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Maybe your state remains closed. Maybe it's a backup opening, but you still don't feel safe going out. In any case, movie nights with friends is still vital, and most major streaming services have formal and neo-official solutions to facilitate them. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've made the most of Mashable's group streaming coverage, and in just a few months the space has evolved significantly. Perhaps the biggest events came from the streaming services themselves. Six months ago, the idea that Hulu and Amazon would officially allow users to join a remote watch party might have seemed unthinkable. This is a really born of unfortunate circumstances. But there is still a long way to go before every great service allows you to do this without going through third-party tools. Until then, here are the best streaming solutions for your needs. Hulu Hulu Watch Party in action Image: Alex Perry/Mashable Last month, Hulu launched the Hulu Watch Party. It's one of the easiest group streaming applications to use, probably because it's not capable at all that much. Before you get too excited to watch Frasier with your friends, understand what the Hulu Watch Party currently requires without advertising Hulu subscription to work. Once you and everyone else you plan to watch with has access to one, you can start the session by moving to the details page on the show or movie on the Hulu website and clicking on the Watch Party icon. Yes, I told Hulu's website. You should be in a web browser on a laptop or desktop computer. Once you're there, send the URL to your friends without advertising and they'll be able to watch along with the main text chat. A useful little sync button will pop up anytime someone's feed falls behind. Other than that, the Hulu Watch Party doesn't bring much to the table. However, you don't need to install any browser extensions or anything like that. It's bare bones, but it works. Amazon Prime Video 'Fleabag' with friends Image: STEVE SCHOFIELD /AMAZON Amazon is the latest service to jump into the ring, just launched prime video Watch Party. I personally haven't had a chance to test it out yet, but it seems almost identical to the Hulu Watch party with features concepts. The good news is that there is no need to install a browser extension. The bad news is, according to Amazon, this feature only works in web browsers, but not specifically Safari. Go, get it. If you've logged into a Prime account, find a Watch Party icon on a movie or TV show, send URL 100 to your friends, and use text chat to see everything that's on Prime stream. The main caveat here is that all participants to the prime account and you can only watch prime streaming content. If you bought or rented a movie digitally, you can't share it with your friends using Prime Video Watch Party. However, Amazon's extensive catalog is now on your HBO Sometimes HBO makes bad shows. Picture: Alex Perry/mashable HBO streaming offerings are split and strange as you're probably aware. HBO Now and HBO Max are completely different services with completely different content. In case you're wondering, there's no officially supported HBO Max Group streaming app yet. However, if you just want to watch hbo content rather than Friends or South Park, Scener is the way to go. Scener is an extension of Chrome that, in partnership with HBO, gives subscribers a way to watch hbo content as the original continuity show. It does more than just turn on HBO's social streams, but we'll get to that later. Make sure everyone in your group installs an extension, clicks on the Scener icon in the top right corner of Chrome, and enters HBO Now using your own login. Once you've done that, it's pretty simple. One user has a remote that is used to control playback and can be passed on to someone else by clicking on their name in the chat window. The most distinctive feature Of Scener has above the rest of this list is video chat support. If you want to actually talk to your friends, you can do it. Text chat is there too, of course. As for HBO, it's a way to watch Arli \$\$ with your kidneys. Netflix Unfortunately, not every streaming service has gotten on the ball with official support for group viewing yet. Let's start with Netflix, one of the biggest names in the streaming space. There's a handy little Chrome extension called the Netflix party that lets you do all the things we're talking about today. Everyone has to install it and provide their own login, but once it's taken care of, you can watch things with friends during a text chat. This is technically a party-party app funded by Patreon Donations, so it's not fully counted here. Doesn't Make Scener, although this app also supports Netflix playback, which works just like it does with HBO. Scener is officially affiliated with HBO, but not Netflix. This distinction doesn't really matter to the end user, but it's worth noting. Plex Watch Together If you're a big streaming fan who isn't familiar with Plex, don't be alarmed. Plex is not a traditional streaming service in itself, and its group watch app is also unusual, in a good way. For the uninitiated: Plex is a service that allows you to create a media server using your own external storage device for basically everything you want. If you've purchased some movie files over the years (legally or not), you can put them on the Plex server, share access with friends, and stream them remotely at your leisure. With the free (at the moment) Plex Watch Together feature, you can sync with people on Plex's friends list. The best part is that you can watch on TV, game console or phone through the Plex app, so it's not blocked online Worst of all, it doesn't have built-in chat features of any kind, so you'll have to set up Zoom, Discord, or any video chat software your friends would like to use. Setting up the Plex server requires some technical know-how, but all it takes is one person in a group of friends with too much time on their hands to create a streaming service group with literally everything you want on it. Image: Alex perry/mashable The last major streaming group site we'll be talking about today is TwoSeven, which is a service that is universal as it's incompatible. Netflix, Amazon, HBO, YouTube and Vimeo make up their free social streaming offerings. If you decide to give at least \$3 a month to its Patreon, then you will also get access to the social flow of Hulu and Disney. In case this wasn't enough, you can also share personal videos with friends and import videos from other websites that have their own custom players using a browser extension. At the top of everything, you get both text and video chat with a pretty intuitive interface. The only serious problem with TwoSeven is that importing web videos and sharing personal videos can be touchy at best and completely dysfunctional at worst. Sometimes playback doesn't start for everyone in the room, sometimes it doesn't start at all. Its eminent integration streaming service really works well in my experience, however. So TwoSeven is absolutely worth looking at your group's streaming needs based on the number of services it supports alone. Leftovers Two of the largest streaming services without officially supported group-hours solutions that we haven't reviewed are Disney and HBO Max. So let's look at them! As mentioned above, Disney works within TwoSeven if you pay some money. But let's say you don't want to spend extra money. Don't worry, because Scener, the service we recommended for HBO Now and Netflix, also supports Disney. Beautiful. As for HBO Max, your best choice right now is probably TwoSeven. Going to the HBO tab on The TwoSeven Streaming Page loads Max instead of Now, which puts him one step ahead of Scener. Keep in mind, however, that you may have to use Firefox to watch it. At the time of writing, the Chrome version of TwoSeven is not compatible with HBO Max yet, but the streaming page says it will be updated at some point. Finally, TwoSeven can be your friend when it comes to various streaming services such as Funimation, Crunchyroll and more. An online streaming feature that allows you to bring videos from other services theoretically work with these sites, but again, understand that you may run into technical problems along the way. The main theme here is that none of these group streaming solutions are perfect yet. They can never be ... or you can just wait until the pandemic is over. But as long as it's just peachy in the world of streaming group, at the moment these are your best options. Options. netflix strategic group map 2019

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