

Are you Meerkatting? Taking video to the next level

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Meerkat is not only an adorable little animal belonging to the mongoose family located in South Africa, it is the #1 app listed under, "Best New Apps" in the Apple App Store. It has also gotten an astounding amount of press after its founder, Ben Rubin showed up at South by Southwest (SXSW), the much talked about 10-day conference in Austin, TX earlier this month revolving around film, interactive, social media, tech and music.

So what is Meerkat exactly? Simply, it is an app that works with Twitter that allows you to live-stream video from your phone to all your Twitter followers at once. The app does require iOS 8 and higher so you may have to finally bite the bullet and update your devices. All you have to do is download the app and click its "stream" button and your LIVE video stream will show up in your follower's Twitter feeds. Your followers that have the app can even comment in real time on the stream (as their Twitter avatars pop up on your Meerkat screen). You can save your stream to your device but Meerkat won't keep the videos. If you add the hashtag #Katch to your Meerkat tweet, the service will record and upload the live stream to YouTube, tweeting you a link to the video once it's done processing. Some Meerkat videos can last up to 50 minutes, though most are just a few minutes or less. Meerkat is taking video to the next level, with interactive live-streaming.

It's almost like Snapchat in a way, where people can only watch it live, there are no immediate reruns, you can search trending users (like @JimmyFallon and @garyvee) and events (like Snapchat's new "Discover" feature). And you are given a Meerkat score (like Snapchat), which is based on time spent on the app and number of views, so it adds an element of gamification.

Meerkat just received \$12 million in funding from Greylock and is already valued at \$40 million according to an article by TechCrunch. In just a few weeks, the app has over 150,000 downloads, so I'm not the only one that sees value. I really like this new app because it brings the average person one step closer to the VIP, behind the scene experience forging new and stronger connections, all in real-time. This could be a very easy way to grow your YouTube video collection too. However, make sure if you start "Meerkatting," it's of something worthwhile like an industry or center event vs. a panoramic of your (still) snow-filled shopping center.

Social Media Fun "Fact": Twitter actually bought a Meerkat competitor called Periscope, but it isn't up to the level that Meerkat is yet. Once it is, Twitter may pull Meerkat all together in which case Meerkat will have to develop new algorithms to use with other social platforms.

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