

Creating a Wii Media Center

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A Guide to Streaming Video & Audio to the Nintendo Wii

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Introduction

The Nintendo Wii has been on the market for some time now, blowing away sales records, drawing in young and old, and engaging people who had never gotten off the couch to play a game before. But, one of the things that it was missing that many people have started to expect out of their gaming consoles, was as a means of playing various other forms of media. The Xbox 360 can do it, and so too can the Playstation 3, after some much needed firmware upgrades.



So, why then can't the Nintendo Wii do things like stream video and audio from your computer? There's no real reason why not. The hardware capabilities are there. The technology is sound. But, it doesn't really matter that much because there are so many other good reasons to own a Wii.

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But, for those of you who made the choice between gaming and entertainment completion, you don't have to worry anymore – the decision has been negated and you can now choose to use your Wii for just about anything you could imagine.

What is a Wii Media Center?

The answer comes in the form of the Nintendo Wii media center, a software application that can be installed on your PC that will allow you to play videos, music, and all sorts of other applications on your Wii that the machine was not original designed for. The best part is that these applications do not require extra hardware modifications and you're not going to risk the destruction of your console. And, there are multiple options on the market for those of you who like to choose between what software you use.

This guide is designed to walk you through the installation and use of any of the five different software types that are most popular right now for Wii media players. Whether you want the fanciest, most complicated setup around, or just a simple installation you can start using right away, these options will all work well for you.

So, what exactly is a Media center do you ask?

A Nintendo Wii is designed to do all those things you never thought to ask of it. If you open up the Opera web browser that comes with the machine (either on your console or from the store), you can do everything from stream audio to play video from YouTube. It's setup to render those things and has the flash plugins and codecs needed to play multiple forms of multimedia.

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So, why doesn't Nintendo just make it possible themselves? That's a question we may never know the answer to, but we do know that the options for the do-it-yourselfers out there are growing.

A good media center setup will allow you to tap into a shared folder on your computer that can be accessed from your Nintendo Wii's Opera browser. Now, instead of needing to run wires across your house, you can simply setup a direct connection between your Wii and your computer to run your multimedia.

Why Use the Wii as a Media Center?

If you already have an Xbox 360 or a media center box hooked up to your TV, you may not need to do this, but not everyone can afford multiple gaming consoles or extra electronics just to get things from their computer to their TV. This kind of functionality is becoming more native every day, but it still needs to be setup to work effectively with whatever format you have in place – whether that is on your Microsoft or Nintendo console.

Plus, the Nintendo Wii is just an easier format to use for things like entering text, web browsing, and manoeuvring around your files. With the Wii Remote, it is incredibly simple to find what you need and start playing it right away.

The Guides in This Book

As we get started, I'm going to show you how to use each of five different software options for your Nintendo Wii that will create a Media Center on your machine. The five that I've selected include:

- Orb
- WiiAudio

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- TVersity
- Wii Media Center X
- X-OOM Media Center

Each of these options provides a different number of benefits and a wider (or narrower) scope to what you can do. And you may find that one works better for your needs than others. Before each chapter, I will discuss the benefits of each software option, and in the chapter I will discuss its drawbacks and possible issues you may end up having.

Ideally, by showing you how to use all five, you'll be able to choose and install the system is best for you and your home. At the end of the guide, I've created a series of comparisons and ratings that will allow you to quickly and easily choose which media center application is best for your computer. For the most part, all five systems work similarly, but there are key differences, so if you decide to try out more than one, I recommend you read each tutorial carefully to get the full gist of what is required of you.

Some Terms You'll Need to Know

If you're computer savvy and are raring to get going, feel free to jump ahead a bit and start working with the tutorials. However, if you're just a casual user or even a beginner who is just interested in setting up your Wii as a Media Center, I recommend you review some of the following terms to learn more about what you'll be doing and how the process works:

- **IP Address** – The IP address is a unique number assigned to your computer by your router for communications between devices on your network. Every computer, phone, gaming console, and device in your house has a unique IP address used to

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communicate with the network.

- **Port Number** – The Port Number is the specific numerical point from which your computer will communicate with another computer. Most of the time, random ports are assigned for things like web browsers, media players, or downloads. However, certain programs will assign a single port, which you can use to connect two devices, such as your Wii and your Media Center activated PC.
- **Media Center** – A media center is an advanced program that allows you to access media such as video, audio, and photos from multiple devices on a network.
- **Flash Video** – Flash video is a format of video that is specially designed to be transmitted over the Internet. It is smaller in size, more easily streamed, and works in almost all web browsers. YouTube is an example of a site that uses flash video for its encoding.
- **Codecs** – A codec is the piece of software used by your computer to read and play a video. Every video format (such as .MOV, .MPG4, .FLV, etc) has a different codec. For streaming video your Wii via your computer, you'll need the DirectDraw codec. Most of the software we discuss will come with DirectDraw if your computer does not already have it.
- **Opera Browser** – The Opera Browser platform is what Nintendo uses for its Internet Channel. It costs 500 points (\$5) to download and is considered one of the fastest

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browsers available. You can also download Opera for your PC.

- **Firewall** – A firewall is a software tool that will block the resources on your computer from transmitting or receiving data from the Internet with your specific approval. For this reason, you often need to create exceptions in your firewall for programs like a Media Center that is constantly connected to the Internet.
- **Command Prompt** – The Command Prompt is a Windows Tool that will allow you to access and view certain parts of your computer not otherwise viewable. We will use this later to determine your IP address.
- **Resolution, Kbit, and FPS** – The resolution of a video is the visual clarity it displays as. Basically, it is how many pixels appear on the screen at any given point in time. The Kbit rate is how many bits can be transferred per second in the video – basically how high of a quality can be transferred to your Wii at once. The FPS is how many frames are viewable per second. For reference, standard definition TV is a 30 FPS frame rate.

Hopefully, this gives you a good overview of everything you will need to know as you prepare to turn your Nintendo Wii into a media center device. Other terms might appear throughout the text you need help with. If they do, simply type them into Google with “define:TERM” and you should find an easy definition to explain in greater detail what you are doing.

