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Joost, the Beginning!

TV and Internet Combined = Joost

You should be juiced

The world of television viewing began its changing process due to the new opportunities presented by the world of computers. First you needed a TV card of some sort in order to tune in to the favorite frequency. All you needed was your monitor, a cable or antenna connection and the appropriate software to flip through the channels. Nowadays the TV tuners and TV cards are obsolete because of the continuously increasing Internet connection. You can watch live shows on the favorite channels all over the world. No more satellite dishes to hang on your house or all types of wires to run through your home as an Internet connected computer is the only condition you will have to fulfill. Take the example of [TVUPlayer](#). It provides you free connection to a series of TV programs for free. All you need is your Internet connection and the peer-to-peer technology will do the rest. You are able to see the live shows of your favorite channels. The same technology is employed for fueling Joost, the application that has made quite a few waves lately. To give you a hint on its functionality and quality, think of Skype. Joost has been coded by the same Skype and Kazaa founders, Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis. The same peer-to-peer is used in this case too. This means that you will be downloading the TV shows but in the meantime you will also be uploading them to the other peers. I was a bit skeptical when I first heard of the Joost TV revolution about to happen. But I soon received an invitation as a beta tester and I was able to stretch it all ways and see how good it is. The first thing I noticed was the striking quality of the image. Imagine any Internet TV application you have used up to now. Joost is nowhere near that as there is no interface in the true sense because its options are embodied by widgets popping onto your screen when activated. Joost starts in fullscreen mode but it can be reduced to smaller sizes. The pitfall is that in window-mode all the options will also get minimum and all you can benefit from is play/pause, go full-screen, skip to next program and volume control buttons. Forget about all the complicated options for tuning in to the desired TV station. With Joost is just a matter of widgets. Everybody can handle them and the transparency options they offer will not hinder your view too much. Also, their position on the extremities of the screen contributes to an enhanced viewing of the shows. Concerning the number of channels available on Joost things are not quite clear as it all depends on the region of the world you are connected from. I stopped counting at 60 channels, but the list went on a little further. Some of the TV stations are restricted to the United States and some of them are restricted to other regions of the globe while most channels are available worldwide (VH1 for instance can be viewed only in US while Alliance Atlantis Sci-Fi and Bridezillas are available world wide, excluding US and Canada). To access the channels you are "entitled" to activate the My Channels menu in the middle left hand side of the screen. A list of the added channels will be displayed almost instantly and browsing through them is as easy as scrolling your mouse wheel or clicking on the up and down arrows in the right. For each channel you can see a bit of information (Saavn is all about Bollywood) and the little arrow will let you see the shows that can be watched. I know this list is just a glimpse of what you have seen on Joost website but you can add some more channels to it by consulting the Channel Catalog in the lower left hand corner of the desktop. The list is divided into several categories (Most Popular, Staff Picks, New on Joost or Genres). In the left there are the thumbnails for the shows which can help you make your pick faster. At the bottom of the channel you can choose to view the list of A to L and M to Z shows available for your region. If the channel is not added to your list, append it first and then you can watch the episodes available. My Joost feature in the right hand side of the screen will enable the Widget Menu. The options available range from a trivial clock to

getting in contact with other viewers of the active channel via the channel chat. An instant messenger is listed among the options but I could not make it work properly as it would not show its face. That was the only widget that refused to work during the testing. Other elements made available in the application window are the advanced settings, the rating widget that records your opinion on the channel and the feed reader which can be manipulated to display the news you want. The channel chat widget is equipped with a set of actions to change your nickname or send the much used chat emoticons. Changing the rooms (each channel is a room) is also available and you can then swap between them due to the tabbed chat windows. Advanced Settings widget is not as crowded with options as you would expect. In fact there are very few changes you can make and these involve the way the application starts (full-screen or window mode), the way it exits (stand by mode will minimize it to system tray), set the age for watching shows (in the tested beta version it has no effect) and a parental control option that allows you to set a PIN number in order to watch the shows (in my case it functioned to unlock some of the advanced options). Browsing for finding the right channel and show to watch can result in time consuming and boring. For this the developers of Joost have equipped the application with a search function that works very well in this beta version. Simply move your mouse and the control panel will appear. In the lower part there is the Search bar where you can type your query. I typed "Zonda" while watching the MTV Staying Alive show. The results appeared instantly and showed me the shows that contained the word. **The Good** The only word that comes to my mind in order to define Joost is "impressing". The quality of the picture is above the one provided by similar softwares. Of course, it is not comparable to HD TV or the one you can benefit from using a TV Tuner and a good signal in the cable, but it is definitely heading that way. There is no fine tuning with Joost as there is no input TV signal to adjust for a better image and the advertising interruptions are just for a few seconds. User interactivity is just great. You can watch and discuss the programs online with other "joosters" viewing the same show. The users get to stay updated while watching TV due to the news feed reader that can be adjusted to your own needs. **The Bad** I was eager to see some US and UK shows I caught a glimpse on the Internet but unfortunately my region did not allow me to watch the National Geographic, BET or VH1. Also, when I realized it is based on peer-to-peer technology I looked for live shows. Not in Joost. The instant messenger widget did not work at all in my case and when using the channel chat I got no response from other users (I may have accessed the wrong rooms or the users simply were not communicative enough). In order to see the duration of the show the user has to consult the list of programs for the channel. With regards to this matter everything the control panel displays is the seek bar. **The Truth** The concept is amazing and the quality of the "broadcast" is amazing. I hope this will turn into a major project and will receive all the necessary support. The important TV content owners all over the world should follow CBS' initiative of signing a deal with Joost. In order to take full advantage of Joost, brace your computer with a lot of RAM (during the testing the application ate about 200MB) and some major bandwidth (1MB or above should suffice). *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*