



Viewpoint
Jim Fontaine

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► *Interview with James A. Fontaine, Microtune President and CEO*

In the second quarter of 2008, Microtune, Inc. shipped its 100-millionth silicon TV tuner chip. James A. Fontaine, Microtune CEO and President, reflects on the significance of this milestone achievement.

Q: *Microtune just shipped its 100-millionth silicon tuner. How has the company adjusted to changing market trends and needs since shipping its first tuner?*

A: In the beginning, we had a vision of a single-tuner architecture that could fit all markets. In reality, TV and emerging broadband applications required tuners that were optimized for the specific needs of these markets. As we worked with our customers, we began to develop these application-specific tuners around a common technology core. Today, we have 12 tuners in our product portfolio, ranging from very high-performance analog/digital hybrid TV tuners to low-power universal tuners that support multiple TV standards.

It's interesting to note that we shipped our first tuner in 2000, and it took four years to ship our 5 millionth tuner (shipped in 2004). Since then, shipments have accelerated and grown exponentially, with the company now passing the 100-millionth tuner mark. This is a testament to the continuing adoption of silicon tuner technology across expanding consumer electronics and automotive entertainment markets. Our earliest TV tuner shipments were primarily deployed in the cable modem market, but today we ship into a variety of products, including those for digital TV, multi-functional set-top boxes, VoIP telephony, very high-speed Internet, portable TV, and automotive entertainment.

Q: *How does Microtune act on its commitment to innovation and product excellence?*

A: From the earliest days, our approach to product development has been to have our customers help us define our products, then push the technology envelope to deliver the best performance and value. As a result, we have achieved an impressive number of industry firsts:

- the world's first silicon TV tuner
- the industry's lowest-power, highest-performance silicon tuner
- the industry's first 1-GHz silicon tuner
- the industry's first silicon-based architecture for multi-tuner set-top boxes; and most recently,
- the industry's first DOCSIS 3.0 cable modem tuner

We see ourselves as a pioneering technology company, and we remain focused on the future.

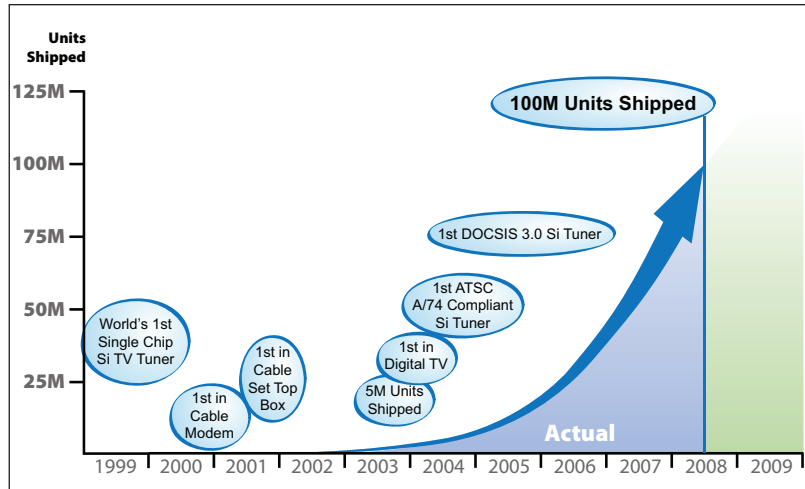
“As a company, we pride ourselves on our commitment to superior products, customer support, and service.”

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Microtune silicon tuner adoption is driven by market transitions, first-to-market solutions, and strong systems and applications support.

Q: *What business decisions have supported this commitment?*

A: It is the nature of RF products that they take a long time to develop. In our business decisions, we focus our engineering resources on products with the highest potential to deliver the greatest return for the company. Cable TV has historically been solid for us, and it continues as our core, fundamental market. In fact, today we are the leading supplier of silicon TV tuners to the cable industry.

In recent years, we have focused on the emerging automotive entertainment and television markets, both of which are also undergoing major transitions with the migration to digital technology. These markets demand high-performance, highly-reliable technology, making them ideal for Microtune RF solutions.

Q: *What is your approach to customers?*

A: We achieved our significant 100-million tuner shipment landmark thanks to our customers. Our goal is to make our customers successful. The tuner is a key component that helps determine the quality of the user experience in our customers' end products. First of all, we develop high-performance tuners that reliably deliver high quality. Second, we focus on making it easy for our customers to work with us across the board, so we provide design, sales, application, and manufacturing support to our customers worldwide. We also work with our key customers to build up a strategic inventory in order to ensure a steady supply of high-reliability products that meet their demand.

As a company, we pride ourselves on our commitment to superior products, customer support, and service.

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Q: *Tuner technology is getting a lot of attention in the wider world market, with growing interest in digital TV. Where does Microtune fit in to the digital TV transition?*

A: We have been hearing a great deal about the U.S. broadcast transition from analog to digital, but it is important to realize that this transition is already in progress throughout the world, especially in Europe, Japan, and Brazil. It is also impacting a wide range of consumer electronics — from TV sets and cable set-top boxes to automotive entertainment and DVD players.

Digital TV still uses an RF signal, but the picture is digitally embedded in the signal. While the transition to DTV offers great opportunity, especially in terms of content, it also presents technical challenges. Digital TV is unforgiving. Either the picture is perfect or it is nonexistent. As a result, there are new pressures on the system components, such as the TV tuner, requiring higher performance and proven technologies. We have been working in DTV since its inception and believe that our products are optimized to deliver the best, most reliable digital TV performance.

Q: *How would you evaluate the impact of Microtune silicon TV tuner technology on the industry?*

A: When we invented the silicon TV tuner, we pioneered a replacement for an old-fashioned tuner that had been around for more than 30 years — it was the size of a sardine can and was made with thousands of discrete components. By significantly reducing the size of the tuner (our tuners today are less than 1/4" square), we made possible the miniaturization of RF signal reception. This innovation paved the way for cell phone TV, DVRs, and portable TV on very small PCs, as well as multiple tuner architectures that are common in cable set-top boxes. In effect, we made TV more reliable, smaller and more portable, and with the capabilities for higher performance and more functionality. We invented the enabling technology that now makes TV literally possible anywhere on any device. It was a significant technical achievement and we are only beginning to see the applications of our technology today.

Q: *What business decisions and strategies strengthen Microtune's position for the future?*

A: It's important to understand that the TV tuner, as an ingredient component, must work with other components in the system's electronics. This is challenging. Our tuners must be carefully designed and tested in our customer's systems, on their boards, and, then, in the real world. It is critical to have a reliable, robust TV tuner that is as immune as possible to interference and works under a variety of conditions.

Microtune has a unique product focus in engineering and achieving high levels of system performance. For instance, for every one of our engineers that designs tuners, we have two engineers who are working with our customers to ensure the tuners work in the final system environment. This is a strategic and competitive advantage for us...we provide customers with the engineering resources necessary to get our products successfully designed into their end-user products. And, that is the kind of commitment that strengthens Microtune's position for the future.