

CHALLENGE – A embedded WMP challenge vs embedded Flash ??

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From: Scott F (*ScottF_at_discussions.microsoft.com*)

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This is a long post but nor a rant ... we love WM 9/10 and are raising the red flag against competitive inroads by Flash !!

We are based in Silicon Valley and we create customized Portals using Microsoft SharePoint ... and for a client we need to create a very sophisticated embedded WMP with a highly visual way to select the order WM 9/10 videos will play. The client had seen this example, and we agree, would be perfect <http://national.feedroom.com/iframeset.jsp?ord=241315> We called the Feedroom and they only do full turn-key solutions for TV stations and deep pocket Enterprise customers like Cisco ... could be a great add-on !!

We have been avid fans of WM, including every advance in DV camcorders and digital video editing and streaming for years now. BUT ... we are NOT developers, since we generally "find" great solutions done by others ... which we buy and integrate into our Portals. Since we use FrontPage 2003 to author our SharePoint sites we have been using some basic "select a video pull-down" Javascript for years – very effective, but very old and dated. Of course every time we had to add/delete/edit the playlist and metadata, WE had to do that in FrontPage ... not very user friendly to say the least.

Along comes WM 10 beta and we are expecting some terrific new embedded players/skins/server-side playlist controls, etc. Yes I know that the SDKs have "simple examples" and we scoured MSDN and found all kinds of dev "ideas" ... BUT where is the creative expertise to craft some really powerful "Digital Dashboards" like the Feedroom has done.

There "should be" hundreds of really cool embedded WMP for sale ... NOT !!!

A couple months ago found a new WM 9/10 embedded add-on on the Microsoft Web Parts and FrontPage 2003 components directory and thought ... could it be true, finally an elegant solution ?? But when we inserted it is a web page we found that THERE IS NO PLAYLIST EDITING capability once the initial asx file is created ... I mean, how lame is that ?? And zero easy selection of videos ... only the built in player control for "next and previous".

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Now to add insult to injury ... we read Neil say that embedded players do not allow skins and became very frustrated ... so we started Google searching AND SHOCKINGLY we found a number of Flash based solutions to our problem (but we are huge advocates of WM 9/10 streaming). In addition to the Feedroom, which probably is Flash based, we found this slick example on Macromedia's site with source file to re-create it (from 2003)
<http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/flashpro/video/gallery/> AND, there are MANY MORE including Wildform Flix Pro, etc.

OK, so help all of us who just want to EMBED more and more cool video into our websites and WOW our clients !! If anyone knows of solutions we somehow have missed ... we will apologize. BUT, it sure seems that Flash can run circles around embedded Windows Media Player based videos.

The deeper we investigated, the more way cool "Flash based" custom embedded players and digital dashboards we found. If Flash allowed the embedding of WM9/10 – instead of much lower quality .FLV files – we wouldn't be raising the red flag.

So I pose this challenge to all of us who love Windows Media – including the MVPs and Microsoft Windows Media Dev Team ... WE CAN DO BETTER THAN FLASH, can't we ?????

After way too hours of Googling we found these two very interesting WM solutions which we would like to share with this group that has helped us so much: one is a Video Gallery (actually Video, Audio and Photos) from South Africa http://www.kerberosdev.net/Products/16_GIAB.asp and one from Germany <http://www.mediabooster.de/gb/> (see the Facts and Features for cool HTML video gallerys) These guys should be congratulated for pushing the envelope, although their targets are low end Content Management systems and not WMP embedded. The KerbosDev guys are really sharp and have a great server side backend which they say will only get better. Both products are less than \$100 US which blows us away.

FINALLY ... there is big money to be made by all of us, since we know many others like us who would BUY this kind of capability in a heartbeat ... Microsoft could do it as a PowerToy or as a powerful add-on to WM 10 !!! I can't believe that somewhere inside Microsoft – with over 6.5 Billion in R&D – that someone hasn't already created this and nobody has productized it yet ??

This is not a rant ... we are seeing an exponential interest in the use of interest of high quality streaming video by our clients ... come on Microsoft and all of you WM developers ... let's solve this FAST !!!

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