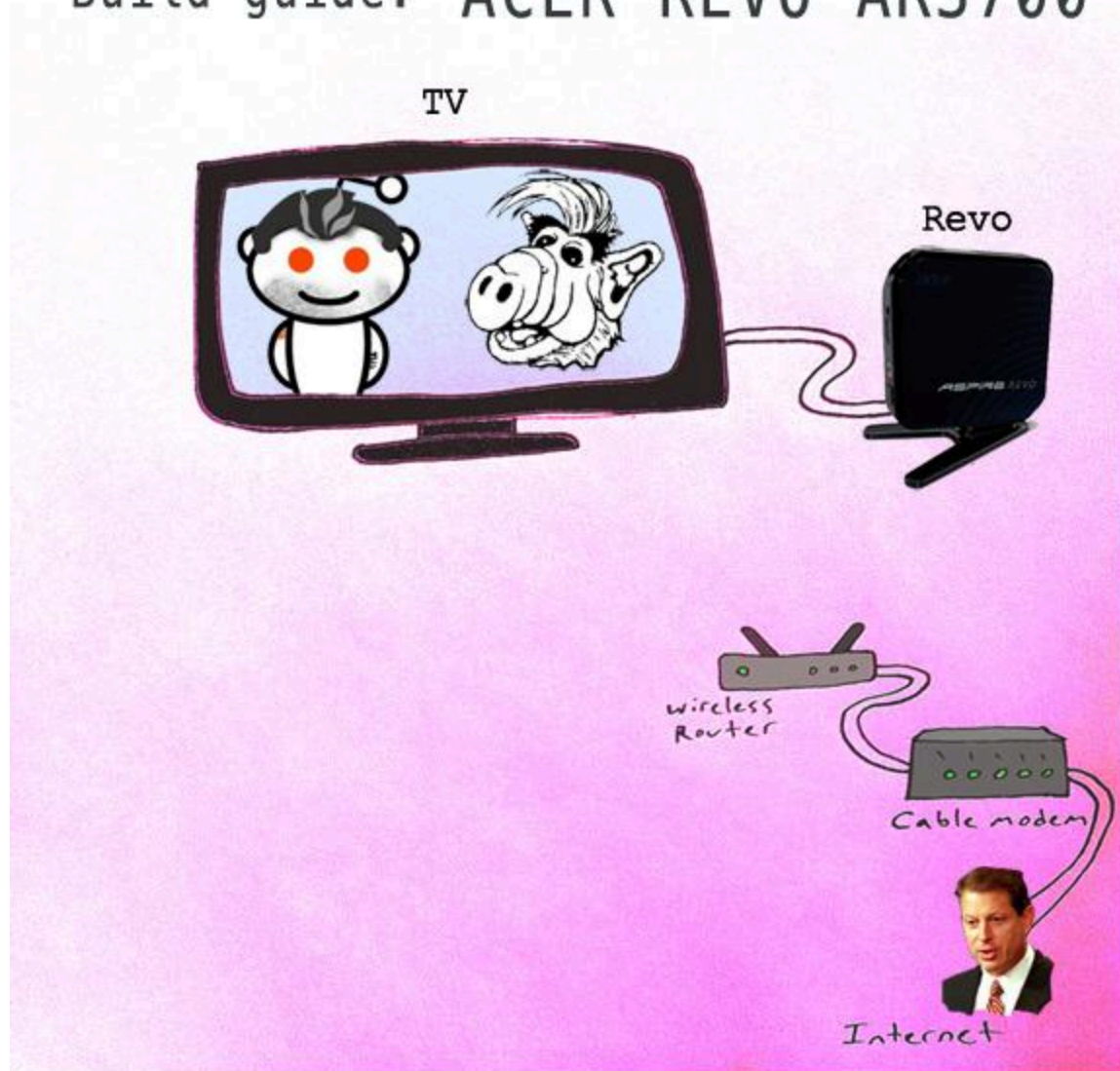


Take control of your TV, cut the cord.