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A Quick Disclaimer

I'll keep this short, but I want to remind everyone that what you're doing is not sanctioned by Nintendo in anyway. They have a very long list of things you can and cannot do on your Nintendo Wii and while these software options do not void your warranty or modify your hardware, you should be aware that they do not provide support or necessarily condone any actions you take that will change the functionality of your machine. The odds of anything going wrong are slim to none, but I think it's only right to let you know that I take no responsibility for damage or issues you have with your Wii console or with Nintendo of America.

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Orb as a Media Player

First up is Orb – one of the simplest tools out there because you can use a universal account that connects to your PC through a browser. Before we get started, let's take a look at some benefits of this tool over others:

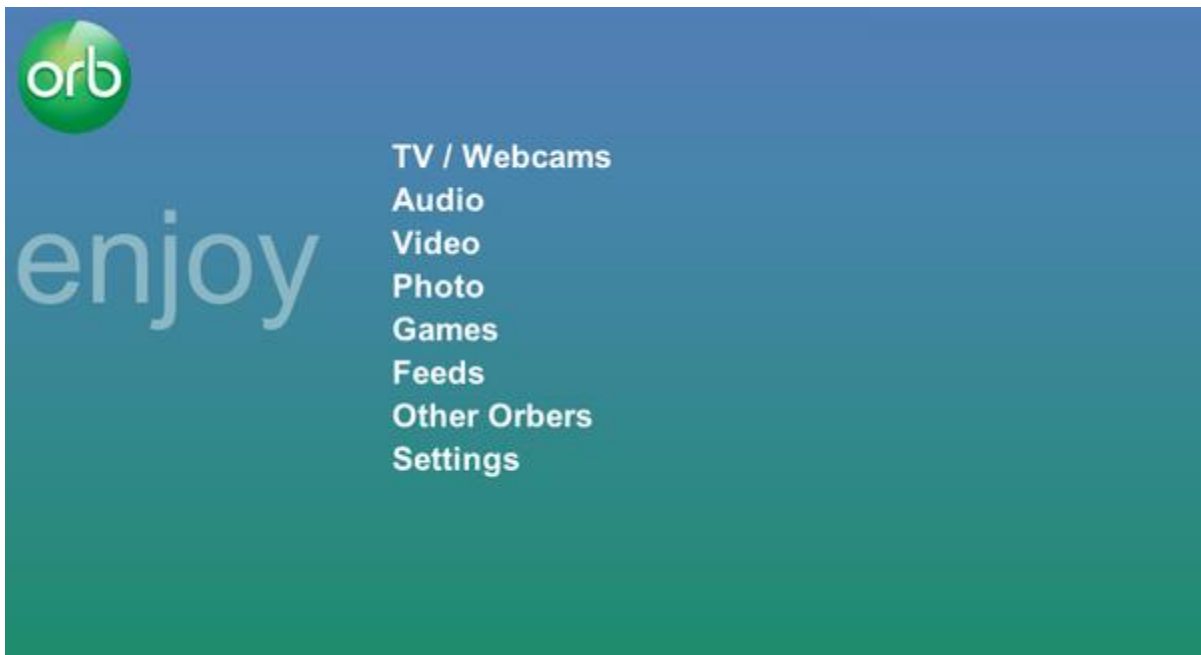
- Quick and Easy Setup
- Easy Windows Access
- Full Use of Your Media
- Can Be Done Wirelessly

Okay, now that you know why I like Orb, let's take a look at what it takes to actually get Orb installed and working on your machine.

The Features of Orb

The Orb media player is not exclusive to the Nintendo Wii. In fact, it operates almost solely on your PC, making it a powerful option for anyone interested in using it for their laptop or on their mobile phone or personal device. In short, it creates a streaming media channel that you can access on the Internet from any device that has a web browser and the necessary codecs to play that media.

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That's probably the biggest positive thing about Orb. You don't have to make any adjustments or changes to your Wii to get it to work. It's a relatively simple, free installation processed directly on your computer.

Using Orb

I won't walk you through how to use Orb for every device. After all, this guide is designed to help you get the most out of your Wii as a media center, not the other devices in your home. So, let's go through the process of setting it up on your PC and then getting it to MyCast on your Wii.

Preparing Your PC

When you get started, you need to download the Orb application. You can find it at http://orb.com/download_orb. The download is free and should only take a few seconds with a broadband connection. Once you have downloaded the application, install it, following the basic instructions it provides. I could walk you through it all, but it's pretty standard if you've ever installed a third party application on your PC.

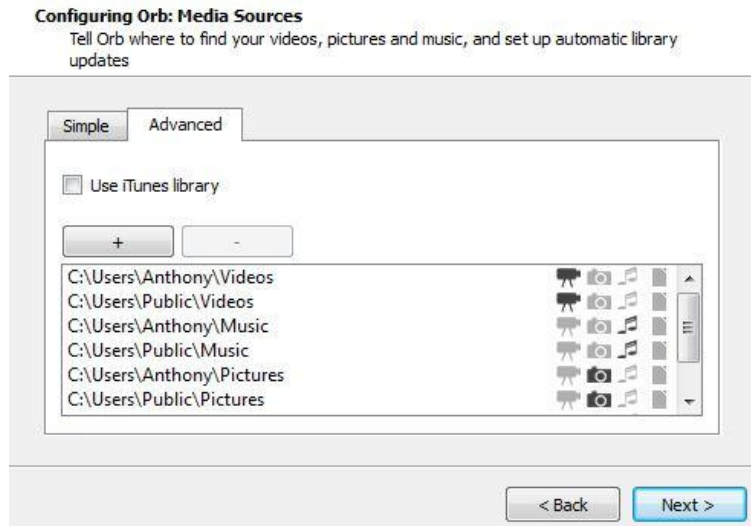
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1. **Set Up An Account** – Once you’ve installed Orb, you need to create an account, unless you’ve used Orb or Orb.com before for any kind of streaming on other devices. Choose a basic user name that only you will know and make sure to put your settings to the defaults. This should only take a few moments.
2. **Share Your Content** – After setting up your account, you’ll need to share your content. To do this, go to the system tray at the bottom right corner and right click on the Orb icon. Choose Configuration from the menu that appears and then go to the Media tab. You’ll need to specifically choose which folders you want to share over Orb – these are the files you’ll be able to access and stream from your Nintendo Wii when the process is complete. Remember that Orb only allows you to stream the files. The actual playing of those files is dependent on the specs of the Nintendo Wii. It can play video, music, and picture files, but it can’t open executables or documents, so don’t share everything over your channel. Also, as a security precaution, I recommend you only share your public folders designated for music

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and video. Your Orb Cast channel should be secure, but you don't want to take chances that you're sharing anything personal over the Internet.



