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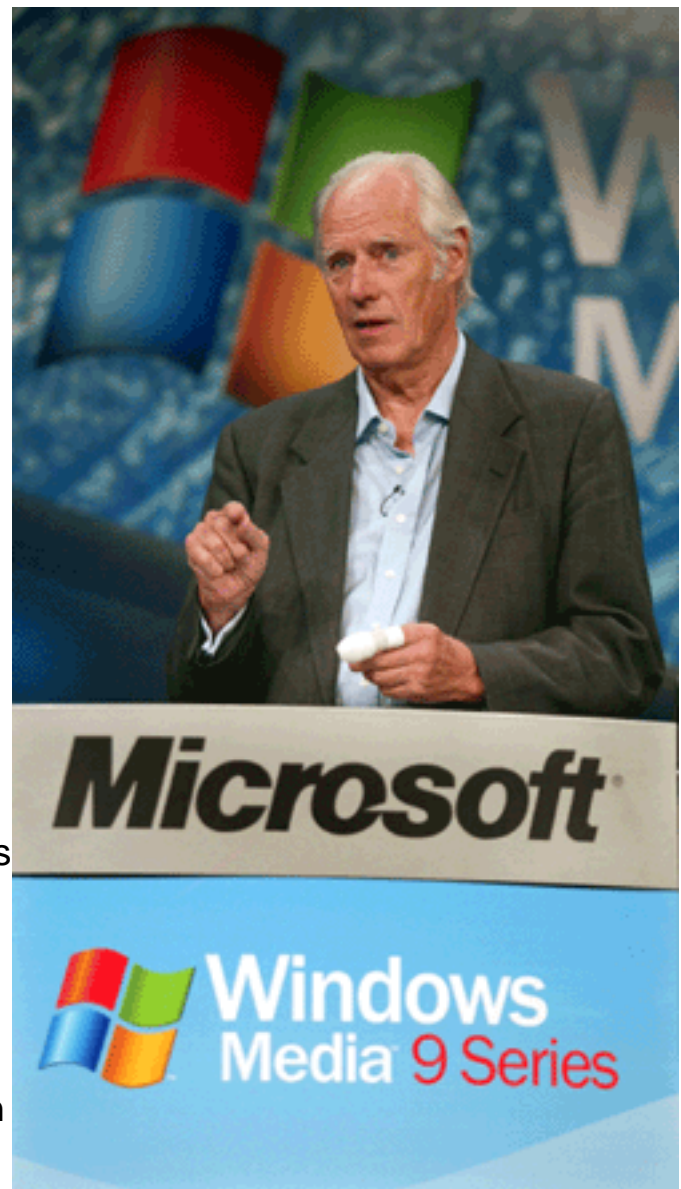
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Sept. 4, 2002, Hollywood- All eyes were on the Hollywood and Highland Media Complex for Microsoft's launch of the Windows Media 9 Series. After \$500 million and years of development, WM 9 Series, like competing systems from RealNetworks and Apple Computer, is for streaming TV and CD-quality music over the Internet. Film and record companies have held back on embracing the idea of Internet downloading of current titles for two major reasons: copyright protection and acceptable picture and sound quality. The Windows Media 9 Series is Microsoft's response to these challenges, as well as to a pending Senate bill mandating a government-approved, anti-piracy mechanism in all computers and consumer electronics.

The WM 9 Series is more than an upgrade. Besides advanced codec facilities and encryption algorithms, the software at the time of encoding allows the content owner complete control over downloaded files on the consumer's computer. By way of a digital "envelope" that surrounds and encrypts all Windows Media 9 content, movies and music files are "predestined" according to price, what file is downloaded and how it is to be used. Files could be made to "time out" or rendered useless after a certain time period, and can permit only one copy to your hard drive or play only with no copies authorized.



Among the new features of WM 9 Series are: zero buffering for broadband connections, instant streaming and playing of large media files; full-screen picture with better quality than DVD (MPEG-2) at about half of the bandwidth; better sound quality than music CDs with full support for 24-bit/96kHz, 7.1 surround sound; video smoothing where extremely low bit-rate video or audio files are greatly improved, even over dial-up connections; and a host of client-side features like time-stretching, customizable screens and play listing.

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