reddit.com/r/cordcutters

CORDCUTTERS

Build guide: ACER REVO AR3700



by pegothejerk

Cordcutters is a reddit.com-based community dedicated to discussing the move of home visual/audio (think TV) entertainment away from expensive and overly priced cable and satellite based systems to easily controlled and cheaper internet and local file based platforms (think

fire-breathing robots doing your bidding, on demand, on tv, for much cheaper, if not for free, and more importantly, legally). In each edition of these Cordcutter builds I and hopefully other redditors will discuss a particular platform that can be used to deliver a wide variety of media to your TV or computer screen so that you can cut the cable and take control of your leisure time. You will find that this will not only free you to view what you are interested in instead of what happens to be on at the moment, but it will also save you money and commercial viewing time.

HTPC - A Home Theater PC (HTPC) or Media Center appliance is a convergence device that combines some or all the capabilities of a personal computer with a software application that supports video, photo, and music playback, and sometimes digital video recorder functionality. An HTPC and other convergence devices integrate many or all components of a home theater into a single unit co-located with a home entertainment system. (wikipedia)

Today I will discuss the **Acer Aspire Revo AR3700**, a nettop PC that handles streaming not only all your web videos, podcasts, and music collection, but HD video and audio as well. With this machine you can use your HD TV to view movies, cable based TV programs, (you can find legal sources for this all over the internet, with cordcutters intent on helping you find them) youtube videos, and even video conference with grandma for that long distance knitting class. All of this can be had for the price of your internet service, after you build your HTPC, of course. It could very well be the last box plug in to your TV.

The Acer Aspire Revo AR3700 is a fantastic, lightweight, incredibly small media PC capable of serving up full HD (1080p via built in HDMI) while not breaking the bank. The best feature, for my money, is that it consumes very little power compared to full sized PCs, allowing you to leave it on without fearing each new electric bill. This particular version of the Revo can be had, at the moment, for less than 400 dollars on Amazon. You should also know that there are refurbished Revo 3610's out there between 200 and 300 dollars that can be had, and these machines are essentially the same, if only a tiny bit slower, but with an eSATA included. They still have way more than enough horse power to do everything the 3700 does.

Again, there is no need, whatsoever, to wonder about the Revo's ability to stream audio, video, or process your various codecs and 3D. Since the Revo 3610 pretty much everything you can throw at the machine will be flawlessly delivered to your media center without hassle. Those little glitches you might find are easily resolved with a quick google search, and that seems even more rare with the new 3700. Most people will not find it necessary to do anything but install the recommended programs, sign up for your various services (like netflix and hulu), and get to watching.

The Machine (Revo AR3700):

Wireless mouse and keyboard

SPDIF (for digital audio to your surround sound system)

The 1.8 GHz Intel Atom D525 Processor

2 GB Ram, 250 GB hard drive
(you can get a 4GB 500GB version)
6 USB ports
7.1 inches L, 1.2 inches W, 7.1 inches H
Windows 7 Home Premium
built-in 802.11b/g/n wireless and Gigabit Ethernet

The machine comes ready to go, as a PC, and you can simply plug it in to a power outlet, plug in the keyboard/mouse dongle, plug the Revo into an HD TV, and turn it on. It will work. Now comes the fun part - you want content, you want to take control of what to watch based on your interests, and you want it legally, and cheaply. You will need to install some software first, to do this. Once you have done that, you are set and believe me, you will find PLENTY to play with and explore. If you need help finding programs that interest you, you can go to reddit.com/r/cordcutters and the community there will be more than happy to help you find what you need.

You'll want to **install the following before you begin watching:**

Avast (free edition) for your anti-virus and anti-spyware needs, CCleaner, Zonealarm (as an extra firewall), winrar, XBMC (an sort of all in one video viewing center), Hulu Desktop (lots of your network based TV programming available for free here), Boxee (another all in one type viewing center), VLC, Microsoft Silverlight, firefox (modern web browser for web viewing, netflix, etc), adobe flash player (if you enjoy BBC programs), Adobe Air, Java, Adobe Shockwave, and Autoruns for Windows (you'll run into programs trying to install crapware from time to time and this will help you control this problem), MyDefrag, and ffdshow tryouts (wide array of windows audio/video codecs).