3. **Testing Your Channel** – Once you've created your channel and shared the files you want to share, you need to test the channel you just created. To do this, go <http://mycast.orb.com> and login to your account that you just created. After you login, you should have access to all the content you just shared. As long as your PC is on and connected to the Internet, you will be able to access all of these files at any time from any web browser that has video playing support.

Once you've tested your content and ensured that it is actively streaming from your PC to your Wii, you can start working on your Nintendo Wii. The next few steps will do that for you.

Preparing Your Wii

Before you do anything, you need to be sure the Opera web browser is installed. It does not come with the Nintendo Wii. If you have never downloaded it, you'll need to go to the Wii

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Shop channel and download it for 500 points (\$5). Even if you have the older versions of the browser on your computer, you need to download the newest one from the channel, as the older versions will not handle large file streaming playback. Most people will need to pay the \$5 – but that’s all you’ll need to do to get this thing up and running.

1. Logging In – To get started, open the Opera browser on your Wii and then go to <http://mycast.orb.com>. Once there, you’ll see a Wii Interface button that is larger than the normal buttons – optimized for your television. The site will automatically recognize that you are logging in from a Wii and direct you there. Don’t login yet – just click on this button. After clicking this button, login to your account and you’ll be shown to the Orb home screen on your Wii.



2. Choosing Settings – Go to the Settings menu and then click on Stream to make sure your Orb account is set to stream all video in Flash format. Save the settings and return to the home screen. Everything should be setup to work with your Wii effectively. Go to the menu and try out any of the content you have on your computer currently and see how it works.

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You shouldn't need to worry about the format of any of your files either. Because you have setup your system to stream everything in Flash, all files will be converted on the fly as they are streamed to your Wii. Make sure to set the MyCast home screen as a favourite on your Opera browser so that you don't have to go back to it any point in time.

Drawbacks and Potential Problems

The biggest immediate drawback of this method is that you'll get a lot lower quality video than if you watched a DVD or just plugged your computer into your TV. It's because of the flash encoding. Imagine watching YouTube videos on your TV – the quality will be slightly better than that, but not by much. So, expect there to be some quality concerns if you're a videophile. There are other methods to streaming video natively, which allow for better performance, but you'll generally find the content works best in a simple browser format like this.

I cannot cover all potential problems (the Orb website is a great resource for any troubleshooting issues), but here are a few common errors you might see and how to solve them when they appear:

- “Orb could not retrieve your login information” – If you did the installation properly, this error might occur because of a firewall or antivirus program blocking your ability to access the Internet natively, from your PC. Either make an exception or disable the software that is blocking your access. You also may have a problem with the installation of your Orb software. If the above fix doesn't work, uninstall and reinstall orb to see if it works better.
- “Trojan Intrusion Warning” – Orb is not a Trojan or any other form of malware. This happens on some anti-virus programs because Orb is trying to access the Internet on

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its own, a behaviour that would normally be considered bad. Either add it as an exception or ignore the warning.

- **Codec Problems** – There are often times error messages related to the codecs needed on your computer to stream the videos to the Internet. You'll need to have the necessary Orb codecs installed on your PC to decompress and recompress them when they are streamed to the Wii. To put it simpler, download the Orb Compatible codecs from Orb.com/codecs.

There are a number of other issues you might run into as well. If that occurs, make sure you have installed Orb properly, set the Flash streaming settings and that your firewalls are taken care of. Other problems can be directed to the Orb forums or support contacts, which you can access from their official website.

Orb in the Future

Orb has a long history of providing easy to use, quality service for anyone wanting to stream video or audio from their computer. Right now, there are not any plans to expand on the services they offer for the Wii, as most of their current technology is being focused on upgrading their mobile platform support so you can stream video to your iPhone or other smartphone device. However, with one of the best media center platforms on the market, and a free price point that you cannot argue with, Orb has created a software program that has taken many people by surprise.

It works incredibly well, has strong development support, and without having to change any features, works on any platform you have, streaming things in Flash format via on the fly encoding. That's something few of these media centers have been able to accomplish thus far, and as such, has created a tool that will endure for quite some time to come.

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WiiAudio as a Media Player

Wii Audio is not quite as well developed and doesn't have the sheer volume of support that Orb does, because it is a handmade, at-home software solution to the streaming video problem. Like Orb, though, it operates by streaming content from your PC to your Wii remotely, using the Internet. Unlike Orb, it is a lot more complicated because it requires you to do things manually. Here are some of the benefits of the software:

- Simple setup with plenty of instructions
- Small, streamlined files with minimal memory usage
- Can be customized to speed up the process as needed.
- Full Use of Your Media
- Can Be Done Wirelessly

Basically, this is a software solution for those that like the do-it-yourself approach and don't want to sign up for a third party service or run their video through someone else's servers. It offers privacy, speed and less intrusion. However, it also requires a bit more work on your part to make sure video and audio stream properly to your Wii.

WiiAudio Walkthrough

Wii Audio is a very simple installation that seems a lot more complicated than it actually is. For that reason, I'm going to outline it very carefully to show you what you'll need to do on your computer and how to adjust it along the way.

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Downloading the Software

Like Orb, you'll want to download and install Wii Audio to your PC directly. This is done by visiting <http://wiiaudio.com/beta2> and downloading the RAR file that is listed there. This is all done by a single programmer who had some extra time, so direct support is very limited. If you need additional help or support, you'll need to find forums or someone who has used it before, most likely.

