

HBO Max: An impressive library with some issues to fix

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The latest streaming service, HBO Max, is out and I've been checking it out.

And I must say, I'm impressed.

For subscribers to the HBO Now subscription service, or HBO via most cable systems, the new HBO Max is a gift, an add-on. The old "Now" app turns into "Max" with an update. For most cable subscribers—who are familiar with HBO Go—they get to sign in to the Max streaming app with their current credentials and get Max for free.

HBO Max is HBO, plus movies, TV series and cartoons from the Warner Bros. library, classic Hollywood and foreign films from the TCM film library, original animation and more.

Original programming is light, especially compared to rivals like Netflix, Hulu and Disney+. But like Disney, the library of content is so rich, it could keep you watching for months.

With a \$14.99 a month subscription—the most expensive streaming service—HBO Now just got a whole lot better. And for those of us who were already subscribing, this is more of a reason to keep it.

You may feel that way too, if you have an Apple TV or Google Chromecast streaming device in the house. But if you're like most people, and get your streaming via a Roku or Amazon Fire TV streaming player, you're out of luck—for now.

AT&T, which owns WarnerMedia (HBO, Warner Bros., Turner TV, CNN) didn't make a deal with either. So it's either fork over \$35 for Chromecast, \$150 for the Apple TV device, or watch Max on one of the newer Sony or Samsung TVs. (You can also watch on your phones, tablets or computers.)

Here's what you'll find:

HBO is promoting heavily the complete collection of "Friends" and "The Big Bang Theory" at the top of the front page, the Harry Potter films and other blockbusters from the WB library, including Aquaman and Wonder Woman.

Max is broken up into several "hubs" which include content libraries from: HBO, DC, Sesame Workshop, TCM, Studio Ghibli, Cartoon Network, Adult Swim, Crunchy Roll and Looney Tunes.

Some hubs are better than others. TCM is fully featured, with classics galore like "The Wizard of Oz," "Gone with the Wind" and the complete Charlie Chaplin film collection. Cartoon Network has a handful of series, like "The Powerpuff Girls," "Adventure Time" and "Dexter's Laboratory," but is missing some key titles like "Johnny Bravo," "Code Lyoko" and "Courage the Cowardly Dog."

Unlike the recent Disney+ launch, which had hundreds of vintage cartoons from the vault, along with more current titles, HBO Max has many of the best of Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and the gang, including "A Duck Amuck," "Corny Concerto" and "Gorilla my Dreams" but a big omission, at least on the first day, are one of the greatest Looney Tunes ever made—according to Vulture—"What's Opera Doc?"

The HBO hub is basically what HBO Now was with, yes, every episode of "Game of Thrones," "The Sopranos" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm," and more.

But if you're looking for something outside of these hubs, navigation is tough. For instance, Max promised classics from the Hanna-Barbera library like "The Flintstones" and "The Jetsons" and episodes of Conan from the TBS library. And they are there—if you're willing to click search and type out their names.

But there should be an easier way to find them.

Overall, HBO Max looks a lot cooler on Wednesday than HBO Now did on Tuesday, with way more programming to keep you busy during these pandemic times.

Should you spring for yet another [subscription service](#)? If you're already paying for HBO Now, there's no decision that has to be made. Your Now logo has been replaced by Max.

If you're not, are you willing to pay \$15 monthly, the priciest of any of the subscription services for "Friends," "Big Bang" and blockbuster movies?

That's the streaming question of the year.

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