



## Rockin' in the free world

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"GUITAR HERO"

ACTIVISION'S billion-dollar cash cow, "Guitar Hero," may be going for a different kind of solo performance soon — heading to retail without the need to purchase a console from Sony or Microsoft.

The company's controversial CEO, **Robert Kotick**, keynoting a conference last week in San Francisco, said, "You should expect to see many of our products to be playable on the television independent of the console."

According to the Web site IGN, Kotick gave "Guitar Hero" as a prime example for the "plug-and-play" model. The NPD Group puts Guitar Hero's sales at \$2 billion since 2005.

To be sure, plug-and-play games have been available at retail for years, but they usually are limited to games with lower-quality graphics and are not too complex.

Kotick said the explosion of high-end televisions with 1080p pictures allows his biggest-selling titles to join in the fun.

"I think Activision is interested in addressing a casual market that doesn't own consoles, and they can generate additional sales by penetrating households who don't have consoles," said **Michael Pachter**, managing director of equity research at Wedbush Morgan Securities.

It would also give Activision the opportunity to get a bigger piece of the pie. Third-party companies pay a licensing fee to create games for Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft systems. With plug-and-play, Activision would have to manufacture the self-contained unit itself, but would not have to pay any licensing fees.

Activision may be the largest game company to pursue plug-and-play — but it isn't the first.

Atari, Namco Bandai and others have released plug-and-play versions of "Centipede," "Ms. Pac-Man" and similar classic video-game titles.

Pachter doesn't think console makers are losing any sleep over Activision's bold talk. "I think that games which are simple — puzzle games, 'Pac-Man' — will be downloaded or played plug-and-play, but I think that more complex games that require greater processing capability and graphics display will continue to appear on consoles."

Activision isn't hurting. Led by the "Guitar Hero" series and the acquisition of "World of Warcraft" creator Blizzard, revenue in the second quarter rose to \$1.04 billion from \$352 million the previous year.

Kotick and Activision were unavailable for comment.

— *Damon Brown*

### Gender App

At the Apple App store, selling products featuring women in bikinis is OK, but those pushing beefcake — buff men *sans* shirts — are apparently banned.

The folks at Athletic Model Guild claim their app, AMG Beefcake, was rejected because it "contains objectionable content." It features shirtless male models in jeans or shorts.

Of course, there are dozens of apps featuring bikini-clad women.

“I’m not sure the content gatekeepers were thinking about the other, equally bawdy fare already available,” said adult-industry commentator **Gram Ponante** from Gramponante.com. “Friends at Apple suggest — anonymously — that the company instinctually flags and derails that sort of non-family content first and reinstates it later.”

Apple has dozens of gay-focused applications that have dating and social-networking components — and even offerings from Beefcake creator Athletic Model Guild.

Apple also donated \$100,000 last year to the campaign against Proposition 8, California’s gay-marriage ban.

“I don’t think that we’re being targeted by the company at large, but I do think that Apple’s standards for censoring outside content are just too loose,” said AMG’s director of communications, **Christopher Trout**.

This is the latest debacle in Apple’s app acceptance process. Earlier this year, it approved, and then yanked, software applications that were found to show nude women, allow underage pornography or locate convicted sex offenders.

Trout said Apple suggested taking out a couple of images, but it was still unclear if it would be approved after resubmission. Apple was unavailable for comment on AMG Beefcake.

— *Damon Brown*

## Scary rent

Would you rent an apartment known to be haunted?

Well, half of 1,000 renters surveyed by Rent.com said they would be glad to crash with Casper — providing they lived rent free for their troubles. Three in 10 said they would share their home with a ghost if they got free utilities.

The ghostly data come in a survey undertaken by Rent.com that is perfectly timed for the beginning of the \$5 billion Halloween selling season. (Yes, it has started already!)

Eleven percent of renters believe they have lived in a home with a ghost.

The biggest horror stories renters tell is of nightmarish roommates — 35 percent said the worst thing a roommate can do is leave the living room or kitchen messy, while 13 percent said blasting loud music was the mark of the worst roommate.

— *Post staff*

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