sign up for dynamically updated playlists of the music they love and get new -- and sometimes surprising music delivered right to their computer or portable music player. Every time consumers visit URGE or sync their portable player, they will enjoy new music from their Feeds that have updated. And now music discovery moves to the portable music player; each time listeners sync their devices, they get a new, programmed experience.
- **Auto Mixes.** Auto Mixes are automatically generated playlists built around specific artists or styles of music selected by the user, and refreshed every time the user accesses URGE.
- **Rich editorial content.** URGE offers exclusive interviews, stories and features about music and artists across all genres.
- **Radio.** More than 130 professionally programmed, CD-quality radio stations span all musical genres, such as jazz, hip-hop, metal, country and classical, including the popular VH1 Classic, mtvU and CMT radio stations.
- **Channel Hubs.** MTV, VH1 and CMT each live on URGE in exclusive Channel Hubs, which feature music programming, playlists, Informer blogs and more.
- **Windows Media Player 11: An Entirely New Digital Media Experience**

The close collaboration between Microsoft and MTV Networks has resulted in unprecedented integration of URGE within Windows Media Player 11 and an entirely new level of performance when managing large music libraries. With Windows Media Player 11, consumers can easily scroll through and access music faster than on any other media player, whether the library contains 50 or 50,000 tracks. Windows Media Player 11’s powerful Instant Search provides results that instantly narrow with each keystroke, whether in a personal library or browsing URGE. Innovative drag-and-drop capabilities make building playlists and moving music to portable players easier than ever.

Other features of the beta version of Windows Media Player 11 include these:

- A visually driven experience using thumbnail and album art, an elegant and simple design, and customization capabilities for more personalized interaction
- Highly simplified navigation using the new Instant Search capabilities, enhanced shortcut options and dedicated category views for all media types, including music, photos and video
- Better access to content with deep service integration that blurs the line between online service and media player experiences
- Industry-first audio fingerprinting capabilities for advanced music metadata tagging

- New formats for ripping and music playback, including Windows Media Audio (WMA) Professional and WAV Lossless
- Improved device experience with new shuffle sync and reverse sync options, device exploration using the library view, and intuitive help icons that ensure seamless and intuitive syncing and burning of rights-managed content

In conjunction with the beta availability of Windows Media Player 11, Microsoft is also announcing an update to the PlaysForSure(TM) program that significantly raises the bar for an end-to-end service, media player and device experience. Among the new requirements for PlaysForSure verification are extensive performance improvements both on devices and when connecting devices to a Windows XP-based PC using Windows Media Player 11. In addition, support for portable subscription is now required, ensuring that content from both a la carte and subscription-based offerings just works, regardless of the device.

Over the coming months, newly verified devices will hit retail shelves, providing consumers with a choice of devices that work seamlessly with Windows Media Player 11 and URGE.

### **14-Day Free Trial**

Beginning immediately, music lovers can experience the full power of URGE through a 14-day free trial, available to anyone at any time. The trial, which does not require a credit card, lets music fans play and download unlimited music from URGE's 2-million-song catalog, transfer tracks to a portable music player and enjoy the unmatched programming that distinguishes URGE.

### **Pricing and Availability**

The beta versions of URGE and Windows Media Player 11 are available for immediate download in the United States at <http://www.urge.com> and <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsmedia/player/11>.

URGE offers three flexible options that enable music fans to enjoy digital music in a manner that best fits their lifestyle:

- **URGE All Access.** This option, for \$9.95 (all prices are U.S.) per month or \$99 per year (with two months free), enables users to play or download 2 million full-length songs, enjoy 130 commercial-free CD-quality radio stations and more than 500 playlists, and save Feeds of automatically updating playlists.
- **URGE All Access to Go.** For \$14.95 per month or \$149 per year (with two months free), this option offers the same features as URGE All Access and the ability to transfer subscription music to compatible portable music players.
- **URGE by The Track.** Consumers can purchase individual tracks for 99 cents, or purchase entire albums or playlists (prices vary). Users also can manage their digital music collection, rip and burn CDs, search and sample the 2-million-song catalog, enjoy 20 free radio stations, and access URGE editorial features, profiles, interviews and Informer blogs.

Over the course of the beta period, both Windows Media Player 11 and URGE will continue to evolve.

## **MusicNet**

**URGE will incorporate MusicNet's library of 2 million tracks, the industry's largest music library, which includes licensed content from all the major record labels and thousands of independents. MusicNet is the world's leading business-to-business digital music service provider.**

### **About URGE and MTV Networks**

URGE is the new digital music service of MTV Networks, a division of Viacom (VIA, VIA.B). Featuring original and exclusive music programming, first-rate editorial and innovative music discovery features, URGE is an immersive entertainment experience for music fans to connect with their favorite artists and discover new ones. Leveraging the music history of MTV, VH1 and CMT, URGE celebrates all music, from alt-country to zydeco, and offers subscription and a la carte access to two million songs covering all musical genres.

### **About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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