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How to set up your XBMC media center

by Justin Pot

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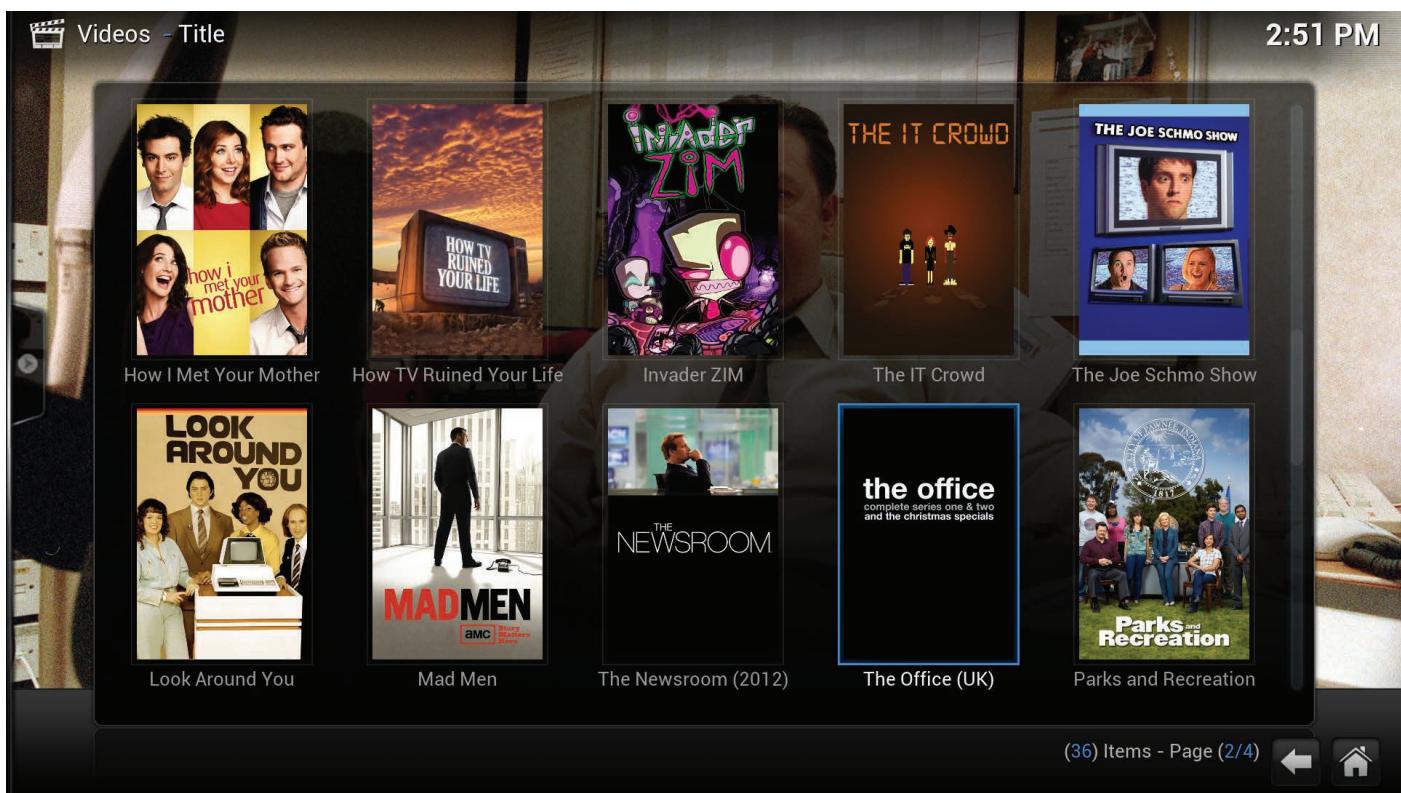
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1. Introducing XBMC



Discs on your shelves. Files on your computer. Websites around the web. You, the modern media consumer, don't get your entertainment from just one place: you get it from a variety of different sources.

XBMC is the ultimate media center software, because it gives you a single interface for accessing all of your media from all of these different places. Even better: it does so using a remote-friendly interface, so with a few taps of your remote you can browse your digital collection of music and videos, explore some of the most popular media sites on the web or check out live Internet TV from around the world. Set up properly, XBMC can do just about anything you'd want your TV to be able to do online – from Hulu to your movie collection, from YouTube to live sports you've bought an online subscription for.

It's every bit as good as it sounds, but unfortunately XBMC can also be a confusing piece of software to get started with. It's an open source project, meaning that it's completely free to use – you can even make changes to the source code, if you want. And an amazing number of contributors from around the world have built plugins for the project, meaning there's seemingly no end to the tricks you can teach this software. More on that later.

