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Yes, You May *Virtually Pimp My Ride*
Having experimented in *Second Life*, MTV Networks releases a standalone branded virtual world for its popular car show

By John Gaudiosi

Santa Monica-based developer **Trilogy Studios** (formed in late 2005 by ex EA and VU Games execs) has found a new niche to explore while developing next generation video games like *Daybreakers*. First out of the gate for the new virtual world software development studio is a fully realized virtual world for MTV Network's Music Group's popular IP, *Pimp My Ride*. While the popular TV show has already been turned into a console video game by Activision Value, Trilogy Studios has designed *Virtual Pimp My Ride* as a free downloadable game that allows fans to enter Van Nuys, California and build custom cars, engage in competitions like drag races and interact with other fans.

"Trilogy takes virtual worlds beyond basic 3D chat rooms, turning them into living, breathing worlds where people come together to share their entertainment passions," said Michael Pole, chairman and CEO of Trilogy Studios. "We've developed a business model that enables media companies to successfully monetize their franchises through virtual world networks including micro-transactions, in-game advertising and sponsorships, premium subscriptions and e-commerce.

"MTV Networks' virtual worlds take the concept of community to the next level, compelling viewers to create their own in-world programming and interact with cast members and other fans in ways that were once unimaginable," said Jeff Yapp, evp of franchise development for MTV Networks' Music Group. "Trilogy Studios' pedigree and high-quality development work on *Virtual Pimp My Ride* helped us create a deeply engaging environment for our viewers who share a love of car culture and for our marketing partners who are looking to interact with our audience in authentic ways."

Trilogy Studios is utilizing its skill set in making world-class console games and elevating the experiences found in today's online virtual worlds. The company is focusing its new virtual worlds around people's passions, from specific entertainment properties to genres such as music, film, television and sports. Trilogy's virtual worlds combine game play attributes from next generation console games with the broadcasting, social networking and e-commerce capabilities found in some of today's most successful online business entities.

Pole said that virtual game worlds allow IP owners from sports, entertainment and corporate America to get into the game business without investing two years of development time and \$20 million into a project. Thanks to the popularity of social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, there's a huge audience for communities. The advances in massively multiplayer online games like *World of Warcraft* have also shown that a large number of mass market consumers will actually pay monthly subscriptions to play together online.

MTV already proved that its audience would invest in virtual worlds built around shows like *Laguna Beach* and *The Hills*. *Virtual Pimp My Ride* is a multi-tiered plan that will later introduce new cars, tracks and abilities to keep consumers coming back. New content will be added on a weekly basis and Trilogy will take live consumer feedback to heart when deciding what to add to this world. The game will reward those who invest a lot of time with exclusive cars, which in turn will allow them to show off within the virtual world.

Pole said revenues from these virtual world experiences can be generated through microtransactions within the game world, in-game advertising and sponsorships, premium subscription content and the ability to buy real items in the virtual world through e-commerce.

"Why co-mingle a brand like the NBA in a virtual world like *Second Life* when you can create your own virtual NBA world?" asked Pole. "We think we can attract 10 to 20 million mainstream consumers to a focused virtual world site and deliver a full brand experience."

Trilogy is currently the only game developer creating virtual worlds around brands and as such, the company is working with multiple partners. *Virtual Pimp My Ride* is the first of many experiences that will blend social networking with gaming centered around a specific brand or theme.