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Virtual Smash Mouth Jam Planned for Intel Keynote

By John Gaudiosi 01.07.08



At CES, the rock band Smash Mouth will jam using avatars in a virtual representation of the garage the band was formed in. *Image: Courtesy Virtual Heroes*

FULL COVERAGE



[Wired @ CES 2008](#)

Second Life is so last year. Intel CEO Paul Otellini's keynote address Monday at the International CES conference in Las Vegas will focus on the theme of "Third Life."

Otellini's presentation, in which photorealistic 3-D avatars of Smash Mouth band members will jam in a virtual garage, is designed to show how the convergence of multicore processing power, streaming media, virtual worlds and social networking could change the way we will all work and play.

"Having your 2-D picture on Facebook.com just scratches the surface of what's possible now with online socialization," said Jerry Heneghan, CEO of "serious game" developer Virtual Heroes, which partnered with several other companies to put together the virtual jam session for Otellini's keynote.

"In the very near future, consumers will be able to easily create a photorealistic 3-D avatar of themselves with their own head using digital pictures and infuse these digital humans with their own personality," said Heneghan, whose company develops games used to teach doctors, soldiers and others how to handle real-life situations. "This capability will facilitate communication, collaboration, play and dynamic interaction with others in virtual worlds and MMO games."

Advanced personalization could spur increased interest in [massively multiplayer online games](#) and virtual worlds like Second Life while moving the technology beyond the realm of pure entertainment.

Otellini's keynote will showcase photorealistic avatars from Big Stage. The avatars were produced using new motion-capture technology from Organic Motion that eliminates the need for skintight suits and reflective balls, instead using a new camera system that registers volume within a motion-capture box. Computers record a subject's movements inside the box and translate them into data that realistically replicates motion.

The physically separated Smash Mouth rockers -- some onstage, some backstage -- will use peer-to-peer technology developed by [music-collaboration company eJamming](#) to play their song "Walkin' on the Sun" within a virtual garage created using Epic Games' Unreal Engine 3.

Mark Rein, vice president of Epic Games, said there are many avenues of exploration for the future of social interaction, and the "Third Life" presentation shows that Unreal Engine 3 technology can be enlisted for more than just gaming.

Virtual Heroes tested the technology last month at Intel's headquarters in Santa Clara, California, with musicians in New Mexico, Oregon, Arizona and New Orleans to show that the convergence of music, 3-D avatars and virtual environments could be done efficiently and quickly for the CES demonstration.

All the companies involved are looking for online uses for their products.

Beyond letting musicians play together over the internet, eJamming's JamCast technology lets anyone with a computer or web-enabled phone listen to artists performing in virtual jam sessions. Big Stage is talking to Hollywood studios about applications that would allow consumer faces to replace celebrities in classic film scenes.

Virtual Heroes' Heneghan said the recent technology integration advancements that his company made for the virtual CES jam session are already being applied to other serious game projects.

Partnerships with companies like Organic Motion, Big Stage and eJamming are facilitating the creation of the most advanced virtual worlds and serious games possible for online medical, military and corporate collaboration and training, he said. For example, the medical field is already benefiting from things like distributed online virtual gait analysis of patients walking on a treadmill.