But like many (not all, but many) open source projects, XBMC can seem overwhelming to the beginner. You'll try to add your media but some of it won't show up. You'll try to add extensions but won't be able to find the cool ones you've heard about. You'll try to customize how things look but won't immediately find an easy way to do so.

Don't worry. In this guide I'm going to talk you through the process of setting up XBMC for the first time. Work with me and you'll have your entire media collection added, extensions for your favorite online media installed and various other tweaks set up to make everything work just as you'd expect.

I can't go over everything – that would be a much longer manual than this. But I'll go over the basics, and show you how to learn more.

This manual is based on version 12.0 of XBMC, released in early 2013 and codenamed "Frodo". The information in this manual should be relevant for future versions, but there may be minor differences. You've been warned.

1.2 Why Is This Called XBMC?

What, exactly, does XBMC stand for? While officially today XBMC doesn't stand for anything in particular, you might

be surprised to learn the four letters originally stood for **XBox Media Center**.

Why the console-specific name? Because the software we call XBMC today was originally created in 2003 to be a media center on the original XBox. Anyone willing to jailbreak their gaming system back then could install this software to watch their own video files – from the internal XBox hard drive or from a network share – and even stream some video from the web.

XBMC has since been released on every major platform: Windows, Mac, Linux and even AppleTV (jailbreak required). There's a dedicated version for the [Raspberry Pi](#), perfect for those not wishing to spend a lot of money on an XBMC setup. And most recently, XBMC has been released for Android, meaning you can install this media center on a wide variety of smartphones and tablets (assuming they're powerful enough and compatible, of course).

XBMC is and always has been open source software, meaning anyone can contribute code to the project or even release his or her own version of it. A company called Boxee once released software based on XBMC, and it was among the most popular media center programs out there for a couple of years. Another prominent XBMC derivative is [Plex](#), which is less flexible but arguably easier to use than XBMC itself.

I prefer XBMC to all of these projects for one reason: flexibility. If you're willing to spend enough time configuring XBMC you'll find a way to do just about anything you want.

1.3 Other Resources to Check Out

I couldn't have written this manual (or even learned to set up XBMC myself) without the help of the [official XBMC wiki](#). This online resource, maintained by the XBMC project itself, includes way more information about XBMC than I could ever hope to include in one manual. Check it out if you get stuck.

Another resource worth looking into is the [XBMC Forum](#). Here you'll find a collection of tips and tricks and a place to ask support questions. You'll even hear from plugin and skin developers working on new uses for XBMC. As with any online community be sure to search the forum before asking a question, and be sure to read the rules if you want to participate in discussions.

Finally, it's worth checking [xbmcHub.com](#) to learn even more. This site, while focused on a few less-than-legal uses for XBMC, is a great resource for learning about third party add-ons. It also offers a forum, where you can get your questions answered. Again: search first, then ask, and be aware of the forum rules.

2. Getting Started

Before we begin let's talk a bit about what you need for an ideal XBMC experience. The first thing, of course, is some sort of system to run XBMC on. For best results this device should hook up to your TV, or whatever display you want to use to watch your media on.

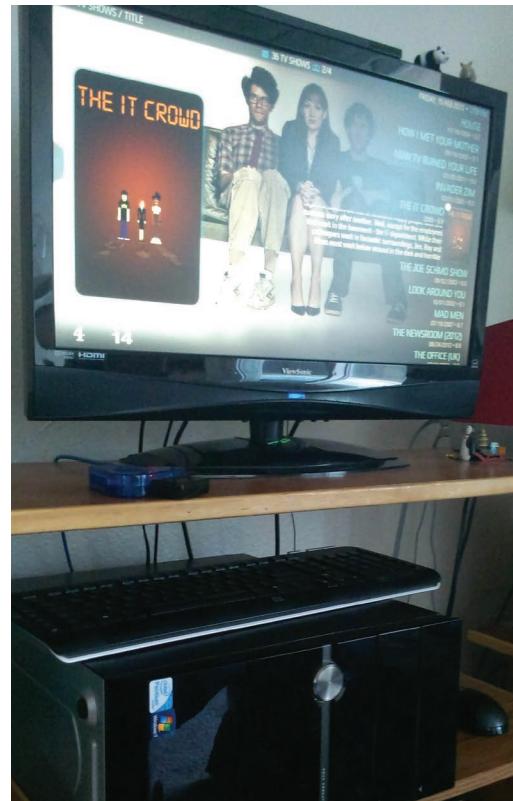
Your device could be a regular computer running Windows, OS X or Linux. Most modern TVs include a VGA as well as an HDMI port, so hooking up a computer to your television should not be difficult.

