

# Has it got the beat?

Somerville startup mashes mobile game with advertising

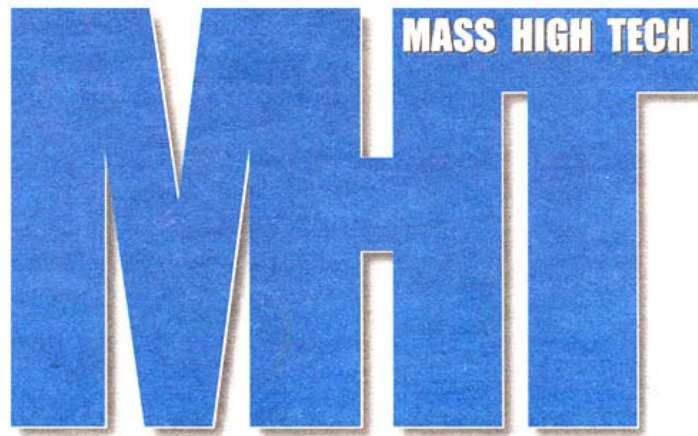
BY EFRAIN VISCAROLASAGA  
STAFF WRITER

A new Somerville company is appealing to the rock-god wannabe in everyone with a new mobile "beat technology" game, hoping to hit the right chord with music consumers and advertisers alike.

As much a promotional device as a mobile game, **AdME Corp.**'s GuitarStar is part of a growing trend in mobile advertising in which static, banner-type ads are spurred for interactive, entertainment-style applications. AdME's game features several emerging artists along with their music, which allows artists and record companies new interactive advertising opportunities, as well as in-game product placement for other music-related brands.



Eggleston



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GuitarStar uses "beat-matching" technology to allow users to score game points by catching guitar picks that appear on the screen in synch with the beat of the music playing. The more guitar picks a user catches, the faster he or she rises from "garage band" status to "club attraction" and, finally, "stadium superstar."

The mobile game debuted on the AT&T Wireless network on Aug. 2 to what AdME executives called a solid response. Though still in the early stages of development, the GuitarStar deal with AT&T is a revenue-share model that costs users \$2.99 per game download.

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"We think (the GuitarStar application) is just the tip of the iceberg," said **Peter Eggleston**, CEO of AdME, a spinoff of **Sonic Network Inc.**, a Boston-based provider of embedded audio software applications to mobile device and semiconductor designers and manufacturers.

**ADME CORP.**  
www.admecorp.com

**Business:** Ad-based mobile games  
**CEO:** Peter Eggleston  
**Employees:** 3  
**Founded:** 2007

"Advertising dollars are moving away from almost all of the traditional, 'eyeball-based' models and really looking at engagement," said Eggleston. And it doesn't hurt that GuitarStar has a similar feel to the popular console-based Guitar Hero game, in which users

play along with music via matching, lighted chords. But AdME has no connection to Guitar Hero creator **Harmonix Music Systems Inc.** in neighboring Cambridge. AdME is planning to launch the application in Europe this fall, integrating content from British recording company **EMI Group plc.**, Eggleston said. He also said the company is in discussions with additional music companies, as well as working on a dance-related game with **Playboy Enterprises Inc.** in Chicago, though those talks are still in the early stages.

The three-person company is self-funded for the time being, said Eggleston, but has begun talks with angels

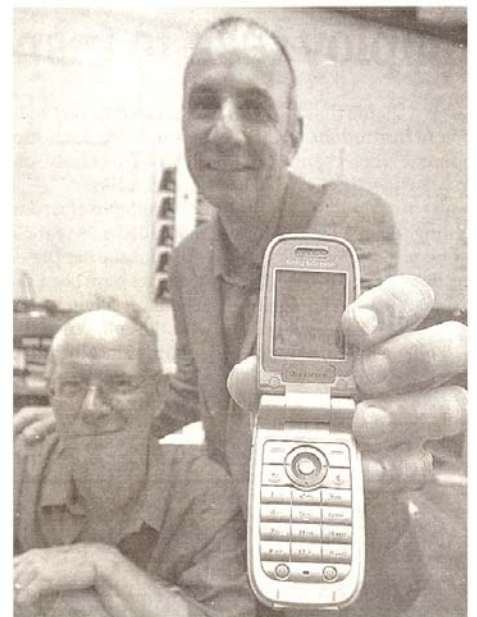
and venture capitalists, looking for approximately \$500,000 to help get new applications into the marketplace. Eggleston is a former sales director at Sonic; AdME is his first CEO role.

Both mobile gaming and advertising are growing quickly. According to **Gartner Research**, worldwide mobile gaming revenue is expected to go from \$2.9 billion in 2006 to \$9.6 billion in 2011. A separate report from **JupiterResearch** projects mobile advertising to grow from \$1.4 billion in 2006 to \$2.9 billion in 2011.

At the intersection of the two is "mobile gaming advertising" — and it is something brands are beginning to look at closely. (AdME's name stands for "advertising-driven mobile entertainment.")

"Engagement" is the buzzword of the industry right now," said **Brian Stoller**, vice president of marketing and strategic development at Boston-based mobile advertising firm **Third Screen Media**, which was acquired by **AOL LLC** for an undisclosed sum three months ago. "Advertisers are far more willing to pay for the placement when they know the user will be engaged, rather than just an eyeball."

Stoller reports Third Screen Media has seen a sharp increase in interest from brands surrounding engagement-type advertising recently. In May, the company signed a partnership with mobile content provider **Hovr Inc.** to sell and serve ads into the New York company's free mobile social game applications.



SANDIE ALLEN

**ADME CORP.'S** marketing man, Chris Payne-Taylor, left, and CEO Peter Eggleston want you to rock out with their mobile game, GuitarStar.