

Jango Internet Radio Adds Fun Social Features

IF YOU'RE TIRED of tuning in to the same old music, try shaking things up a bit with Jango. Similar to sites such as Pandora and Last.fm, Jango streams custom Internet radio stations focused on your favorite artists. But it goes way beyond playing DJ; the beta version I tested integrates a social aspect that makes discovering new music fun, by matching you with like-minded listeners.

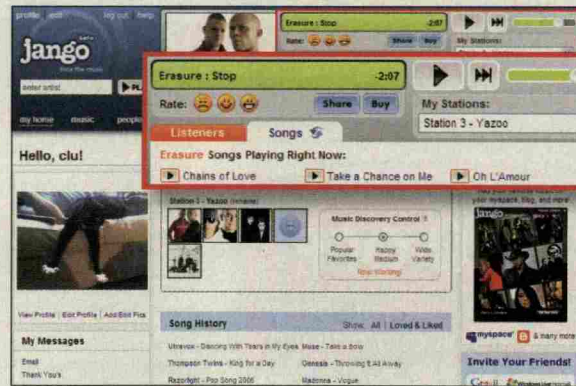
When you enter the name of an artist, the site creates a radio station centered on that artist. (Unlike Pandora, it won't let you enter a song title.) Jango also adds other tunes it thinks you'll enjoy based on a number of criteria. For instance, the service takes into account what other users who like the same artist are also listening to, and it looks at stylistically analogous acts from similar genres and time periods. Though the service played some pleasing mixes, it did attempt to skew my Queen

station toward Iron Maiden and Ozzy Osbourne, which are too metal for my taste.

Jango saves an unlimited number of stations to your profile, and it offers several ways to customize them. You can add artists (Jango provides suggestions, or you can plug in your own); ban certain musicians; and choose whether you want to play popular songs, more obscure music, or something that's in between the two.

Limited Selection

Customizing stations certainly helped me shape the song selections more to my liking, though with only 15,000 artists and 200,000 songs in rotation, the service has limits. For instance, at review time, just ten Queen songs were in the system. (According to Jango, the service has access to much more music than is listed, but analyzing it and adding it to the listener database takes time. Jango



THE JANGO PLAYER displays additional songs by the currently playing artist, as well as other users who share your musical taste.

also says it is constantly adding tunes to the rotation.) Jango follows restrictions defined by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act—and pays royalties to labels and artists—so the site is perfectly legal. It makes money when you click on links to buy music through its partners (such as the iTunes Store and Amazon.com) as well as through advertising.

Jango's real prowess lies in its social networking features, which, when you create a Jango profile, help you hook up with people who have the same good (or bad) taste as you. The Jango player displays additional songs by the currently playing artist, as well as users who are listening to the same performer or similar artists. Clicking on a song takes you to the station playing it; selecting a user takes you to a profile page, where you can check out that person's stations and other information (birth date, location, and favorite books and movies, for example) that they have chosen to share. The

site also lets you keep track of what your Jango Friends are rocking out to, and attempts to connect you with Like-Minds—users with similar musical inclinations as yours. One polite touch: Jango offers to send a thank-you when you tune out of someone's station.

For the most part, music streaming was smooth, with a few rare stutters; on one occasion, Jango indicated that a song was playing even though there was no audio. Jango says that it is working on repairing a number of issues.

Still, Jango is solid. If you dig the whole social networking scene—and want to see how it can expand your musical universe—Jango is worth a spin.

—Cathy Lu



Jango (Beta)

Jango takes music discovery to the next level. Free www.jango.com

