

Hailuo AI vs Runway ML: Which AI Video Generator Is Actually Worth Paying For?

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Table of Contents

- At a Glance: Core Specs Compared
- What Each Tool Is Actually Built For
- Generation Quality: Where Things Get Real
- Speed: Who Gets You Out the Door Faster
- Pricing: What You're Actually Paying For
- Pick the Right Tool for Your Situation
- The Verdict

The Question Worth Asking Before You Subscribe

The biggest misconception is that Hailuo AI and Runway ML are competing for the same users. They're not. One was created for professionals who need a full creative environment and are willing to pay a premium for it. And the other was built for creators who need cinematic short clips, quickly.

Both tools market themselves to everyone, and have similar price ranges. Someone new to AI videos would find it difficult to know which one fits their workflow. This article helps solve the dilemma.

Throughout this piece, we'll be comparing their generation quality, pricing structure, speed, and real-world use cases. By the end, you'll know exactly which tool is worth your money.

At a Glance: Core Specs Compared

Specification	Hailuo AI	Runway ML
Developer	MiniMax	Runway AI, inc.
Latest model	Hailuo 02	Gen-4, Gen-4 Turbo
Max resolution	1080p	4K (Gen-4 on higher plans)
Frame rate	24FPS	24FPS
Max video duration	6 seconds (extendable)	10 secs (extendable to $\approx$ 40s)
Generation modes	Text-to-video, Image-to-video	Text-to-video, Image-to-video, Video-to-video, Act One
Camera controls	Basic prompt-based	Full camera presets + Motion Brush
Audio/Lip sync	No native lip sync	No native lip sync
Free tier	20 credits on signup	125 credits on signup
Watermark (Free)	Yes	Yes
Best known for	Cinematic realism, motion quality	Creative control, filmmaker toolset

The generational leap between AI video models is substantial, with Runway Gen-4 offering superior character consistency and scene stability over Gen-3. Similarly, Hailuo 02 provides a significant upgrade through improved physics, sharper motion, and reduced flickering in complex scenes.

What Each Tool Is Actually Built For

Hailuo AI is a Chinese AI platform built by MiniMax. It gained popularity globally when it was delivering cinematic quality at a lower price than its counterparts - so impressive that people couldn't believe what they were seeing. Its standout feature is the ability to create cinematic short clips that don't look generated. Faces move naturally. Water behaves correctly.

That said, it doesn't give you full control over the output; Hailuo AI simply creates according to your prompts. Describe what you want and generate it. If you don't like it, tweak your prompts

and try again till you get your desired output. Clean UI, no motion brush, no advanced camera trajectory tools, no frame-interpolation controls.

Conversely, Runway ML is a different beast. Launched in 2018 by a research-backed company before pivoting into AI videos with Gen-1. And by the 3rd gen, they had cemented their position in the AI video production niche. Gen-4 took it to another level with motion consistency - making longer coherent sequences a possibility.

With Runway, you have access to a plethora of tools including motion brush which lets you isolate specific areas of a frame and define how they move. Act one for extracting character expressions and movement from reference footages. Camera control does more than pan/tilt; you can define specific motion trajectories, control speed, and transition between movements seamlessly. If you know what you're doing, that power is genuinely valuable. If you don't, it's an overwhelming interface with a steep learning curve.

Generation Quality: Where Things Get Real

Comparing quality in AI videos is misleading because prompt complexity, subject matter, and server load (depending on the day) determine the outcomes. Therefore, the data below is a result of aggregate testing across multiple prompts; treat the results as directional, not definitive.

Motion Realism

Hailuo stands out here, deservedly so. The 02 model showcases hand movements in an incredibly advanced way leaving behind the rubbery limb physics in previous AI video tools. Walk cycles that actually look real, gestures flow naturally, and even hair and fabrics move with realism that is remarkably close to physical accuracy.

Runway gen-4 puts up a strong fight here, especially on non-human subjects and abstract environments. While it falls short on direct human motion tests, it compensates with excellent scene coherence keeping backgrounds consistent and objects stable.

Scene Consistency

Runway is the clear winner. Watching AI video details drift frame-to-frame is frustrating as subtle shifts accumulate across a clip until the end looks completely different from the beginning.

Gen-4 solved this more aggressively than other models when it was released. Objects remain objects, character qualities are stable throughout and colors maintain their consistency.

Hailuo needs improvements on this end; drifts in clips beyond 4 - 5 secs become noticeable on complex prompts. Works well for its intended use case but anything approaching narrative continuity becomes a problem.

Style Range

Runway has more range. Whether you need photorealism, animation, illustrations, or cinematic film grain, it delivers across the board. It interprets style prompts with impressive accuracy, and an extensive library of community-built style guides helps you get consistent results.

