

What you'll likely get with a Amazon Fire TV from Best Buy vs. other smart TV's

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Pity the TV consumer who shops at Best Buy later this year and looks to make an informed choice about buying a flat-panel smart TV set.

He or she will see new Amazon Fire-branded TVs, with the personal assistant Alexa built in, sold on TVs that tout the brand names Insignia or Toshiba. They are expected to be bargain-priced.

But what exactly is an Insignia TV, beyond being known as Best Buy's lower-priced house brand?

The savvy consumer might look to the overall score of quality by Consumer Reports, which in 2017 ranked Insignia as 8 out of 11 choices, compared to 6 for Toshiba. (Samsung topped the list.)

In 2017, Toshiba, which used to be a top brand in the United States, sold off 95% of its TV business to Hisense, which itself ranked 10th out of 11 on the survey. Manufacturer TCL came in 11th.

Insignia TVs have historically been made by Toshiba and LG. This year's Amazon-branded Insignia and Toshiba sets, which are made by Hisense, replace last year's Insignia models with built-in smart TV software from Roku, the maker of the popular streaming player.

Confused? Let's refresh.

At a small press conference in Bellevue, Washington, Amazon CEO Jeff

Bezos trumpeted his new alliance with Best Buy as a way to get more Amazon-branded products in retail consumers' hands.

The new products will be 4K and HD Fire TV Edition television models with Amazon Fire TV built in, allowing users to search for and watch broadcast TV, or choose from a catalog of streaming TV episodes and movies from Netflix, Prime Video, HBO, PlayStation Vue, Hulu and other streaming sites.

Best Buy already has a relationship with Amazon, promoting Amazon-branded products like the Echo speakers and Fire TV streaming players in stores for the 2017 holiday season.

An affordable Amazon smart TV—no prices were announced—would save the consumer the \$40-\$70 it costs to buy the add-on Fire TV stick units, which connect to TVs to bring Internet entertainment to consumers. They are similar to the Roku devices but have more limited channel lineups.

Amazon products don't let consumers view No. 1 video site YouTube, due to a corporate spat with YouTube owner Google. Streaming players and TVs from Roku, TCL and Apple have both Amazon and YouTube entertainment. (A recent workaround is the addition of the Firefox browser on Fire TV units, which lets users navigate directly to YouTube or other online sites not featured within the app system.)

The name Hisense now means a TV that is "good," says Lee Neikirk, a TV reviewer with Reviewed.com, a sister unit of the USA TODAY Network. "They aren't on the level of a Vizio or Samsung, but I'd rather buy a Hisense than an Insignia TV. It would be better."

To be fair, Insignia TVs have their fans, and they are Best Buy customers. A 50-inch \$349 smart TV with built-in Roku, for instance,

has 1,355 reviews with an average rating of 4.6 out of 5 stars on the BestBuy website. A slightly larger 55 inch, for \$379, has 1,015 reviews, and average rating of 4.7.

Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Securities, says Best Buy [consumers](#) associate Sony, Samsung and Sharp with the best TVs in stock at the store, but that Insignia means affordable quality. "If they need a 32-inch set for the garage, they're not worried about how great it will be."

He expects Best Buy to push the new Amazon sets hard to the consumer, because they'll have lower margins and better profits on these models, and with the buzzword of "Alexa enabled," that will resonate and be easy to sell, he says.

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