
From: Mike Beckerman
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2001 5:22 PM
To: Bill Gates; Jim Allchin; Will Poole; Chris Jones; Joe Peterson; Dave Fester; Linda Averett
Cc: Steve Ballmer
Subject: RE: Real

Since the beta of WMP 7 we've been working to get our integration / usability message across in the press and to reviewers. DaveF can give more details, but I know that we've been through this in detail with key reviewers including Walt. I believe he dinged us in the end in spite of this because we didn't rip to MP3 and didn't play Real content.

If you want to see even more of how Real totally ignores consumer experience, install Real JukeBox as well and then use it to play video. In some instances you'll end up with a browser rooted to an ICP or Real page, partially covered by the RJB UI, which in turn is partially covered with a slimed-down version of the RP UI to render the video. At that point it's next to impossible to figure out what set of on-screen playback controls are active and should be used.

We are working hard to make it even easier for Mars, IE, and other clients to integrate great WMT support into their UI in totally sensible and user-friendly ways. We're also looking hard at what it means to provide consistent ICP advertising across WMT clients in support of our content provider's business models (this is one of the top selling points of Real to the content partners). This is a big focus for us in 2001 and we will continue to work with IE and MSN (multiple groups) to figure this out and get it into our joint plans.

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Gates
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2001 10:42 AM
To: Jim Allchin; Will Poole; Chris Jones; Joe Peterson; Dave Fester; Mike Beckerman; Linda Averett
Cc: Steve Ballmer
Subject: RE: Real

I also like the way that player functionality is integrated into Mars. We have to have a view of how this will work and get it into IE and our Shell vision.

A key constituent who should see the mess and the greed is the content companies.

They should make it harder to find the real format version because its bad for them and bad for their customers.

Ideally we can make this concrete for them

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim Allchin
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2001 10:26 AM
To: Will Poole; Chris Jones; Joe Peterson; Dave Fester; Mike Beckerman; Linda Averett
Cc: Steve Ballmer; Bill Gates
Subject: Real

I installed Real last night because there were some things that I needed to hear that were only in Real format. I really couldn't believe how ugly my experience was. I was using MSN Explorer to search the net for some latin music loops for my music stuff. When Windows Media/MP3 was found, it played in place in the bottom left of MSN explorer. It was so nice. Then I hit some Real stuff and I had to download the Real Player. This particular machine was a new one and I hadn't put Real on in a while so I hadn't experienced their new invasion into the machine.

So I went to their site and had to search all over the place to find the free player. They do make it very hard. Then when it installed I had to uncheck area after after where they were going to splatter icons/links or whatever, send my name to other companies, send me junk from Real, tell them I didn't want the jukebox, and on and on. It was truly stunning. THEN when I went back to run the music, Real started up and I had to search for a ton more places to kill off their promotions, explorer bars, internet radio, etc. Basically, they were very very sneaky doing things at both install time AND at run time. There is even some switch that says they won't bug you for 30 days about upgrading -- but ONLY FOR 30 DAYS. They were relentless in being invasive. I loved the checkbox about "letting ONLY REAL PLAYERS

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play REAL content". They warned it might be bad otherwise

I was convinced it was bad from the competitive review, but actually going through personally was great. I saw first hand the difference between having music be an integral experience and what it was like when it was an "add-on" which was used as a hook to monetize something. The experience was just so much worse with the player popping up all the time. I hated the Real player coming up when I just wanted to quickly preview a piece of music with all the flashing and junk they put in their player. I didn't want news or anything else -- I just wanted to listen to a clip of music. The Real Player reminded me of some of the billboards that used to exist on 42th street in NY -- pure ugliness.

The point of this mail is two things.

1. We need to immerse audio and video into the PC experience. It is so much nicer for consumers if we do this. MSN using the control for the media player is a good example of making it good for consumers. We must keep our eyes on what consumers want: I think Real has lost sight of this.

2. The experience was so bad that I think a comparison campaign against them would do well. All you need to do is show the two choices: the invasive and annoying Real approach or the immersive simple Microsoft approach. Multiple comparison screen shots do tell a powerful story for us. I think taking this story to Wall and many others would be a good thing to do.

jim