

News digital

Move from web to mobile expected to boost music app and its featured acts

MXP4 brings interactivity to mobile

Mobile

By Eamonn Forde

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANY MXP4 is bringing its interactive and remixable technology to the mobile platform.

Already active since the summer with its web-based remix offering for acts such as La Roux, Lily Allen and now Britney Spears, the company has licensed its software for an interactive iPhone app for EMI artist David Guetta.

Other apps from EMI and Warner acts are expected to be released soon, with the company also looking at other mobile platforms. Some will be offered for free as part of a broader marketing push while others are being treated as revenue generators in their own right.

MXP4 CEO Albin Serviant says, "You can record your own vocals on the iPhone app and share that with friends. You cannot share remixes, but that is on our road map."

The web-based MXP4 offering lets users play around with audio elements, adding or removing vocal and instrumental parts as they see fit. They can then share these with friends and create a viral effect for both the artists and the technology itself.

Mobile, however, is key to the ser-



MXP4: iPhone app enables users to remix tracks and watch lyrics light up as they sing; Sexy Chick by David Guetta (above) is featured

"It's about reinventing the single and album experience"

ALBIN SERVIANT, MXP4

vice's expansion. "It is critical for us to replicate on mobile what we already offer on the web," explains Serviant. "The first step is the iPhone and then the next step is Google Android. After that, we will look at the other mobile platforms."

The company has revealed that in three months it has had 45 acts sign up and delivered in excess of 500,000

playbacks. It is confident it will top 1m playbacks by the end of the year.

The average session online per user is around 10 minutes, with 65% of people interacting with the track elements on at least three separate occasions.

Perhaps most appealing on a marketing level is the fact that, as the initiative spreads virally, it prompts high levels of uptake. After three weeks of a remixable track being made available online, some 70% of traffic comes from referral, with users pushing their remixes to friends who then visit the site to create their own mixes.



The company has also released an interactive mixtape for Ministry Of Sound to promote the label's Addicted To Bass compilation album. Drawing on 13 tracks, it is a significant step on from the previous song-based MXP4 offerings.

Serviant suggests album interactivity will be a priority in the coming months as a way of building sales.

"Our objective for next year is to demonstrate how much we can contribute to the value chain," he says. "It is about increasing revenue and reinventing the single and album experience."

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Digital news in brief

● Download service **eMusic** has revealed that 72% of its sales are of complete albums.

● The **French National Assembly** has passed a draft law that would see repeat copyright infringers have their internet accounts disconnected. It will only be adopted into French law if cleared by a parliamentary commission.

● **Guitar Hero 5** (pictured) went to number one on the Chart Track all-format games chart in its first week.

● **NPD Group** has reported that sales of music-based video games dropped 46% in the year to date. Music games remain the third best-selling category.

● **Facebook** has now passed 300m active users globally. The social network topped 250m users in July.

● A federal judge in LA has dismissed a copyright infringement suit against video site **Veoh** brought by Universal Music in 2007. The judge argued that Veoh was implementing adequate takedown procedures and was protected by "safe harbor" provisions within the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

● **BigChampagne** has reported that, by switching off the auto-play function on **MySpace Music**, plays fell from 1.436bn in July to 1.138bn in August. This was designed to reduce royalty payments that were costing the company an estimated \$10m (£6m) a month.

● **U2's** Mobile Album app for BlackBerry has been released for free download and features photos, videos, an interview, news, song lyrics and song samples. The second phase of the app will focus more on social networking.

● **Sony Ericsson** is opening its own app store and claims third-party app developer submissions will be approved or rejected within five days. Apple states that 95% of submissions for its App Store are processed within 14 days.

Digital roundup new services

● **Fuzztopia.com**: currently in beta, this music-based social network was set up by musician and actor Steven Van Zandt. It features the 10 most popular tracks of the week, news, gig dates and videos. It is designed for industry experts to interact with novices and is expected to launch in the next six months.

● **ToonsTunes**: aimed at tweens (those aged 6-14), it enables them to create their own music within a virtual world. They can also mix loops and add their own vocals to tracks that can be shared with friends or performed online by an avatar.

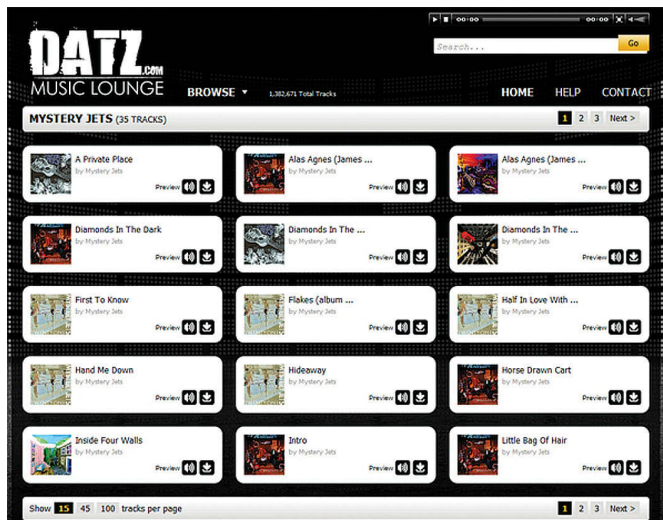
What on earth happened to Datz?

Datz, principally known for the **Music Lounge**, which launched last October offering unlimited downloads for one year for a one-off fee, last week called in the liquidators after running out of money. Managing director Michael Richardson explains to *Music Week* the company's view why it had to close and his belief in the Datz business model.

Why did Datz close?

When we launched the company ages ago, its job was to add value to other products, predominantly mobile phones, particularly in Woolworths. But because we weren't getting traction with consumers, we looked at different ideas, like making an MP3 player. Then we came to the idea of doing a large bundle of music - the Datz Music Lounge.

When we were having negotiations with labels, at the time, we had another business, Comment, whose main business was in phones with Woolworths. We could afford to do that [the Music Lounge] because Comment was going well. Woolworths was selling lots of



Datz all folks: Music Lounge website no longer works after funds dried up

phones. When Woolworths failed, the Comment business also fell off. That then gave us a major problem with Datz.

But you decided to continue with it nonetheless...

We thought long and hard about it. We decided that a small amount of funding, £200,000, could keep Datz going and enable us to catch up

with advances that we were in arrears on. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough money. We spent that in a couple of months and we weren't successful in keeping up with advances we had signed up to. I've spent the last six to eight weeks trying to find alternative funding. In the end the only option was to close it down.

Was a sale as a going concern not possible?

As a going concern it has about £250,000 due to labels...

Do you think there was a flaw in the Datz Music Lounge business model?

If Nokia or Microsoft or another of the big players came up with the Music Lounge then no doubt they would be in a bloody strong position. Unfortunately, a few oiks from Oxfordshire didn't quite have that clout.

What will happen to existing customers?

The vast majority of our customers have had near as damn it to a year. But for sure there will be a number of customers out there that will be pissed off.

In the end, what did you learn from the whole experience?

I think the ideas behind Datz, whether it be the Music Lounge or other products, were bloody good. We had lots of ideas we could put into retail. You've got a lot of people in the digital arena that don't get selling through retail, and people in the physical arena panicking that their sales are falling off.