

With 15 billion videos on the Web, you can safely say that television speeded up its migration to the Internet in 2008. In 2009 it will be fast headed for smartphones.

Bringing big prime time video to the small screen will be no mean achievement, but its day is coming. For one thing, the numbers are in and Q3 2008 reports indicate that the platform and user base are growing fast. Last quarter, Apple sold seven million iPhones, RIM sold six million smartphones, and AT&T increased its wireless data revenue share by 50% over the previous year. Another clue is T-Mobile USA's formal launch of its HTC G1 smartphone in October, the first to run Google's Android operating system.

Now, close on their heels, another video-enabled mobile product is coming to market. The highly anticipated Storm, RIM's newest multimedia Blackberry, is finally coming out of stealth. By the time this column goes to print, units will be shipping by the thousand and available for everyone's Holiday Season list.

LOOK AND FEEL. A little shorter and thicker than the iPhone 3G, the Storm has an elegant look and user interface. Crammed into its cigarette-box-sized form is a list of features as long as your arm that's mostly been extolled by early press and analyst reviews.



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The new device has taken some flack because its media navigation

isn't quite as intuitive as the iPhone, but mainly for its lack of WiFi features. The Storm actually uses EV-DO – Verizon's 3G network. In Europe, India, Australia and New Zealand, Vodafone will support customers with its own 3G mobile broadband networks.

CRISP DISPLAY. However, there is more excitement than criticism around the release. Customers will be enthused Blackberry watcher and *Skype Journal* editor Jim Courtney told me. "The display quality just grows on you the more you use it," Courtney says. "It is really stunning – crisper than on the iPhone . . . reducing the need to 'run to a laptop' to watch YouTube videos."

Does all this ensure we're about to reach a slick industry-wide mobile video experience? The truth is that prime-time quality-of-service video will sweep the small screen steadily, but slowly.

The shifting state of play in Web and mobile video became clearer during the recent Fall 2008 Digital Hollywood in Santa Monica. It's

Storm Looming on Media Horizon

The Storm comes with a gigabyte of internal storage and a removable rechargeable battery. Its 3.26 inch screen display supports 65,000 colours at 184-pixel-per-inch. "It's the best screen on the market," says Gizmodo gadget maven Matt Buchanan. "I think I could watch the whole of *Iron Man* on it." A new 'touch-to-click' interface seems to be getting a thumbs-up by trialists, some iPhone users are calling it "awesome" and the

expected that five years from now, 23% of TV viewing will be done online. Put in the context of Internet video, broadcast executives know that their \$60 billion industry has changed and that living-room TV audiences no longer constitute a single consolidated target market like the good old days. Mobile video will be encouraged by the increase in broadband video revenues expected to grown from \$1 billion this year to \$6 billion by 2012, according to Parks Associates.

SPEED BUMPS. But the mobile content industry will inevitably hit speed-bumps. It will have to overcome price, display, and bandwidth barriers to thrive. "Today, we are not imposing bandwidth rules on the applications," says Cole Brodman, T-Mobile's chief development officer regarding the Android-based G1 release. "In the future, we will have to look at how to efficiently use network bandwidth." I guess we'll have to wait to see if that means T-mobile and other carriers will impose restrictions or fees for bandwidth-intensive mobile applications.

Regardless, the Storm itself represents the beginning of a growth curve for mass mobile video. Hopefully, customers will be spared some of Web video's early growing pains such as performance flaws and lack of commercial content. Just as hopefully, telcos and ISPs will provide the attention and investment required to foster this fledgling media platform. Or as Virgin Mobile USA executive Ron Faris put it at Digital Hollywood: "Shame on any carrier that's not willing to innovate."



accelerometer is reportedly even a little more sensitive than iPhone's. The Storm also comes with built-in GPS.

This Version 1.0 release features a 3.2 megapixel video-supported camera. And expect to see additional third-party functions soon as RIM's new \$150m Venture Fund seeds mobile applications and services to complement the Storm. You can also count on hype from adoring fans like Crackberry.com who are giving away Storms to the most extreme followers in their 'What Would You Do for a BlackBerry Storm?' contest.