

Kaneva



A social network that bridges the gap between the 2D and 3D Web

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Minimum Requirements (PC only):

- Windows XP or Vista
- 515 available hard disk space
- 512 MB RAM
- High-speed Internet connection
- Nvidia 5200 series / ATI X700 series or faster graphics card
- Intel or AMD 2GHz or faster processor
- Internet Explorer 6.0 OR Mozilla Firefox 1.5 or later

Kaneva is a social networking site that bridges the gap between the 2D and 3D Web by providing easy access to an experience where “your profile will come to life in a virtual persona.”

On the 2D side of the equation, Kaneva is comparable to MySpace, where users can create profiles, make friends, blog and chat. Users can search for like-minded people based on interests, education, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference, or any number of other parameters. At the time of this writing, Kaneva supports 14,441 special interest communities.

Having an existing community of users is a fundamental difference between Kaneva and full-blown virtual worlds such as Second Life, where the primary destination may be—at least in the beginning—a place or experience. I think it is fair to say that with Kaneva, the primary destination is first and foremost the community of people, or your particular group of online friends. This also may help put into perspective the rather limited capabilities of its 3D environment. Kaneva adds a new and interesting dimension to online social networking for users who have only experienced a 2D Web site.

For companies with products to sell, established social networks represent the “promised land” of the mass market. Although the Kaneva user base is much smaller than MySpace or Facebook, it raises the bar for what a social networking site can be.

When you first log in to the Kaneva world, you are asked, “What would you like to do today?” The options are: 1. Visit your home. 2. Shop Kaneva Mall, and 3. Go Dancing.

Visiting My Home



Each Kaneva user receives a starter apartment that can be furnished and used as a personal hang-out. It's a 3D extension of their user profile that allows them to share their pictures, music, and videos, express their interior decorating skills, and meet up with friends. Visitors to your profile page can be transported to your apartment by clicking the link, “Go to my 3D home.”



My Profile Page

The splash screen that appears as you launch the 3D world shows a group of avatars sitting around a TV and brings up an important point. Kaneva is in a prolonged, pre-release Beta phase and the ability to sit down is a new feature that was implemented in the current release. The fact that the avatars are sitting, rather than standing, in front of the TV sends a subtle message that, “Yes! Now you can sit down!” (All the more reason to buy some furniture!)

Friends who may visit your apartment won't simply walk up and knock on the door because each apartment is a standalone, enclosed space rather than part of a larger community environment. The process of going from one place to another is similar to teleporting, where you must wait a few moments—or minutes, as the case may be—to download the software that is needed to create the next scene. However, the next time you visit the place you won't have to wait so long for the scene to be rendered.



Watching TV in my apartment

Each starter apartment comes with a TV set, (which should come as no surprise, because users need a place to play their videos and also because of the partnership between Kaneva and Turner Broadcasting). So I followed the instructions on the wall and flipped through the channels until I found orientation mistress Brianna saying, “...if you're like me, you like to hang out, socialize, and share experiences.”

Shopping at Kaneva Mall



My first thought was that if I'm going to invite someone over to hang out in my apartment, I'd better brighten things up a bit. So I went to the Help system, hoping to learn how to turn up the lights. Instead, I was instructed to go to the mall and buy a few lamps. So I clicked the Inventory button, chose Mall from the list of Public Places, and off I went. In a few moments, I found myself standing in the center plaza of the mall with a number of avatars who were chatting, and dancing as if they all knew each other.



Avatars milling about the mall

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People communicate in Kaneva using a combination of chat, gestures, and expressions called “emotes.” The Emote menu also includes a number of poses and dances which can come in very handy. It’s clear, however, that this is part of Kaneva that is still in the process of development. For example, I think that the walking animation needs some work because avatars sort of scoot along. So I scooted around the mall until I found a furniture store and went inside.



The Furniture Store

The store had a nice selection of furniture and I bought a couch, a chair, a fireplace, a rug, and two lamps. There was a cashier standing at the check-out counter, but she didn’t seem to be on duty. I was beginning to suspect that the cashiers are all bots, so I clicked her avatar and up popped a list of the items for sale in the store. Although I still wasn’t sure how I was going to pay for them, I selected the things I wanted to buy and was surprised to discover that I had enough Rewards in my account to pay for them. I don’t know what I did to earn these Rewards, but I was happy to have them!

