

## Chatroulette 2.0? Napster founders launch Airtime video chat

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AIRTIME

Remember the good ol' days of Chatroulette? Ah, to be able to grab a beer and spend an evening talking to lonely, blank-faced men in hoodies, drunk people at parties and various exposed body parts. Now Sean Parker, of Napster and Facebook fame, is bringing the random video chat magic back in the form of Airtime.

Think of it as a cleaned-up Chatroulette, matching people through Facebook connections and shared interests. According to the New York Times, it will feature safeguards to make sure you aren't constantly coming face-to-face with somebody else's crotch.

First of all, you have to sign in through Facebook, meaning only the most shameless (or those with fraudulent accounts) would dare harass you. Facial recognition software will judge if there is a face on the other side of the camera and user ratings will keep track of how many times someone has been "nexted" by other people.

So, a cross between Chatroulette and Skype; how much buzz could it get? Well, apparently Napster founders Sean Parker and Shawn Fanning have a lot of celebrity friends, because according to BetaBeat, the Airtime launch event featured none other than Community star Joel McHale and professional famous person Olivia Munn chatting it up online with Jim Carey, Snoop Dogg, Alicia Keys and other important Hollywood people who have heard of the Internet.

"When did the Internet become so boring?" Parker reportedly asked the crowd. That question might hold the key to Airtime's success. The service seems like a nice compromise between the chat room-filled Wild West days of the early web and today's strictly controlled social worlds of Facebook and Google.

I'm just not sure there are a ton of people looking for something like Airtime. Chatroulette's appeal was its mix of danger and novelty; if we wanted something safe and easy-to-use, we'd just sign in to Skype or Google+ Hangouts. Is anyone looking to split the difference? Well, apparently investors think so. According to the New York Times, Airtime has already raised \$40 million.

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