1. Installing Wii Audio – To install Wii Audio, unzip the RAR folder and place the files on your root drive (usually this is the C: drive). When you install it, run the “install-winaudio.bat” file first. After you've run the installation file, you will need to manually start and stop it with files included in your directory. The file to start the Wii Audio streamer is “start-wiiaudio.bat” and the file to stop it is “stop-wiiaudio.bat”. Ignore the rest of the files in the folder as they are used behind the scenes to stream the actual video. When prompted, choose to refresh the XAMPP installation. It will run its course and then you should be able to close the executable and complete the installation.
2. Making it Work – Wii Audio uses MySQL and Apache to send the files to your Wii, so you'll need to run the files each time you start your computer up. This can be done by starting the “start-wiiaudio.bat” file and then choosing to allow it to run.
3. Accessing Your PC – The program will run on port 80. What this means is that a specific port has been chosen to run the software through when streaming, allowing it to be bypassed if your firewall decides it doesn't like what you're doing. From your PC, type in <http://localhost/> and the interface should appear.

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Ideally, this should complete the installation on your computer successfully. If you have any trouble with it, it can be hard to find the necessary troubleshooting, as again, the program is a private hobby, not a major undertaking. There are forums out there with some support options, however.

Running WiiAudio on Your Wii

Once you have everything setup, you should be able to go to your Wii and open the Opera browser to access the Wii Audio files that have been setup on your PC.

1. Getting to Your Media – To access your media, enter the IP address of your computer on the local network and you should be able to access the same menu you saw when you entered Localhost from your PC directly. The files will appear and can be streamed directly from that interface.
2. Accessing Files – The thing about Wii Audio is that there is no advanced recoding of your files in the interface. You'll need to either convert your files to a compatible format on your Wii or you'll need to find a way to get them streamed there through another service. Your MP3s will work well, and any Flash compatible files will play well, but others like DIVX or MPG may not run as well or at all through this format.

Wii Audio on your Wii is a bit tricky, and there is a good chance you might have some trouble getting it set up. I only recommend using this option if you are well versed in MySQL and Apache server setups. You'll quite literally turning your PC into a server and accessing it from your Wii over the local network. If that sounds like too much complexity for you, it might be best to stick with the guys who make it point and click easy.

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On the other side of the coin, if you're a programmer or someone who enjoys having far more control over how your computer works, then this might be a good option for you.

Troubleshooting pretty much does not exist, and as far as we can tell, there have not been any updates to the software since 2007, so don't expect there to be new functionality anytime soon either.

WiiAudio in the Future

I don't foresee anything coming out of this project for quite some time. While the developer never spent any additional time on the project and the added functionality for things like Linux or photo displaying was never added, it does work well enough and if someone wanted to pick up the torch and turn this into an open source project, there might be a good amount of room for growth. As it stands right now, though, it will likely never be given the chance to develop that far into the future. While a tremendous project that showed how much at-home developers can do, it is more or less dead in the water at this point.

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TVersity as a Media Player

TVersity is one of the largest and best supported software applications currently available for streaming video from your PC to pretty much anything. It works in conjunction with your PC, Wii, and just about every other electronic device you own to get content off your hard drive (as well as the Internet) to your TV. Here are some of the obvious benefits of using TVersity as your media center solution.

- Universal Support
- Quick and Easy Setup
- Easy Windows Access
- Full Use of Your Media
- Can Be Done Wirelessly
- Full Support from the Company
- New Features Regularly
- Pro Version Allows Streaming TV from the Internet

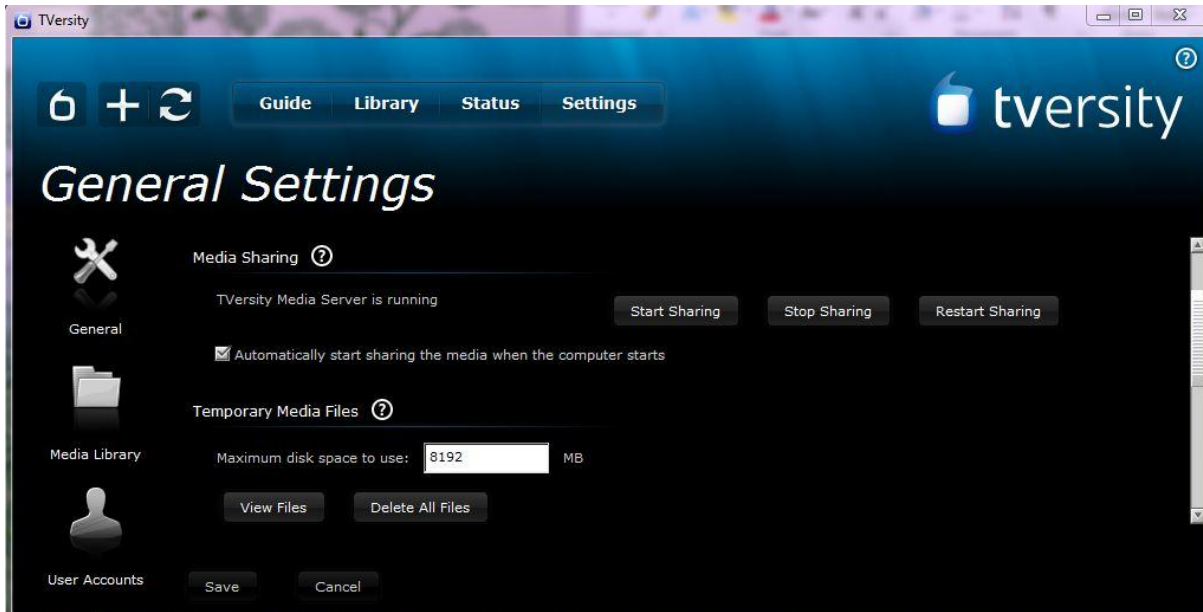
While TVersity is specifically designed to work with set top boxes and gaming consoles, you'll still need to stream your content from it through your web browser on the Wii. That's okay, though, because with this software application it's relatively easy to do.

Features of TVersity

To start with, TVersity is super simple. You just download it to your hard drive and it works almost instantly, in conjunction with your PC's built in ability to stream content. After setup,

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you'll need to do some basic tweaking on your Wii, but then it will be easily accessible from the browser at any time.