As it turns out, purchases can be paid for with either Credits or Rewards. Kaneva Credits are the official in-world currency and can be purchased by clicking the Add Credits button in the menu bar. The current exchange rate is 150 Credits to \$1 USD. So here is what I have bought so far:

	Credits	\$USD
2 Floor Lamps	38	.50
Fireplace	170	1.13
Carpet	75	.50
Chair	98	.65
Couch	113	.75
Total		\$3.53

There’s such a wide variety of merchandise available in Second Life, (and many with sophisticated animations) that it’s not easy to compare prices. However, the Kaneva merchandise seems to be maybe a little more expensive, overall.

Dancing at a Club



My next stop was the DanceParty3D Club. [Wait a minute—that isn’t quite true!] OK, OK, so this club was one of the first places I visited when I logged in to Kaneva for the first time because I was looking for some people. Anyway, I found it to be the most unnerving experience, but I kept going back to see if I could figure out exactly what it was that made it so annoying. It may also be where I picked up the Rewards that I used to buy my furniture.

The minute I walked into the club, I was invited to enter a dance contest. So naturally I clicked Yes, but before I knew it, my avatar was stumbling around and being thrashed about on the floor. My avatar then picked herself up, dusted herself off, and made an “oh darn” gesture. I found this to be extremely annoying because I didn’t know what the object of the game was or what my avatar did—or didn’t do—to deserve such a thrashing. Maybe the rules are posted somewhere, but I couldn’t find them. However, the last time I went there, I won 500 Rewards, but I still don’t know how to play the game.



DanceParty3D Club
(that’s me in the front)

Receiving an Offer of Friendship

Just a few minutes ago I received an e-mail from someone in Kaneva who wants to be my friend. When I clicked his name to see his profile, I learned that he’s a 28-year-old from Ireland who has a very impressive collection of dark-themed, mildly erotic fantasy art by the Spanish artist Luis Royo, and also a collection of pretty cool Irish music videos. My grandmother was a Fitzpatrick and I can appreciate fantasy art as much as the next person, and of course I know the Pogues are cool, but I don’t really want to have a banshee in my friends list—especially not in the number one spot. So after weighing the matter, I decided that this is probably not a good fit for me. But I’m not used to turning down offers of friendship and it made me feel bad—especially after I found out that he had Raved me, which is a point system that indicates your coolness factor. I guess that just goes with the territory, but it occurred to me that some people

probably send out offers of friendship to new people just to increase their list of friends. And it also made me realize that I shouldn’t put my main e-mail address in my profile.

Paying a Visit to Turner Broadcasting

Although Turner Broadcasting isn’t included on the list of “Things to Do Today,” an exploration of Kaneva wouldn’t be complete without a visit to the TBS Headquarters and TNT Backlot.



The TBS Headquarters

TBS has an impressive corporate headquarters with an outdoor theatre that provides sneak previews of upcoming episodes of popular sitcoms. The big building is a showcase of TBS programs and as you move through the space, you can hear the soundtrack of the program that is being featured in that area. But the truth is, it was all kind of an assault on my senses and I turned the volume *way* down—but that’s just me. I must confess that I am at a distinct disadvantage here because I have never been much of a TV watcher—which I attribute partly to having a short attention span. But nevertheless, I must say that there was nothing there of interest to me.

Making my First Friend

My next stop was the TNT Backlot, which seemed to hold more promise. I ran around the neighborhood for awhile and bought a TNT tee shirt from the store. Just when I had clicked on every door trying to find something to do, I crossed paths with Gothic-Punk199. We ignored each other at first and then spoke up at the same time.

I said, “Have you found anything interesting to do here?” and she said, “I’m bored.” So after exchanging crucial information—like how old we really are—she said, “Follow me!”

Over the next half hour, she taught me how to walk without gallumping along (keep holding down the Shift key) and how to jump (press the Space Bar). Then we tried to jump over a fence and into a tree. She also showed me the house that she hopes someday to live in, although she hasn’t been in Kaneva long enough to qualify. Then she asked me if I would like to be her friend right when I asked her if she’d like to be mine.

I don’t expect to ever sit in front of my computer to watch my avatar watch TV. But I did enjoy having these close encounters with real people who I would not have otherwise met. ☿