

## MDV's Fuel Cell Debut

Justin Hibbard

04/11/05

If you've ever met Erik Straser, a VC at Mohr Davidow Ventures, you know this guy is passionate about energy. When I visited him at MDV's office in Menlo Park, Calif. last year, he filled the conference room with an expansive discussion about natural resources, global geopolitics, distributed generation, and the like. So when he called today to talk about MDV's first energy investment, I expected something big and revolutionary. Turns out it's small and practical.

Along with co-investors, MDV has sunk \$13 million into fuel-cell maker [Jadoo Power Systems](#). Unlike most fuel-cell startups, Jadoo is a) already selling products, b) headquartered outside Silicon Valley (near Sacramento, Calif.), and c) targeting vertical markets: video production, military, and surveillance. The company's portable fuel cells are replacements for the bulky batteries that cameramen and high-tech soldiers carry around. Its lightweight products offer two to three times the run time of batteries and cost just a little more.

I kept asking Erik for the awe-inspiring scientific breakthrough behind Jadoo, but it's not that kind of company. "This is a company that is focused on solving customer problems," he said. "It's got real product that is selling today." Rather than getting bogged down in perpetual R&D as many fuel-cell companies have done, Jadoo identified a few key markets and quickly developed a product to serve them. The four-year-old company has raised about \$19.5 million in one angel round and two VC rounds. MDV and Venrock co-led the latest financing.

Jadoo already attracted some attention in 2003 when it was one of 22 fuel-cell companies invited to present at the White House and one of seven to meet one-on-one with Dubya, who flashed Jadoo's product in front of TV cameras. Lefty bloggers have had [conniptions](#) over the startup, which is funded partly by the VC arm of Sinclair Broadcasting Group, a media giant and big-time Republican donor. Jadoo has [reportedly](#) sold fuel cells to the CIA, the Secret Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and the U.S. Army. Michael Moore may not use Jadoo fuel cells to power his cameras, but there's always Fox News.