In addition to just accessing your own content off your hard drive, there are options for streaming content from the Internet as well, accessing services like Hulu and network sites like Comedy Central or CBS, where the content is directly streamed to the Internet every day. To top things off, you can use your TVersity account with any of a number of devices, including your iPhone, iPod Touch, PSP, and any other set top boxes beyond your gaming consoles. And my favourite thing about TVersity is that the company updates and works on their content seemingly every day. There are almost always new features coming out.

TVersity Walkthrough

To get started, we'll need to first setup your PC, then your TVersity account. After that, it will be a simple matter of setting the features of your Wii's Opera browser and then accessing your TVersity account from the dashboard.

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Setting Up Your PC

You'll want to make sure you meet the minimum system requirements. Luckily, most PCs these days easily meet those requirements. Just to be sure though, here is a brief listing of what you'll need:

- Pentium 4 2.8Ghz or higher
- Flash Player (newest version) with Firefox or Google Chrome
- 4GB of Free HD Space
- 2GB of Memory
- Direct X 9.0 or Higher
- Media Player 9.0 or Higher

These are actually the recommended setting, so even if you have something a little less powerful, you'll probably be able to run TVersity alright, just be sure to test everything ahead of time. You'll want to be sure you don't melt your hard drive just to run this.



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Second up, you'll notice there is a difference between Free and Pro edition. The Pro edition is a "pay when want" method of activation. So, you can download the Pro version today and pay the \$29.95 license fee whenever you decide you want to keep the software. If you want the folks at TVersity to keep producing quality software, I recommend you pay for it if you use it though.

1. Download the Application from <http://tversity.com/pro> or <http://tversity.com/free>.
You can download either and get access to the files the same way.
2. If you download the Pro edition, make sure you have a sound card and sound drivers installed on your PC to use the audio mixing capabilities. You'll also need to turn on "Stereo Mix" if you use Windows Vista.
3. After downloading the setup file, install and go through the setup wizard. It should be fairly self-explanatory. Just follow the directions and install the software.
4. After you install, you will need to choose the logon account for your computer for which you have access to the Media Player and DirectShow components. This is likely your administrator, which is probably you. But, if you installed it on a separate user account, make sure to change the user that has access. You'll need someone with administrative rights if you plan on sharing media with network sharing.
5. To check and see if the software is running properly, open <http://localhost:41952>.
When you do this, you'll see a media library navigation page for the web based interface. You can also use the Flash Based navigation interface by going to <http://localhost:41952/flashlib>. If you want to access this from a different machine on your network, just use the IP address instead of the "localhost" part of the link.

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6. You can also open the TVersity application from your start menu to bypass the browser based part of it.
7. Finally, you should add your media to the media library through the interface. This will take as long as it takes to index all your content. For some people, that's a few minutes. For others, it can take an hour or two.

Note: During the installation, the TVersity client will provide you with extra options. You can follow its directions for things about setting up your Firewall, installing codecs (do this), and any other questions you might have. Most of the time, you can go straight through and follow its directions, but if you have a question, it will be brought up during installation.

The PC installation process is relatively simple. You may have some difficulties if you have firewalls or antivirus software installed. See the troubleshooting section for more information about these potential problems.

Setting Up Your Nintendo Wii

Once you've installed and setup the PC aspect of TVersity, it's time to get it running on your Nintendo Wii. Here are the steps you should follow to get that done.

1. Get Your Software – Make sure you have The TVersity software, the FFDSHOW DirectShow Filters and Windows Media Player 11 installed on your computer before you start using your Wii in conjunction with TVersity.
2. Your Wii needs to be set up on the Wireless network as well and you need to have the Opera web browser installed. See the section on the Orb media player for more information about Opera and how to download it. Make sure you have newest

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version of Opera installed before starting, however.

3. Get Your IP Address – Before we can go any further, we need your IP address, which can be accessed on your PC. If you have a router and a wireless setup, this should be easy enough to determine. To get your IP address, click on the start menu, then choose “Run” in XP or just type “CMD” in the Run box with Vista or Windows 7. You should open a Command Prompt that looks like this:

A screenshot of a Windows Command Prompt window. The title bar at the top reads "C:\windows\system32\cmd.exe". The main content area shows the following text: "Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7600] Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. C:\Users\Anthony>". The prompt is currently at the "C:\Users\Anthony>" line.A screenshot of the output of the ipconfig /all command in a Command Prompt. The output shows the following information: "IPv4 Address. : 192.168.1.102(Preferred) Subnet Mask : 255.255.255.0 Lease Obtained. : Wednesday, February 10, 2010 8:33:25 AM Lease Expires : Thursday, February 11, 2010 10:09:52 AM".

Type **ipconfig /all** into the prompt and you will get a screen that looks like this. You need to choose the IP address from the screen and write it down. It will always start

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with 192.168.X.X with the X.X being the final numbers you need to write down.

4. Access the Menu in the Wii Internet Channel – Go into the Wii Internet Channel and go to enter a manual web address. Here is what you should enter into the web browser to make this work properly: <http://192.168.X.X:41952/flashlib>. This is the exact thing you'll enter, except for the X.X, which you need to fill in from Step 3. Once you click okay, make sure to bookmark the address so you won't need to enter it again in the future. You should now be able to access this directly every time you login.
5. Using TVersity – You should now have easy access to the TVersity media server library. You can choose between Audio, Photos, and Video from here relatively easily.

The Pro version of TVersity will also have options to stream from the selection of premium content they offer regularly. Just click on any of those options to access and start streaming from them through your browser.

Drawbacks and Problems

I'll be honest. I'm hard pressed to find many problems with TVersity. It's a great tool that allows you to do pretty much anything you want with your content on any device. The problem that many people have is that it's a relatively complex installation process.

Whereas Orb makes it pretty simple to go through setup and get into your account, TVersity has a number of additional steps. Here are some issues that you might run into when installing TVersity on your PC and then accessing it on your Wii.