By comparison, Hailuo is a one-trick pony; it dominates at default photorealism but chokes on abstract or stylized prompts. Look elsewhere if you need painterly effects or anime aesthetics.

Quality Dimension	Hailuo AI	Score	Runway ML	Score	Winner
Motion Realisms (Humans)		8.8/10		7.9/10	Hailuo AI
Scene consistency		7.4/10		9.0/10	Runway ML
Style range		6.5/10		8.9/10	Runway ML
Physics accuracy		8.6/10		8.1/10	Hailuo AI
Prompt adherence		8.2/10		8.7/10	Runway ML
Resolution Sharpness		8.3/10		9.1/10	Runway ML
Long-form coherence		5.5/10		8.8/10	Runway ML
Short clip impact		9.1/10		8.2/10	Hailuo AI
Overall score		7.8/10		8.6/10	Runway ML

Speed: Who Gets You Out the Door Faster

If you’re prioritizing speed, Hailuo wins. Paid subscribers should expect a 6-second 1080p clip to finish in 2 to 4 minutes; and below 90 seconds on a good day. Freemium users should expect a 5-to-10-minute wait time during busy hours.

Runway’s Gen-4 takes more time, needing 3 to 7 minutes for a 10-second 1080p clip on standard plans. Whereas higher-tier Turbo modes can reduce that wait time by nearly half. Heavy workflows like Act One sessions require extra processing; complex projects can easily take up to 15 minutes from upload to the final export.

Scenario	Hailuo (Free)	Hailuo (Paid)	Runway (Free)	Runway (Paid)
6s clip, simple prompt, 720p	5 to 8 mins	2 to 3 mins	4 to 7 mins	3 to 5 mins
6s clip, complex scene, 1080p	8 to 12 mins	3 to 5 mins	7 to 12 mins	5 to 8 mins
10s clip, 1080p (Runway)/Extended	N/A (max 6s native)	N/A	8 to 15mins	6 to 10 mins
Peak hours	Up to 20mins	4 to 6 mins	Up to 25mins	5 to 10mins
Act one/reference-driven gen	Not available	Not available	15 to 30mins	10 to 20 mins

None of these tools will make you wait unnecessarily on a paid plan. However, both can test your patience when it’s US hours.

Pricing: What You're Actually Paying For

This is the section where people end up making the wrong choice. There's a difference between the tools and their pricing structure

Plan	Price/month	Hailuo AI	Runway ML
Free	\$0	20 credits signup, watermark, 720p	125 credits on signup, watermark
Basic/Standard	\$10 to \$15	600 credits/month, 1080p, no watermark	625 credits/month, 1080p, no watermark
Pro	\$28 to \$35	2000 credits/month, priority queue	2250 credits/month, priority queue, 4k
Unlimited/max	\$95 to \$144	High volume credits, API access	Unlimited gens (some limit applies), team features

The pricing looks similar on paper, but in practice, you access different things per credit. For instance in Runway's unlimited plan; you can collaborate with your team and get your output in 4k. These don't exist in Hailuo. Hailuo's entry value is decent enough - good quality, enough credits, and no watermark at a low cost.

It's worth noting to mention that Runway's unlimited plans limitations are listed above: High priority during huge server load, and generations-per-day cap. I'd advise that you read clearly before purchasing an annual plan.

Pick the Right Tool for Your Situation

Your situation	Go with Hailuo AI	Go with Runway ML
Need realistic human movement	Best in class	Good, but not the leader
Producing short clips (below 8s)	Ideal format	Works, but overkill
Need clips longer than 10s	Hard ceiling	Extendable sequences
Want full camera trajectory control	Limited	Motion brush + presets
Working with a production team	Solo used only	Built for collaboration
Tight monthly budget	Better entry value	Cost climbs fast
Need 4k output	N/A	Pro plan and above
Experimenting with style variety	Leans photorealistic	Strong style range
Extracting performance from live reference	No equivalent	Act one feature
Want fast results without learning much	Prompt in, Video out	Too many features = complexity

The Verdict

Runway is the better tool and it's not close. The consistency in scenes, style range, 4k output, team features, and camera control makes it suitable for professional use. Runway should be your go to if you're producing content for an agency, production pipeline or a brand.

However, just because it's capable doesn't mean it's right for you.

Hailuo AI produces the most impressive human motion quality at an unbeatable price point. For individual creators churning out short-form social content where lifelike movement matters more than complex camera angles, Hailuo delivers. It frequently matches or beats tools that cost two to three times as much. Plus, its simple interface stays completely out of your way—which, for many fast-paced workflows, is a major asset rather than a limitation.

The bottom line: Test both free tiers using the exact same three prompts. See which output you would actually publish. That's your answer, and you don't need a comparison review to tell you otherwise.

Best of all, both Hailuo AI and Runway ML are available through ZuloAI, so you can easily run this side-by-side test without juggling separate platform accounts.