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[3D Chat, the Wave of the Future?](#)

A chatting experience like no other.

IMVU, A Chat that's more like a Video Game! I felt more like I was creating a character in a videogame more than creating an avatar for chat. Usually all you need is a screen name and password for your typical chat programs, but with IMVU, you need to create a total embodiment of what you want your online self to look like. You start off by choosing your avatar's appearance, then a skin tone and beard (if you'd like), hair style and color, along with eye color and dress attire before you even get to chatting. After selecting your looks, you then go through the normal process of getting a username and password. You also get to input a little short greeting. How creatively do I say hello? Well that's up to you, I just hope "Alright Meow where were we?" is good enough. It was originally going to be "Hey, are those space pants you're wearing?" But I thought that was a bit much. You're then taken through a quick tutorial on how to manipulate your avatar and everything from what you're wearing to the background scene you're in. You're shown how to display expressions like "yes", "laugh", "no", and "what". You're even shown how to make your character do some cool moves, from breakdancing to back flips, your online character can do the things you'd be too embarrassed or too clumsy to do in real life. You get to experience the typical emoticons (called modicons) and you're able to set your current "mood" as well. I forgot to mention that IMVU is all based on a sort of currency system. The more points you have, the more items you can purchase (items include everything from clothes to hairstyles and background scenes). **What's Inside** Not unlike your typical chat programs, you get a main window with all the commands you're going to want. This is the IMVU Launcher. The window includes the following: Chat now!, New 3D window, New IM, Who's Online, Contact List, My home page, Inventory, Go Shopping, and Add Contact. The whole system set in place by IMVU relies around the users. Basically the users will either make or break this program since it's so intricately connected. There are rankings and stats with the amount of visitors you get, or the amount of friends you have, there's even one for the amount of gifts you receive. The chatting itself is interesting at the beginning because you're randomly matched up. I started off chatting in "Buck Stars Coffee" where I met a random dude with a gas mask on his head. What I found to be very common was the fact that everyone and anyone can act/do/say whatever they can't in real life. I somehow felt that I was back in my teenage years trying to figure out if the person I was talking to was in fact a 46yo fat ugly dude from Montana who's trying to get a date by pretending he's a woman dressed in leather. **Real People's Comments** I was then matched up with Terra, a 15 year old female from the U.S. She went ahead and told me that she's actually convinced her friends to use the program. She enjoyed the fact that it's so interactive, "it's just fun you get to do a lot of kool stuff like change scenes and buy stuff." She then went ahead and told me that if you don't care that you have a "Guest" in front of your username, you can take advantage by earning points and using them to go shopping for your avatar. That's until I bored her to death with random questions about the program until she randomly left... Thanks anyway Terra. The best answer I got was from a 15 year old Canadian girl, "I'm not a cow farmer, I'm just interested in the process of cow killing." Ah Canadians, so many jokes, so little time. I kid I kid, I like Canada, it's got good ski places. But honestly, what are they teaching their kids over there? **My own thoughts** I didn't know if it was just me or what, but I felt a little weird constantly getting connected to 15 year olds. Finally my age had made me realize I was no longer the young adolescent I'd always wanted to grow out of being. So I guess it's a good thing. The chat program itself can get pretty choppy if you haven't gotten the actual window selected. The chat control options are a joke, where's the cut/copy/paste options? I

need something that's easily accessible. When it comes to pure chatting functionality, IMVU's definitely lacking. In a "bubble chat window" I was only able to fill about 59 or so characters before it opened a new one. I don't know how I feel about IMVU, every time I was paired up with someone, I felt like I was on an episode of "Blind Date." The only things missing were the little Editor's notes that showed up at the bottom of the screen (I already had the little thought bubbles since that's how your chat window appears). I was constantly being paired up with whoever was online at the time, but I wish I had more say in the types of people I could select. **The Good**The good part about the program is that it's just fun to use. I mean where can you backhand a person mid conversation and have then know it (outside of real life that is)? You can even accessorize your avatar till the cows go home, so many options are included it's ridiculous. Your character interacts with what you're typing making it appear as though your character's having a real conversation (if I ask a question, my avatar's hands gesture inquisitively). You can switch scenery as well as clothes. If there's one word that I'd choose to describe IMVU it would have to be "*Interactivity*." **The Bad**If you're looking for some fun, then yeah, it's your chat program, if you're looking for chat options and abilities, then you might be out of luck. I miss the quick and easy way of copying and pasting. The program lags when you don't have the actual chat window selected and you have to pay for some of the "premium" services. **The Truth**The whole chat service offered here is definitely not like your typical AIM or Yahoo, I guess that's why in order to have a real IMVU name, you're going to have to purchase one. You're also going to have to throw down some real money if you plan on entering the "restricted site" along with a few other options. Although this experience is unmatched by today's standards in chatting technology with the numerous emoticons, I'd have to say that it's all superficially motivated. If you're looking for a quick chat (something that I haven't done with random people since I was 14 years old), you're not going to know if they're motivated by their will to be ranked the most popular or if they just want to get some visitors to visit their sites, but I guess for some people this might not even matter, it's still chatting in the end no matter what the motive is. It's more of a social peer finder than it is a chat program, go right ahead and enjoy yourself, but for some people, chatting with teenagers can only be so much fun before you realize how old you really are. But all in all, it's a fun program that will entertain you almost as much as some of the people that use it. Give it a try and give us some feedback on it. Check out the screenshots below.