

Ustream Finally Launches A Recording iPhone App. No Live Video, But A Lot Of Options.

by MG Siegler on August 5, 2009

For several months now, Ustream has had an iPhone app that allows you to view video from the service. But “view” is the keyword there. You could only watch it, you could not record and send your own video back from the iPhone. But starting today, you finally can.

The new Ustream Recorder is a free application available in Apple’s App Store that allows you to send video from your iPhone to the web. Unfortunately, despite long-standing talk that it might be able to send live video from your iPhone to the web, that is not the case. Instead, Ustream appears to be attempting to use some spin by calling it a “live-to-recorded video recorder” — um, okay, isn’t *all* video at some point technically recorded live? Yes, it is.

Mentioning “live” was not necessary here because this app does not stream video live. Not that it’s Ustream’s fault, it’s Apple that doesn’t currently allow apps that do that in the App Store. So instead, this app records video and then uploads it to the web. The problem is that there are already a number of other apps out there that do this, like Kyte and 12cast. But Ustream wants to challenge them on the iPhone by offering more options.

The app gives you the option to share you videos to Ustream, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook or Ustream on Facebook. This makes the app much more flexible than its competitors when it comes to deciding where you want to send your video. Ustream also promises high-quality video from the app, which isn’t a surprise given the quality that Kyte’s app outputs.

Also interesting is that the app allows edit and manage videos that are already up on Ustream, even if they weren’t recorded with the iPhone. You simply pull download them to edit them.

But the reason why Ustream isn’t too bummed about its app not offering live-streaming is that they envisioned it used in another way, with another new service they’re launching.

Called “Media Stream,” it’s a functionality that basically allows broadcasters to pull in other video clips to supplement their own streams. Imagine it this way: Say you’re watching the CrunchCam, but one of the TechCrunch reporters has just shot a cool video and uploaded it. Assuming they had the correct privileges, that video would then show up as a thumbnail below the live feed. And if a user clicked on it, they could watch it.

Again, that is pre-recorded video being sent in from the iPhone, but such a use-case actually sounds pretty cool. And for publishers it’s fairly flexible. You can accept videos from anyone that submits them if they use a hashtag that you set (to be able to identify the right videos). You can then choose to accept certain videos into your feed on a case-by-case basis. Or you can approve certain users ahead of time so that their videos will definitely show up in your stream.

The functionality works on Ustream and on embeds.

It’s disappointing that the app doesn’t offer live video streaming, but again, that’s not Ustream’s fault (Qik can only do it by bypassing the App Store with an Ad-Hoc install method). But a nice set up upload options and this new Media Stream capability should make Ustream’s app a good option in an increasingly crowded iPhone 3GS video app field.