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All things Satellite Radio



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Orbitcast Interview with Scott MacLean of Time Trax



Love em or hate em, there's no doubt that TimeTrax has had a lasting effect on the Satellite Radio industry. Orbitcast got the chance to interview Scott MacLean, the man behind the TimeTrax technology, to find out the juicy bits you've all been dying to know.

For readers who aren't familiar with Time Trax, could you please explain who you are and how it all got started?

My name is Scott MacLean, and I have been working as a programmer, analyst and consultant for over 18 years. I purchased an XM PCR last year, and realized quickly that some of the content I wanted to hear - specifically some concerts - were being broadcast in the middle of the night. I decided to write a program that would record the concerts for me, so that I could listen to them the next day. Once I did, I realized after browsing various XM online forums that there was a demand for this sort of thing - so I cleaned it up and released it publicly - and it just exploded.

Real quick, please give us an overview of all of Time Trax Technology's products?

Currently our core product is the TimeTrax Complete, which consists of an XM Direct receiver, the TimeTrax software, and our TimeTrax Connect, which connects the XM Direct to your PC. We announced a similar version for Sirius at CES in January, and that version is almost ready for its release. We also recently announced our DockTrax product, which is an iPod docking station that allows users to transfer TimeTrax recordings directly into an iPod for effortless listening on the go.

What was your initial reaction over the controversy behind XM pulling the PCR off the market because of Time Trax's success? Did you think it would get so crazy?

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It was really quite amusing, actually. There was no announcement from anyone – the units simply disappeared from the market. It was weeks before XM actually admitted to discontinuing the PCR, and the resultant rumors and speculation were rampant. One user on one forum would make a guess at what was going on, and that would be quoted as fact elsewhere, and it would grow from there. A few people made a lot of money speculating on the last few PCRs on eBay. I recall auction prices upwards of \$700 at one point – this for a unit that had been selling in clearance online for \$14 only a couple of weeks before. The fact is, nobody except XM knows the real reason why the PCRs were pulled from the market. Whether it was part of a long-held corporate strategy, or a knee-jerk reaction to the release of TimeTrax, or somewhere in between, it's left for speculation.

Now with a Sirius-ready product on the market, has there been a similar reaction from them? How has Sirius responded to the introduction of a Sirius-compatible Time Trax unit?

Everyone that we've met at Sirius has been a real pleasure to deal with. We've had very a positive reaction from Sirius, and we are looking forward to what the future may hold in terms of working with them in the near future.

Has the news of [XM filing for a Patent](#) for "a system and method for providing recording and playback of digital media content" made you change your mind about the future of Time Trax? What about Sirius' [upcoming ReGo unit](#)?

I would suggest that XM might be attempting to capitalize on a Digital Audio Recorder (DAR) market that we were the first to discover and define. XM's announced plans haven't changed our immediate plans for the future of TimeTrax – in fact, I think you will be surprised to see the direction we will be taking TimeTrax in the next year.

I'm quite excited about the ReGo unit, which I saw in prototype form at CES. I think Sirius has got it right. I'm sure XM purposefully left out the removable storage capability from their MyFi to protect themselves and their content rights, but I can tell you right now, if I was faced with a choice of XM's MyFi without removable storage, and Sirius' ReGo with removable storage, I'd be very strongly attracted to the ReGo.

It definitely seems as if both XM and Sirius have time-shifting on the radar - do you consider this a threat or a form of flattery?

I don't know that it is either, really. Flattery perhaps in that we were the first to market with a satellite radio time-shifting system, but I think that when you see what TimeTrax has in store in the near future, you'll see that we are actually diverging somewhat from their hardware-based time-shifting solutions.

With the announcement of the new DockTrax product, you've now taken time-shifting away from the desktop and onto the iPod - what's next? Any plans to step into the receiver market?

We have no plans for an integrated receiver at the moment. While hardware is obviously an integral part of our solution, we are a software company – the core of our product is our software, and we will be expanding upon that to make it more user-friendly and more useful.

How often you find yourself reading Orbitcast? It's ok, you can admit it, we're all friends here.



I spend a great deal of my time online trying to understand and capture the real pulse from real users. I check all of the major news sites and forums covering satellite radio and consumer electronics. Of course, Orbitcast is a regular stop on my list. At Time Trax, we're big fans of your work. Keep up the good work keeping us on the edge waiting for what is the "next big thing!"

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Hmmm.... Any speculation as to what they have coming up in the next year? We know it will be a software based product. I think there is an obvious need for a T.V. guide type of schedule and to be able to set up recording times from that. I'm sure that will be what they do.

Posted by: [Monmin](#) at February 25, 2005 03:09 PM

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