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- **Failure When Browsing** – There are a few reasons this might happen. Primarily, it is likely because your IP address is not matching up properly, or your media library is currently refreshing. Just wait for a few minutes and try again. If it still doesn't work, restart your computer and check your firewall and/or antivirus software.
- **Software Won't Start** – This is a problem that is generally related to certain software programs running in the background. uTorrent is a common reason for this kind of problem – as is any other P2P software program or anything that accesses UPnP port mapping. Generally speaking, turn off any software programs running in the background that could be causing your application to fail.
- **It's Working Very Slowly** – Personal firewalls will slow this down a lot. If you have something like ZoneAlarm, make sure to make an exception so it doesn't scan every activity you perform with TVersity. You'll want to be sure things work properly each time without maxing out your CPU.
- **My Hard Drive Space Ran Out While Playing Video** – All transcoded content is put into a cache area on your PC's hard drive. You can change the size of the cache so that you don't use up all your space when playing video. Generally, it is recommended you have at least 4GB free to use for this purpose. More cannot hurt though.

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There are plenty more small issues that might popup for Wii users. If you have any problems that you cannot find in this guide, visit <http://tiversity.com/support/faq> to learn more about ways to get around your issues.

TVersity in the Future

TVersity is by far one of the most advanced programs out there, and with a huge audience and a variety of set top boxes and devices that support use of the program, you'll find that there are going to be a bunch more options hitting soon. Unfortunately for us Wii users, until Nintendo adds native streaming support to their console, we will be using the same browser work arounds we've always used to get to the content on your hard drives. Keep an eye out though. The Pro edition is a big step forward, and it will likely become easier to use and faster as the company moves forward with new technologies.

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Wii Media Center X as a Media Center

Red Kawa is one of the most impressive groups of media producers and programmers on the Internet today. They have been responsible for all sorts of software solutions to problems that probably shouldn't exist in the first place – things like video conversion for iPods, removing music from an iPod, and streaming video to your Wii. While the Media Center X software is relatively similar to what we've already discussed in this guide, it does have its own benefits, it is probably the most lacking it when it comes to support, as it is riddled with bugs and has not been updated or worked on since 2007.



While the streaming and encoding aspects of Media Center X could use some upgrades, the rest of the process is very easy to use and works well both on Windows and on other platforms like Linux and Mac OS X. Unfortunately, it is also in early Alpha format, which means it has quite a few bugs that have not yet been worked out (and many believe will not

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be worked out any time soon, as development stalled months ago). Regardless, if you are a fan of Red Kawa software, here are some tips on how to install and use it on your Wii.

Media Center X Walkthrough

To get you started, I will show you how to first install Media Center X on your PC hard drive and then how to transfer the content from there to your Nintendo Wii so you can access it on the fly.

1. Download the File – You can find the file at <http://www.redkawa.com/mediacenters/wiimediacyenterx>. It is a relatively quick download – only 6.5 MB and will be ready to install in seconds.
2. Install the Files – Once you've downloaded everything, install the software on your PC. It installs and works with the Java Runtime Environment, so if you don't already have that installed, you'll need to install that as well. This can take an extra few minutes, so just be patient and it will install eventually. Otherwise, the installation is very straightforward without anything extra options or things for you to do. Just follow directions.
3. Using the Media Center – Once it is installed, you will be able to launch the Media Center from your desktop. After launching, you'll see an option to "launch Media Center". Make sure to take note of the URL located on the screen as well. It should be <http://192.168.X.X:8192> – the port number will always be the same, but the IP address will be attached from your computer.

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The PC installation is rather simple. After installation, you can access the media center using the above URL from any web browser.

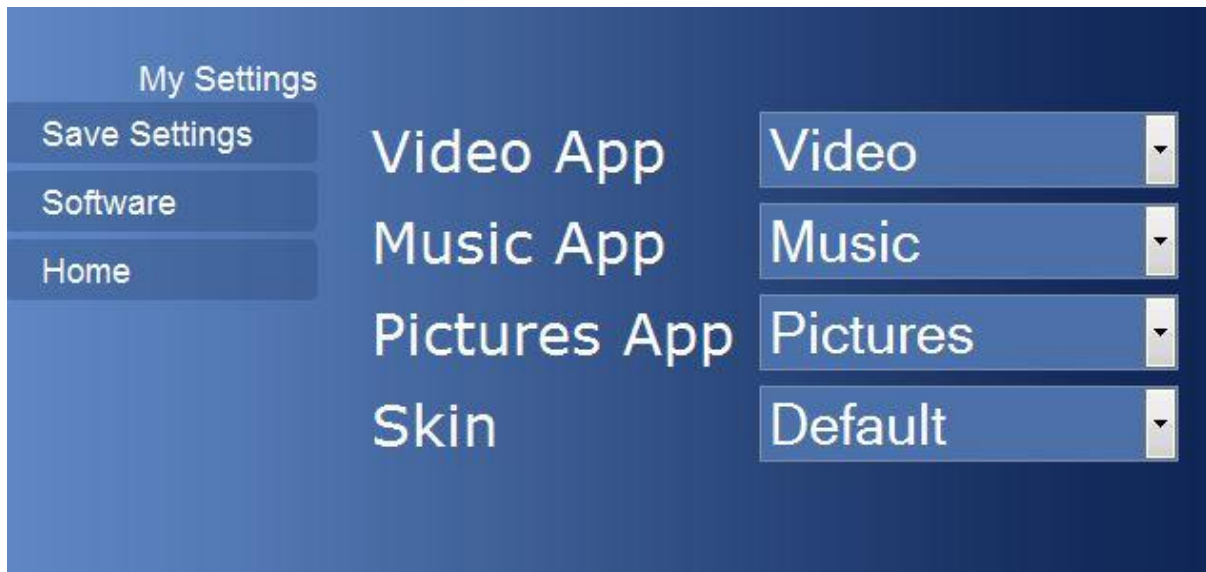
Using Your Wii

Here are some tips to getting the Media Center X up and running on your Wii after initial installation.

1. Enter the address you took from the media center application and put it into your Wii web browser. Make sure to bookmark it so you have access to it later with less work.
2. You can access the content by clicking through the menus on your computer. Unfortunately, the actual interface doesn't work very quickly when it comes to getting the Video and Music to index separately.
3. Additionally, you have to put your media in Flash format to view it in your browser. It does not have a converter to do this for you, so it can take a great deal of time to get it prepared and convert everything over. Red Kawa does offer a Wii Media Converter to turn your existing videos into flash videos, but honestly with so many other options out there, it makes little sense to go that route.

