

Video Transmission in 2016

With so many possible ways for us to consume video in 2016 it's easier than ever for us to find and watch movies at a moment's notice. Particularly films that a few years into their release as they have generally found their way onto a number of different streaming platforms. Throughout this essay I will explore a number of available ways to view the film 'The Muppets' released in 2011 and explore the different benefits, technical aspects and costs associated with each viewing platform as well as a brief insight into the legality and workings of each service.

One of the most common methods of modern media consumption is online streaming, this is available through both legal and illegal methods, firstly we will look at legal methods of streaming such as services like Netflix, Amazon instant video and a number of others. These services often work through a subscription service in which the user pays a set fee per month which gives them access to hundreds of titles in which these services buy the legal rights to stream the titles. Many of these services offer a perpetually changing catalogue as they lose the rights to certain titles and obtain or renew the rights to others. The services also offer a variety of streaming qualities dependant on your available internet and technological capabilities. The general standard for Netflix streaming stands at 720p for most devices however Netflix do offer a 1080p resolution when streaming over fast internet connections and using specific web browsers, notably Apple's Safari browser and Microsoft's internet explorer.

Another option in regards to online streaming would be to use an illegal streaming service which have recently become widely available with the increased use of smartphones and TV boxes. Services such as Showbox and Popcorn Time are available as apps for most smart devices and they offer a vast streaming library, often with the ability to download files for offline viewing. Due to the unlicensed nature of these services they can often be temperamental in their usage. As opposed to legal services such as Netflix, Showbox and Popcorn Time use comparatively smaller servers which can much easily become overused causing crashes and even temporary down time. Due to this, the technical limitations of these services are more limited with many of them offering at most 720p streaming quality, however during peak usage times, higher quality streaming can cause significant buffering issues. It is also possible to find a variety of websites that offer free online streaming however like the services noted above these are faced by various limitations due to the illegal nature of the services. On the bright side however, these services do offer many recently released films, often whilst they are still showing in cinemas without any costs attached however many risks and downfalls are associated with their usage.

For consumers looking to download their content before watching, they're also a vast number of options available for this, again both legal and illegal. Legally, there are services such as, iTunes, the Play Store and Amazon. These services offer full HD downloads at 1080p for much of their content as well as the option to rent a film for a

reduced price which will expire and delete itself after a set period of time. This option is generally extremely reliable as it gives you a downloaded copy of the content which you can watch without a web connection meaning you don't have to worry about an unreliable internet connection. The downfall of this is the costs associated. With online streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Instant Video, you simply pay a set amount each month for unlimited streaming of a huge selection of titles, whereas with iTunes and the Play Store you are required to pay for each individual title and although the renting option can often be reasonably inexpensive it can be fairly costly to buy each of the titles, but the benefits and legality of the services are often outweigh the costs.

On the other end of the spectrum many people opt to use torrent clients to download their video files. This method of downloading is generally considered illegal without the consent of the content author and film distribution companies are constantly fighting against torrent sites to have their content removed from the servers or simply by having sites hosting torrent files banned in various geographical locations. Torrents work through a torrent client, torrent files are downloaded from the internet and opened in the torrent client and these files are used like a map to find the desired video file which the torrent client then downloads from a server. The benefits of torrent files are the quality and variety of formats in which they can be downloaded. Many torrent sites list a specific film with a variety of video formats and qualities to choose from ranging from anything between 240p and 1080p, the availability of the file in a number of formats is simply dependant on the availability of the file on the servers. Torrents are often temperamental and can vary in download times depending on the technical aspects of the host server and the popularity of the chosen torrent file. Often, the more people who download the file and continue to seed it after the download, the faster the download speed becomes. Although torrenting is cost free, the illegality and lack of regulation can cause your device to become susceptible to a variety of viruses.

Another method and one that has been used for a number of years is to watch the film from physical media. Most modern films are generally available in DVD and Blu-Ray formats which are the most common physical media standards. DVD offers a standard quality video format at 576i whilst Blu-Ray increases that to a HD resolution of up to 1080p. Although buying DVD's and Blu-Rays can quickly become costly, they can be watched as many times as desired without fear of them being removed from any various online libraries making them one of the most reliable forms of media consumption and presuming the discs are purchased from a legitimate retailer and are officially produced copies of the films, purchasing physical media is 100% legal.

In conclusion, there are a variety of mediums available today that make media even more accessible than ever before, with even more variations likely to rise in the coming years. Each medium has it's own merits and disadvantages meaning there is

no definitive answer to which is best. Personal opinion alone is the defining factor in that decision.