

by Alan J. Pierce, EdD

Tivo Premiere 4 Vs Optimum Multi Room DVR

Tivo and ReplayTV changed the way most people today watch television. Both companies simultaneously introduced the Digital Video Recorder about 13 years ago. I interviewed their representatives 13 years ago at a consumer electronics press event. As I wrote that August 2000 column I got the feeling that their technology was about to usher in the birth of a new time shifting TV recording revolution. You can read that 13 year old column online - **click the link at bottom of this page.**

The years since their technology was first introduced have not always been easy for the original creators of the DVR. ReplayTV was litigated out of existence after they introduced a DVR unit that could instantly skip



video feeds of the shows that you want to watch or record legally through the use of a cable card that you must acquire from your cable company. To be perfectly clear, to use the Tivo Premiere 4 DVR you must be a customer of your local cable company and already pay for a package that includes cable TV and high speed internet.

Since the unit will not work without a cable card, you will want it on hand before you unplug your old cable box. I stopped into my local Cablevision of Rockland County office and they supplied this card for a rental fee of \$2.00 per month. Your cable company might charge the same for the cable card as you are now paying to rent their cable box; so by returning the old cable box you might not incur any additional fees for renting the card.

Besides wiring the system the only other thing you need to do is activate the Tivo service. Basically you are acquiring the Tivo machine intelligence, which is the backbone of the Tivo system, through your high speed internet cable



TV commercials. Tivo has to date survived the onslaught from other DVR providers, but they have been forced to be a minor player in a technology that they originated.

The Tivo Premiere 4 DVR (see photos) is a replacement cable TV box that can record four different TV shows at the same time. You will use it in place of the box that was supplied to you by your cable TV service. You will use this Tivo and its remote to perform all of the activities that you once did with your old cable box. It will access the

connection for \$14.95 per month. Your cable TV connection only provides the digital feeds of the shows that you will watch live or select to record. All of your recordings are stored on the 500GB hard drive inside the Premiere 4 unit. This is enough space to store 75 hours of HD programming or 300 hours of SD recordings. The Tivo Premiere 4 is designed to only operate with a digital cable system, it can't record analog programs, can't work with a TV antenna, and it won't work without the Tivo service.

To take full advantage of the playback capabilities of the Tivo you will want to locate it in the same room as your modem, wireless router, and supersized Ultra HD 4K or HDTV. Tivo has designed this unit so it should be directly plugged into your wired ethernet network. The Tivo Premiere 4 can't connect to the Tivo service through a telephone line or a Wi-Fi connection. The company wants this Tivo unit directly plugged into your wireless router or modem. They feel that Wi-Fi is not good enough to provide you with reliable service. It is possible to get around this direct wiring requirement by purchasing a MoCa wireless adapter. To go multi-room or access your recording on your Smartphone or Tablet you will need to purchase other Tivo products, do some wiring, and possibly pay some extra monthly Tivo service fees. Visit Tivo at: <http://www.tivo.com/products/tivo-accessories/index.html>

to react. They do however, have an Optimum app that allows you to control all DVR scheduling and functions from your computer, Smartphone, and/or tablet. Besides controlling this DVR, the app also lets you watch live or record TV while you are within range of your Wi-Fi network. Once again I found some hiccups. The app did work on an iPhone and iPad but could not be loaded onto my android Smartphone or tablet. Perhaps by the time that you read this product review they will have worked out all of the android app kinks. This app made the system extremely easy to control. The last hiccup that I experienced during the testing of the system can best be described by quoting what appeared a few times on my TV screen. "We cannot connect to your DVR at this time. Please check back shortly". So my final word on the Optimum Multi-room DVR is that you should consider it a work in progress.

Cablevision of Rockland County offers a multi-room DVR for \$12.95 a month. See photo.

The shows that you record are stored in the cloud not on your TV cable boxes. You can store up to 300 hours SDTV or 75 hours of HDTV and the system will allow you to record 10 shows at the same time. Once operational you can watch different recorded TV shows in different rooms at the same time and/or start a show in one room and complete watching it in another.

Basically the system is a DVR on steroids; but it does have some hiccups. When you access the system with your standard cablevision remote the system is slow

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*Alan is co-author of **Introduction to Technology Glencoe McGraw-Hill 2010** and a **TechDirections Magazine** Columnist .*

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