If you want to get your media to appear in the "Video" or "Music" folders, here are some tips to do so:

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- Videos – Place video files you want to share in the C:\Program Files\Red Kawa\Media Center\software\Video\videos directory
- Music – Place music files you want to share in the C:\Program Files\Red Kawa\Media Center\software\Music\music directory.
- Pictures – Place pictures you want to share in the C:\Program Files\Red Kawa\Media Center\software\Pictures\images directory.

Only by putting files in these directories will they appear in the folders on your media center interface. You can also go directly to the videos through the file directories, but that can be a slow process.

Drawbacks and Problems

The Media Center X does work, but it unfortunately never got the support it needed to be finalized and perfected. For many videos, it cuts off short, not allowing you to view the entire video, and if you're interested in watching DIVX or MPG movies, you'll need to convert them all to flash manually before you can access them. That's a lot of extra work for functionality that you can have through just about any other software in this guide.

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I don't necessarily recommend this program over any other single program we've discussed thus far. It's slower, isn't complete, and requires extra work. That said, if you want to try out your different options, have only Flash, or want to see how fast this little guy is (it's a quick program), you can give Media Center X a shot.

Wii Media Center X in the Future

Right now, this thing has been on perpetual hold for about 3 years. I wouldn't expect any updates or fixes to ever appear. Stick to the other guys –they have constant updates and regular revisions to adjust for firmware fixes on the Wii. The bottom line on the Media Center X is that the software, while admirably developed by a company that I have a lot of respect for, was just never given the support it needed or the time necessary to turn it into the kind of Media Center that could compete with the big boys. Probably due to the fact that a price point won't survive on media center software, but nonetheless, it killed Media Center X.

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X-OOM Media Center

Last on our list of media centers for your Nintendo Wii is the X-OOM Media Center, released back in 2008 as an option to do pretty much everything else that you've ready so far. You install it on your computer, stream video, music, and images to the web and then access those in your Opera browser on the Wii. It's pretty simple, and generally speaking, it works very well – as well as can be expected on the Wii anyways.



If you've never heard of X-OOM, this is a company that has made a name for itself in many media circles by offering different PC tools for your transferring content to your iPhone or iPod, grabbing movies off the Internet, or copying movies to your hard drive. It's \

- Quick and Easy Setup

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- Easy Windows Access
- Full Use of Your Media
- Supports Multiple File Formats
- TV Channels and Radio Stations Through the Browser
- Can Be Done Wirelessly

There are a number of reasons why the X-OOM Media Center is a good option, but if you are really serious about making it work for you, be sure to match up your particular needs to the right software solution first. Some of the other options in this guide will go the extra mile.

X-OOM Media Center Walkthrough

To get you started, you cannot download the X-OOM Media Center off the Internet. In fact, on first visit to their website, you wouldn't think they support the product any longer as there is no trace of it there. However, you can still find software packages on Amazon and eBay and there are some download links on torrent sites and forums where people still use the software.



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Installing on Your PC

Once you have your software in hand, it's time to install it on your computer. This is relatively simple, and can be done by following these particular steps.

1. **Installation is rather simple**, so you don't need to worry about any advanced settings or changes to the way anything works. However, you may want to choose a PIN number to keep your channels secure.
2. **Adding Internet Radio and Podcasts** – This is a cool feature that the other guys don't have, but you need to do it all manually. There are no presets defined by the software package, so you're left to determine which ones are best on your own. I recommend that you go through and do this manually when you have the time. During initial setup, you may not want to bother just yet. There is an update, however, that can be done through the software that will provide predefined podcasts and RSS feeds if you'd like those available.
3. **Adding Your Media** – Next, you need to add whatever media you have on your computer. Do this by manually selecting the folders you want from your PC. The Media Center will then scan those folders and add all media that fits your needs. You can also let it scan the entire computer but that can take a longer time – as long as an hour if you have enough media to scan through. If you are impatient, just add a few things for now and then go forward. You can always come back later and run the wizard again to get whatever media you forgot.

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4. **Your Software** – Once you've installed and added your media, you need to move forward and choose what options you will play with. There are six tabs on the interface, including Start Media Center, Browse Library, Media File Wizard, Library Settings, and Program Settings, plus a Help Menu that can provide troubleshooting assistance. The Browse menu is where all the media that you scanned was placed, broken down by categories. Double click anything to open it and play it. If you want to change any settings or add any media, now is the time.

This should get you fully ready to actually use the software. The next step is to choose your settings and finish preparing whatever it is you need for your software to run smoothly and provide streaming video on your Wii.

Settings and Wii Setup

Getting the Wii setup is very similar to the other Media Centers that we've discussed. I'll go through it in detail anyway to show you how to get it going.



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- 1. Configuration** – The software needs to be setup properly to work with your Wii before anything will work. Go to the Program Settings tab first. When you get there, make sure the right network card is chosen in the “network” drop down menu. You will also need to choose your port if you do not want to use the default 4001 port. You can change your PIN as well as your video encoding settings here as well. The encoding settings are set by default to 480,360 resolution, 1200 kbit rate and 25 FPS. You can change this to as high as 640x480 resolution, 1500kbit rate, and 30 FPS – which is about equal to standard television on a non-HD TV. If you do this, remember that the power output will be greater. If you’re running an older computer, these settings may not work properly.
- 2. Connecting Your Wii to the PC** – To get your Wii to run the Media Center, you’ll need to have the Wii Internet Browser installed, as described earlier in this guide. You will need to update your client before this will work properly. You’ll need your IP address (see the TVersity walkthrough for how to get this), and then the port number, which should be 4001. Then type <http://192.168.X.X:4001> in your Wii browser and you’ll visit the dashboard for the Media Center. If you chose to have a PIN, you will need to enter it now to make it work properly. Always remember to save the address so you don’t have to go back in and enter it again.
- 3. Using the Media Center** – Once you get the Media Center running, you’ll be confronted with a series of different screens. The main menu will look similar to the PSP or PS3 menus (if you’ve seen those before), with the media types on the horizontal line and the actual files and choices on the vertical lines. You can use the

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D-Pad on your remote to get around the menu fairly easily on this screen. When you click on any of the icons, you'll be taken to the media player for that type of media.