XBMC doesn't need the latest and greatest hardware to run well, but obviously a powerful graphics card can help with HD playback. [Check out the specific hardware recommendations](#), if you're curious, but if you purchased your computer in the past couple of years you're probably fine.

Your XBMC device could be a dedicated device, however, like the \$25 Raspberry Pi. This tiny computer comes with an Ethernet connection and an HDMI port, so it's simple to hook up to your TV. HD video will not play well, of course, but for \$25 it's hard to complain.

You can even use an AppleTV, if you want, though you'll need to jailbreak the device to do so. The process for doing so changes a lot, so I won't get into specifics, [but the XBMC wiki is a good place to start](#).

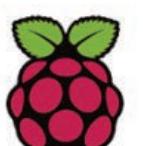
Another thing you're going to want is a remote, but we'll get into that later. For now let's get XBMC set up on your device of choice.



2.1 Installing XBMC

To get started head to [XBMC.org](#) and click the "Downloads" button. You'll be presented with various download options:

Current Stable Release: 12.0 "Frodo"

-  [OSX-x86-64 - OSX](#)
-  [Linux](#)
-  [Windows](#)
-  [ATV - ATV2](#)
-  [iOS](#)
-  [Android*](#)
-  [Raspberry Pi](#)
-  [AMD - Intel/NVIDIA](#)

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F.A.Q.

Installing XBMC on Mac, Linux and Windows computers is fairly straight forward – that is, basically the same as with any other software.

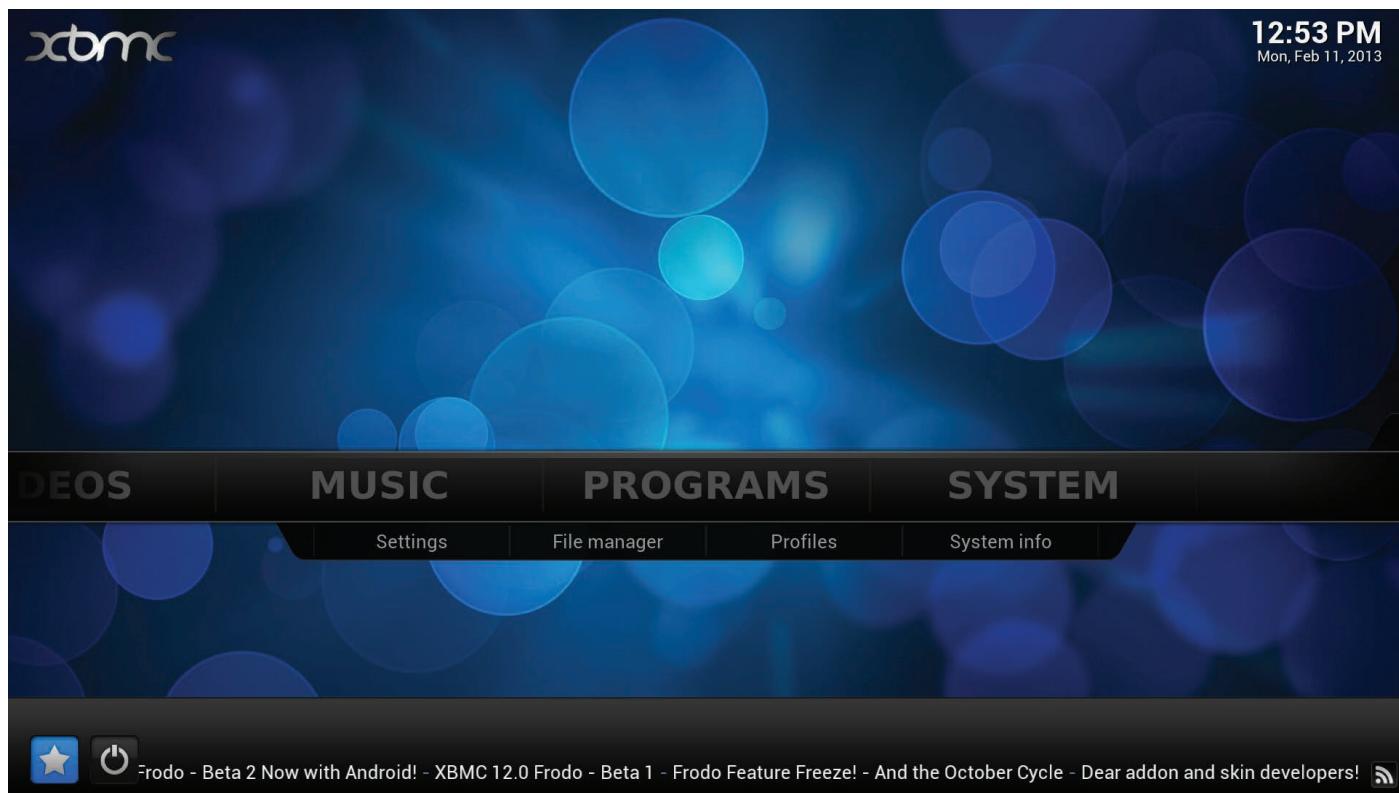
Installing XBMC on Android is a little more complicated. As of this writing the program is not available in Google Play, but you can download an .APK version of the program and install it on devices that allow direct installation. [Read more on the wiki.](#)

We outline how to install XBMC on the Raspberry Pi in our [Raspberry Pi manual](#), so check that out for more details. You'll basically need to write XBMC to a flash drive and boot it with your Pi.

