

Broadcast opportunities are there!

Making the impossible possible with OnLive

by Bob Charlton

Silicon Valley-based OnLive is launching a new Games On Demand service, instantly delivering the latest high-end titles over home broadband internet to the TV and entry-level PCs and Macs.

A Silicon Valley veteran, Tom Paquin oversees product development at OnLive as its VP of engineering. With more than 20 years of management experience at leading technology companies, Paquin has a successful track record of launching startups and establishing them as household names.

Most notably, Paquin helped found Netscape, the company that popularised Web browsing, and was named its first fellow. During his tenure at Netscape, Tom Paquin led the engineering of browsers and servers for Netscape 1.0 and 2.0, and spearheaded many innovative initiatives, such as the development of SSL and Web "cookies."

OnLive, founded by technology entrepreneur Steve Perlman and incubated within the Rearden media and technology incubator, spent seven years in

stealth development before being officially unveiled in March.

OnLive illustrates several key trends, all of which are reshaping the way we think about and use digital media: the shift to cloud computing, displacing the limitations, cost and complexity of local computing; an explosion of consumer broadband connectivity, bringing fast bandwidth to the home; innovation, creativity and expansion within the video game market.

Pioneering the delivery of rich interactive media to the home, OnLive could change the way that entertainment applications are created, delivered and consumed.

"The buzz on the street is that what we are attempting at OnLive is impossible over the internet because it has latency and other problems making our kind of interactivity impossible," comments Paquin. "Despite what they say, we have got it cracked and can provide even the most extreme shoot 'em up game with delays of much less than 80 milliseconds.

"The video game industry is huge and the ability to not buy a console and never do an upgrade has appeal for consumers and games developers who don't have to be beholden to the console manufacturers," says Paquin.

Today, the service is available on a PC or Mac using a browser plug-in or on a TV via a micro-console. Paquin reports that they are talking to carriers about what tomorrow's cellular networks will look like and how it will be possible to achieve the same latency as they achieve on broadband over a cellular network.

"We're already at the point where a small, cheap and simple device can do what yesterday needed a \$5,000 computer because the guts are in the cloud," he remarks.

The broadcast industry has not been involved with the development project so far, but Paquin was attending IBC since he believes that there are aspects of its service that will be of interest to broadcasters.

"You can spectate the games being played on our network, so I can easily imagine one of our games tournaments being broadcast. It just requires broadcasters to look at our service as an opportunity to innovate the TV experience," he explains.

"Innovation is all important since the audience is continually on the lookout for the next big thing. I see the broadcast industry being slower to innovate but they have a burden since when they innovate there's a large distributed installed base that they need to move



Paquin: "we have got it cracked"

along and people don't want to throw their TVs away every couple of years.

"Innovation is necessary. The question is where to innovate and who pays for it. We go through cycles when the market is ready (or not) to make a change. So, to take 3D as an example, I think we are years away from 3D. We got viewers to move on to HD and they are still coming to terms with that big change.

"Where is the innovation in the broadcast industry - in some ways, it is just

Tom Paquin

EVP Engineering
OnLive
Region: Global

catching up with the IT and internet industry. The buzz around the show is about file-based workflows but that is technology that was available 10 years ago finally being integrated in mainstream broadcast operations.

"I think that there remains tremendous opportunities for innovation in broadcast - especially making systems better, cheaper, faster and smaller.

"At OnLive, our next challenge is to get customers using our service and content providers putting material onto our service, so that we can prove to the nay-sayers that this is a viable service. When broadcasters see a combination of consumer demand and a way to service that demand they will get interested.

"We are early in the development curve but absolutely, we believe there is a market demand that people will pay for and they will pay less than what they are paying today. It's innovative, but its technology with a clear purpose and the business model is there for all to see," concludes Paquin. ■

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