When you play any media type, the video will be reencoded from your computer to the Wii in real time. This will make it so you cannot get to the different parts of a video or song directly. Everything is played linearly.

Note: Closing Media Center is hard to do. If you close it normally, it stays resident in memory, even if you go to the taskbar and close it there. This can be fixed with an update, but if you cannot get it to close, you may need to go to the task manager and close it manually.

Drawbacks and Problems

The biggest drawbacks of X-OOM come in the form of the different content limitations that all of these media players have –and that has more to do with the Nintendo Wii than with the actual software. Support is limited for X-OOM's software as well due to the current dropping of it from their site. They never had very good tech support on their site, and without the X-OOM Media Center actually appearing anywhere, you'll need to go to the forums and look for help from fellow users directly.

Additionally, this media center costs money, where as the others are all free. Even Orb and TVersity, which are both very good media centers, are free or have free versions, meaning you never need to invest more than the \$5 in the Internet Channel on your Wii.

The visual presentation of the Media Center is also less than fantastic. Because of how much they try to fit on to the screen at once, the number of icons can result in a crowded, messy

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looking screen that waters down your options and makes it hard to find what you're looking for.

X-OOM Media Center in the Future

Despite those drawbacks though, the X-OOM Media Center works and it works fairly well. If it was free, I would be hard pressed to recommend any other option over it by too many points. However, you need to remember that there are so many different options on the market right now that have support and are being updated regularly, that opting for this one over the others might be a problem in the future. Right now, it works well, but if there is an update later to the Wii or to the interface that you are using, it might become hard to use.

I don't foresee much future development or support for X-OOM's software, despite the fact that it works well enough and had a small fan base when it was first released. If you are interested in continuing your use of it, know that it might not always work, and that the promised future features are still in development.

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Software Feature Comparison

Because there are so many options out there, we're going to break this down to make it a lot easier. Below is a rating scale with 1-5 stars for each feature for all 5 of the top media centers for your Wii. If you're interested in additional comments, I've also included my thoughts on the top choices from all 5.

Feature	Orb	WiiAudio	TVersity	Wii Media Center X	X-OOM Media Center
Ease of Installation	5	2	4	5	5
Appearance	3	1	4	3	3
Support	5	1	5	1	2
Overall Features	4	2	5	3	4
Problems and Troubleshooting	4	3	4	2	3

The Best Wii Media Center

There are obviously quite a few different options on the market when it comes to choosing a Media Center for your Nintendo Wii. The problem that many people run into right away is that the Wii is not designed to be a Media Center. So, finding a software suite that replicates the functionality of even an Xbox 360 or PS3 can be hard. The resolution is lower, the native

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support just isn't there, and the content has a lot of limitations that comes from on-demand streaming and format changing.

But, that doesn't mean a good media center cannot exist, and that's why you're reading this guide. You want to know which media center does the best job of replicating your media on the TV through your Nintendo Wii. And in my opinion there are only two clear choices – Orb Media Player and the TVersity Media Player.

While WiiAudio is an impressive piece of software for an amateur who was at home with a bum knee for a few weeks, it lacks support and it is harder to install than most other options. Wii Media Center X had great potential but a lack of support or updates has made it pretty much dead in the water, and X-OOM Media Center seems to be lacking support as well. Even with support, it is the only option on this list with a price tag, making it an investment that many people may be unsure of.



Which brings us back to the two top choices in my opinion. Orb Media Center is a great choice because it is so easy. It doesn't require any IP addresses or port forwarding or any of that other fancy stuff. The only big drawback it has that I've heard many people quote, is that it requires you to sign up for an account and get all your content forwarded directly through that account. They don't take your content or access your computer, but handing over that kind of direct accessibility can be a no-go for some people.

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If that bothers you, there is always TVersity, which like the other programs creates a media server out of your computer, allowing your Wii to access the computer via the IP address and port number. That is probably the only complex part of this software and with support for pretty much every device on the planet that has Internet access, you'll get everything you need out of TVersity every time.

It doesn't take any additional setup time. It doesn't cost any additional money, and it is being constantly updated. The Pro edition of TVersity is a particular strong point that I'm fond of and that that I hope to see other services follow suit with. Being able to stream content off of sites like Hulu or local TV networks is tremendously cool, and while there is an optional payment of \$29.95 to update to the Pro edition, it is well worth it in my opinion (and the free version makes it less of an issue).

Whether you're planning on using just the media center aspects to watch home movies and view old photos, or you have a library of thousands of films and TV episodes, you'll find both Orb and TVersity great choices for whatever you need.

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Conclusion

Creating a Wii Media Center is one of those things that probably seems much more complicated than it really is. In the back of your head, you think it could result in a broken console, extra payments, or just a big headache. But, as you have seen from the above reviews and tutorials, it is anything but.

The Nintendo Wii, while very limiting in terms of technology, has plenty of options on board for those that want to stream anything through the web browser. With Flash support and one of the fastest browsing platforms around in Opera, you can get just about anything onto your TV with a few quick installations. At that point, it becomes purely about the software and how it will run on your PC.

As you have seen, Media Center software, while sometimes problematic, has been perfected by a handful of companies to work very well on your PC, creating a virtual Media Server that can be accessed from any web browser – not just your Wii. I like to remind readers that you're not just creating a Wii media center, but a media center for any portable device in your home. That includes your iPhone or iPod, your PS3, your PSP, and pretty much any other device you can get your hands on.

In today's centralized technological world, there is no such thing as a device that only does one thing. That includes the Nintendo Wii, even despite the desires and specifications of Nintendo when they built their little white console. If you are interested in tapping everything there is to tap out of your Wii and showing the world that even the weakest game console can have a fully functional media center, then you've just found your answer.

Creating a Wii Media Center

It's not nearly as hard as you thought – in fact, you could be up and running in as little as an hour. Why not get started!

Best of Luck and Happy Viewing!

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