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Peer-to-Peer

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Raketu

REVIEW DATE: 04.19.07

Editor's Rating: ●●●●○

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By [Davis D. Janowski](#)

Let's get the name out of the way first: Raketu means "rocket" in Czech, hence the application's iconic rocket-ship logo. This free jack-of-all-trades peer-to-peer (p2p) communication service and app requires a small (under 4MB) downloadable client. It runs over dial-up as well as broadband, and although far from perfect right now, it offers plenty and shows a lot of promise.

The product's LaunchPad interface, which rolled out in March, has a striking black background and provides fairly intuitive jumping-off points for starting up everything the application offers, including [IPTV](#), [video on demand \(VOD\)](#), [voice over IP \(VoIP\)](#), and IM/SMS service, podcasting, media player, and RSS information feeds (including news, stocks, and weather). The communications portion of the client and service has been [available since late last year](#), but the company added IPTV and other video features in March. Though the video certainly works better over a broadband connection, buffering makes it viewable even over dial-up.

Just as [Skype](#) users can voice-chat with one another over that service for free, Raketu subscribers (in any of 42 countries) can call each other at no cost. And, taking another cue from Skype, Raketu offers a service—RakOut—that allows users who prepay to call regular phone numbers (in these same 42 countries). Check the site for current rates. You can buy RakOut credits in increments of \$9.95 or \$24.95 using a credit card or PayPal, or internationally via [Moneybookers.com](#).

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quite as clear as that available from Skype, according to my usual cadre of call testers. Connection took between 10 and 40 seconds, slower than with either Skype or SightSpeed. In several instances my dialing timed out at the minute mark.

Raketu includes its own chat client, but my favorite feature, Multi-Messenger, lets you add your AIM, Google Talk, ICQ, Jabber, MSN or Live Messenger, Skype, and Yahoo! accounts. Only a handful of premium aggregation products, such as Trillian, offer this wide a range of support. Some initial problems I had setting up Multi-Messenger seemed to stem from trying to load all five of my own accounts at once. Following the advice of Raketu support, I restarted my effort, this time beginning with just my Yahoo! account, then adding the rest. As you can see from our slide show, I was able to have chat sessions through five different services running simultaneously. With the aggregated services you can have real-time chats, but not make voice or video calls. You'll have to rely on Raketu's native voice calling while inside its client.

I'm rather dubious about one recently added feature: the Global Chat capabilities intertwined with IPTV streaming. From within Raketu, you can initiate a chat in which friends, family, and other subscribers can interact in real time while watching the same program. I know of at least one other Web service, ClipSync.com, that offers the capability, and others probably exist. I'm not convinced, however, that many people will find such a feature compelling.

Raketu offers limited video selections right now, so I can't really recommend it for its content. At press time, the service provided video from Fearless Music(www.fearlessmusic.tv) and NamcheTV (www.namche.cz), a sports and adventure channel from the Czech Republic. The service's premium VOD content includes pay-for Sports, Horror, Extreme Wrestling, Brazilian Models, Soccer Highlights, Extreme Sports Brazil, Medical Minutes, and other entertainment, some in English, but much of it in foreign languages and lacking subtitles. Gaining traction in the U.S. will require deals with more Stateside content providers. That said, Raketu seems to have the technology to bring to users a decent stream and a quality viewing experience as a result.

Raketu has obviously put a great deal of engineering work into its product, which does most things fairly well. It still has some rough edges and needs additional work to make its interface more intuitive. In its present form, I'd most recommend it to early adopters who like—or at the very least don't mind—fiddling, tweaking, or looking further into the interface and dealing with online documentation and tutorials. Those with family, friends, or business associates in Europe will find the application and its services a passable alternative to Skype in terms of its voice offerings, especially if they also happen to have multiple instant-messaging services running (something Skype does not support).

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