

# Choosing a Media Server

“ Choosing to run a home media server can be a fun and educational hobby while also providing a central source to store, control and serve all your media.

Most people want a media server to consolidate all their media content and access that content from one unified source displayed in an attractive menu that is easy to navigate and use. There are a number of excellent free and open source media servers available that do just that as well as paid, proprietary servers and appliances. It just depends on what you are trying to achieve as an end result that should drive you to one or another.

When selecting which media server software to invest your time (and sometimes \$\$) you should do so by asking yourself (and answering) the following questions.

- How do you want to access your media?
  - Do you want to access your media only at home or also away from home?
  - Do you want to share your media with others?
- From what device(s) do you want to access your media?
  - TV?
  - Projector?
  - Smartphone?
  - Computer?
  - Home audio devices?
- What type of media do you want to serve from your media center?
  - Video? For example, a movie library, TV show library, personal videos, etc.
  - Audio? For example, a music library or streaming music service
  - Live TV? For example, cable or over-the-air signals
  - Images? For example, Family photos, hobbyist images, etc.
- Do you want to integrate your media server into a Home Theater?
  - Do you want to automate any processes of your media server? For example, automatically controlling lighting when a movie starts, stops or is paused.
  - Do you want a Cinema-like experience with trailers and/or bumpers before a movie starts?
- What visual or audio requirements will you have for content on your media server?
  - Any format or resolution preferences for your content? such as:
    - SD, HD or 4K for video content
    - MP3 or FLAC for audio content
- How comfortable are you with Computing?
  - Do you like to be "hands on" or do you "just want it to work"?

The answers to these questions will help you decide which media server type, software and hardware will best suit your needs.

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