Install Links:

Avast - <http://www.avast.com/free-antivirus-download>

CCleaner - <http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner>

Zonealarm - <http://www.zonealarm.com/security/en-us/anti-virus-spyware-free-download.htm>

Winrar - <http://www.win-rar.com/download.html>

XBMC - <http://xbmc.org/download/>

Hulu - <http://www.hulu.com/labs/hulu-desktop>

Boxee - <http://www.boxee.tv/download>

VLC - <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-windows.html>

Microsoft Silverlight - <http://www.microsoft.com/getsilverlight/>

Firefox - <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/>

Adobe Flash Player - <http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/>

Adobe Air - <http://get.adobe.com/air/>

Adobe Shockwave - <http://get.adobe.com/shockwave/>

Java - <http://www.java.com/getjava/index.jsp>

Autoruns for Windows - <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb963902>

MyDefrag - <http://www.mydefrag.com/Manual-DownloadAndInstall.html>
ffdshow tryouts - <http://ffdshow-tryout.sourceforge.net/download.php>

Important!: Install ALL your windows updates and drivers, specifically taking note that your nvidia drivers (download Version 260.99, currently) are the most current. There are even nvidia 3D drivers available, but you'll need those fancy active glasses for that, and I'm not that fancy, myself, so you'll have to do that research on your own.

XBMC - enable hardware acceleration and sync your TV with the frame rate settings or you could have problems with choppy video and sound. That's in the settings if you hadn't already guessed. You'll also want to spend a GREAT DEAL of time reading up on the plugins/add-ons. **Add-ons** are packages that add features and functions not normally included with XBMC. There is a list of currently working plugins here - http://wiki.xbmc.org/index.php?title=List_of_working_plugins

Remotes – if you want a remote, I have personally found that BY FAR the best remote to invest in is the official microsoft remote. It works with all the programs you'll use for local files and most of them for streaming. Personally I use the mouse and keyboard, but I have at times used both the remote, and even my iPhone as both a mouse and keyboard (look up Mobile Mouse Free in apps on your phone). The microsoft remote will work out of the box, but to gain full access to the buttons in XBMC you'll need the MCERemote add-on.

Potential problems with codecs – I own a Revo 3610, which is almost identical to the 3700, just a tiny bit slower with an eSATA. If the 3700 is anything like the 3610, you MIGHT have to install another codec package to successfully play a few oddly encoded 1080 files like H.264 and MKV. I easily resolved these issues by purchasing (for just under 10 dollars) the CoreAVC codec pack. After installing that I never had an issue again. If you ever run into a problem with stuttering or audio/video sync issues, know that the Revo has plenty of power to decode and steam these files and there is definitely a fix to be had. There are tons of people using these tiny beasts, and a lot of them post on the tubes, so do yourself a favor and search the hell out of google before you get frustrated. A very good community that deals well with hardware and software issues is <http://forum.xbmc.org/>. Believe me, these people know what they are doing, way more so than myself.

CoreAVC - <http://corecodec.com/products/coreavc>

Linux Lovers - If you want to go the linux route, installing XBMC Live Dharma, here is a wonderful guide for getting that done. Be aware that this is more complex, involving a few tweaks of the audio drivers and various medium tech level installs, but in the end you'll be very pleased with the result should you go this route -

<http://forum.xbmc.org/showthread.php?t=88369>

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This is was my first attempt at writing a guide for those interested in building an HTPC. A special thanks goes to redditor wawayanda for creating Cordcutters and helping bring us all together as a community. If you can think of anything I missed, found something I need to correct or update, feel free to contact me on reddit via the links below:

<http://www.reddit.com/message/compose/?to=pegothejerk>

<http://www.reddit.com/r/cordcutters/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Boo-Science/264132800312?ref=mf>

<http://booscience.tumblr.com/>

<http://twitter.com/BooScience#>