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Clubhouse is a free voice-based iPhone only app. Development for Android is on the cards. The app allows people to host and join audio conversations with other users. People discuss predetermined topics or whatever's on their mind in "rooms." Clubhouse is currently invite-only, meaning you need to know an existing user to use the app. Still, CEO Paul Davison says the app will eventually open up for anyone to join.

Despite its exclusivity, the app already has millions of users, many of the major players in Silicon Valley and the entertainment industry. Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Oprah Winfrey, Drake, Chris Rock, designer Virgil Abloh, comedian Tiffany Haddish, CNN's Van Jones, rapper 21 Savage, and "Shark Tank's" Mark Cuban had already appeared on the app.

Unlike Twitter or a Facebook group, Clubhouse rooms aren't complete free-for-alls. They're more like conference calls, with a set group of people acting as moderators on a virtual stage. The moderators, who can speak freely, can also call on members of the audience who want to participate.

You can tell who is talking by looking for a subtle grey halo around a participant's photo. Anyone can start a room and set it to be "open," meaning any other users can pop in. A "social" room means only people you follow can join. And "closed" is for guests only. The app also has "clubs," which can create recurring rooms and have members.

You can follow people or clubs to find out when they are moderating or participating in rooms. Click on the calendar icon, and you can see a suggested or unfiltered list of rooms happening at any given time. Visually, the app isn't much to look at (lots of overly long profiles, rows of people's faces), which makes sense given its focus on audio. There's no way to delete an account in the app or online, but you can email the company to request deletion.

Clubhouse was launched in March 2020. It became a big deal to a select few in part because of its invite-only exclusivity, much like a real-world club membership. In those early days, it was a tiny community, mainly consisting of venture capitalists. After all, the company behind Clubhouse—Alpha Exploration Co.—got a \$12 million investment from Andreessen Horowitz after two months of existence. It was quickly worth \$100 million—and it only had 1,500 users at the time. Now it's open to a lot more than investors, even if it is still invite-only access.

The types of rooms are potentially endless, but the very format of Clubhouse — disembodied voices trying to hold a conversation without dissolving into shouty chaos — means the most popular rooms are often a handful of people presenting to a silent crowd. It can feel like a mixture of TEDx talks and conversational podcasts, with the disorder of a heated community meeting and the cringe factor of a call-in radio show thrown in. The format can lead to more spontaneous and revealing conversations than you'd find elsewhere but also rambling and cross talk.

Listening to interesting people talk about topics you care about, often with no pressure to participate. Users can hop between more serious, traditional conversations about topics they're intrigued by or test out different Clubhouse formats. Some are like concerts, and others set up like old-school dating shows. In one case, a room had 40 cast members re-creating the entire "Lion King" musical. When many people feel isolated, a cacophony of strangers chatting, singing and even fighting can be comforting. Clubhouse is at a tricky stage in its young life. It's getting attention and listeners and the increased scrutiny that comes when a massive influx of users meets unclear moderation policies.

There is a critique of the company's leaders for not investing resources in policing harassment or hate speech. The company now allows reporting of specific people in an incident report but will not specify how many people or what automated systems it has devoted to moderation.