

How many streaming services would you pay for? Three more services want your money

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Quibi, a new video streaming service most people have probably never heard of, launched with a bang on April 6, touting a unique concept.

For \$4.99 or \$7.99 monthly, fans could watch celebrities like Jennifer Lopez, and Chrissy Teigen in short videos of ten minutes or less on their phones, but not on TV. They couldn't share the videos. And might we add that YouTube has dozens of videos featuring Lopez, Teigen and any other performer you could imagine, for free.

Quibi, which raised \$1.8 billion in financing to launch, did have a good first week, but it's been all downhill from there. Quibi has since disappeared from the app charts. Its co-founder, former Disney and DreamWorks exec Jeffrey Katzenberg, blames the poor showing on the pandemic spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

"I attribute everything that has gone wrong to coronavirus," Katzenberg told the *New York Times*. "Everything."

The opinions expressed on Twitter and elsewhere would beg to differ. Offering content no one wanted to pay for is a way more likely culprit.

"It was such a convenient way to save face, because really, there's nothing about their business that was likely to succeed," says James McQuivey, an analyst with Forrester Research. "Just say, 'It's not our fault.'"

Which brings us to HBO Max and NBC's Peacock, two more subscription services eagerly awaiting your hard-earned dollars in these pandemic times.

Both released their program lineups this week: ready to check them out?

HBO Max's marquee attraction are reruns of "Friends" and "The Big Bang Theory," which have been very available for years elsewhere, and Peacock touts the entire NBC and Telemundo lineups, and starting in 2021, reruns of "The Office."

HBO Max costs \$15 monthly, while Peacock is free, \$4.99 monthly for the "premium" upgrade with more content, or \$9.99 for an ad-free version.

But there are many caveats.

HBO Max will actually be given free to current HBO and AT&T subscribers, which may sound like a funny way to run a business that currently charges \$14.99 monthly to subscribe to stand-alone HBO Now.

What it says is that HBO owner AT&T saw the writing on the wall, and knew subscribers would cancel HBO due to subscription overload if it didn't sweeten the pot, says McQuivey. "It's a retention play."

Peacock is free, currently, to Comcast cable TV subscribers, as Comcast owns NBC Universal, then launches nationally on July 15th.

Would you pay to watch the same NBC lineup that's free now? Or to get early access to "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" and "Late Night with Seth Meyers" hours before they air on NBC? Beyond that,

NBC, which calls Peacock "the wildly entertaining new streaming service from NBC Universal that you can't not love," is touting reruns of old shows like "Parks and Recreation," "30 Rock," "Law & Order," movies from the Universal library like "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" and "Lost in Translation," and originals, like a new version of the old teen show "Saved By the Bell."

TV fans who decide to sign up for HBO Now at \$14.99 monthly now can get Max thrown in, or they could go vice-versa and sign up for Max and get Now.

If that's not confusing, consider this from the HBO Max sign-up page. AT&T has lowered the price to \$11.99 monthly, if you sign up before May 27. Both channels for the same price.

But what exactly is on Max? More of the same. Reruns of not just "Friends," but "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "Pretty Little Liars," "Rick and Morty," movies from the Warner Bros. library like "Casablanca," "Wonder Woman" and "The Joker," new versions of "Looney Tunes," with Bugs Bunny and the gang, and originals, like an anthology series about dating called "Love Life," with Anna Kendrick, and a reboot of "Gossip Girl."

Which brings us back to the age-old question. How many streaming services will people pay for?

"It's the dilemma all the companies are facing," says McQuivey. "Consumers will not continue to pay for a fourth or fifth service. These companies are going to have a very hard time."

McQuivey says they will stick with Netflix and Amazon and one other low-cost service. That's tended to be Disney +, the most successful new

streaming service that's launched in recent years, with nearly 55 million subscribers since November, or Hulu, the adult-oriented service that's also owned by Disney.

Like Peacock, it also offers NBC's prime-time lineup, as well as ABC and Fox.

And what about Quibi? McQuivey doesn't think it's long for this world. "They will shut down, probably by early 2021."

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