Danish couple creates Hairstyle PRO app for Windows 8

Microsoft

"This app really prevents hair disasters"

When 55-year-old Gurli Behrens Madsen gave her husband, engineer and developer Henning Kabel (54), an iPod for his birthday, he decided he might as well start building applications. What started just for fun turned out to be a smart move, because Kabel and his wife joined forces and came up with Hairstyle PRO. This is an application that shows you what you would look like with a new virtual hairstyle before going to the salon. "It might seem like a funny app, but I assure you that it really prevents hair disasters," Madsen said. Good news for Windows 8 users looking to change their hairstyle: the Danish couple is working on a Windows 8 version of Hairstyle PRO.

Although the couple may seem like former hairdressers, this is not the case. "We didn't know anything about hairstyles," Gurli Behrens Madsen confessed. Henning Kabel works as an engineer and developer and has been using Microsoft tools for the past ten years. Madsen is a graphic designer. "Once we had the idea for Hairstyle, we found a third party in Australia that could provide us with all the content for the application. That's where it all started."

"75% of the target market consists of women"

Designing and developing applications has become their hobby, and led them to start a company, called KBMSoft ApS. Hairstyle PRO is now available worldwide and has sold over 270,000 copies since it

was launched for iPhone in the AppStore in October 2008. The iPad version of Hairstyle is free and includes 15 free styles. For 5 dollars, users can buy an additional 300 hairstyles for women in short, medium, or long lengths to try on. For men there are 180 styles to choose from, including bald looks for 3 dollars. Each hairstyle is an actual photo. "75% of the people who buy the app are girls and women between the ages of 14 and 70", Madsen explained. But men need not feel left out, as the Danish couple also created the application Hair & Beard for iOS, which allows men to see how they would look with a different style of hair and/or beard. "We're looking forward to also getting this app into the Windows Store, but first we will focus on the application Hairstyle PRO for Windows 8," Kabel said.

"We want to be the first in the Windows Store"

Hairstyle PRO will be released in the Windows Store in October, since Kabel and Madsen did not want to wait until the official launch. "We want to be the first. We've had great success with this application on the iPhone. We had the first virtual hairstyle application in the AppStore and the free version has been downloaded three million times and it's still selling well." Following the release of the application, a lot of other virtual hairstyle apps followed. The competition is tough, but the Danish couple is clear about what makes their app so special. "Hairstyle is just better than the rest! We really think about the user – the app should be easy to use. And it should look good; we wanted it to be professional. Other than that, there are some nice features, including a choice of 53 different hair colors and valuable info for each style," Madsen explained.

Madsen and Kabel hope to achieve the same success with their app in the Windows Store. "Windows 8 is going to be a huge platform. We need to strike now, because the Windows 8 market is not yet too competitive. Of course, this is also an opportunity for us to earn money with our app," Kabel said. The couple explained that this is also one of the reasons they chose Windows 8 over the Android platform. "We think Android users are not willing to pay the same for an app as Windows users," Madsen said.

"Less is more"

Kabel still hasn't really found himself in complicated situations while developing for Windows 8. "I started creating apps four years ago, but I have more than ten years of experience working with Microsoft tools, so everything's going very well. Of course now and then I have to get used to the new technologies, but so far Microsoft has been incredibly helpful in this process." His wife is equally enthusiastic about the Windows UI design. "I also like to keep designs simple. The Windows 8 style is simple and fresh. Less is more. I like it very much."

Although the couple's hobby got a little out of control, they can't make a living out of it. "If we wanted this to be our livelihood, we would have to dedicate all our time to designing and developing apps. However, our resources are limited. It's just my wife and myself, so for now we'll keep it a hobby," Kabel said. Still, that doesn't mean they don't dream about coming up with the ultimate app one day. "Something like Wordfeud or Angry Birds would be great!," Kabel said.