Apple TVs will need to unlock their device before they can install the software, which we won't get into here.

2.3 The Main Screen

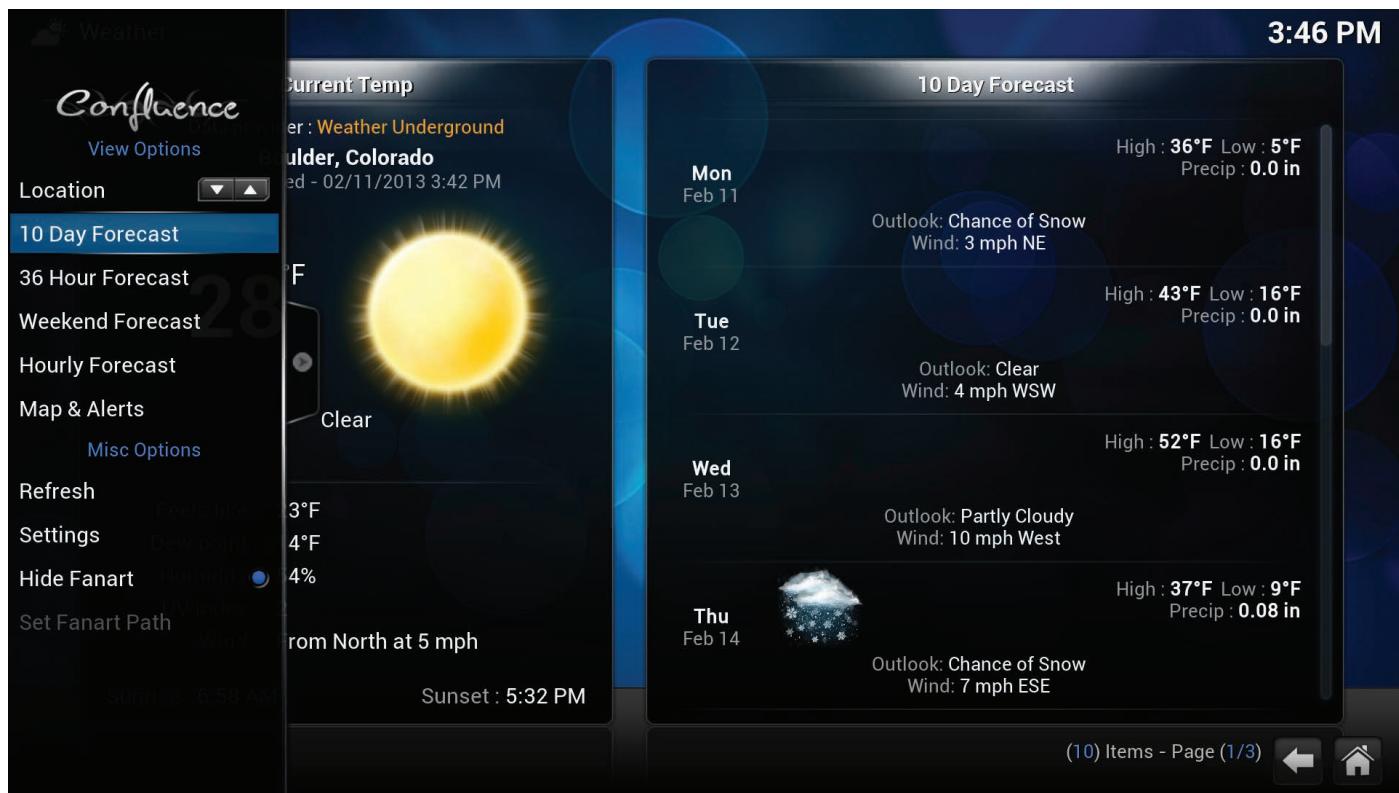
Start up XBMC and you'll see the main screen of the program. Videos, Music and Pictures will all be here as options, but none of your media will show up yet.



We'll configure the software to find your media collection later, but first let's get used to the interface by setting up the weather properly. Click left until you get to "Weather". Hit "enter" and you'll see the current forecast.

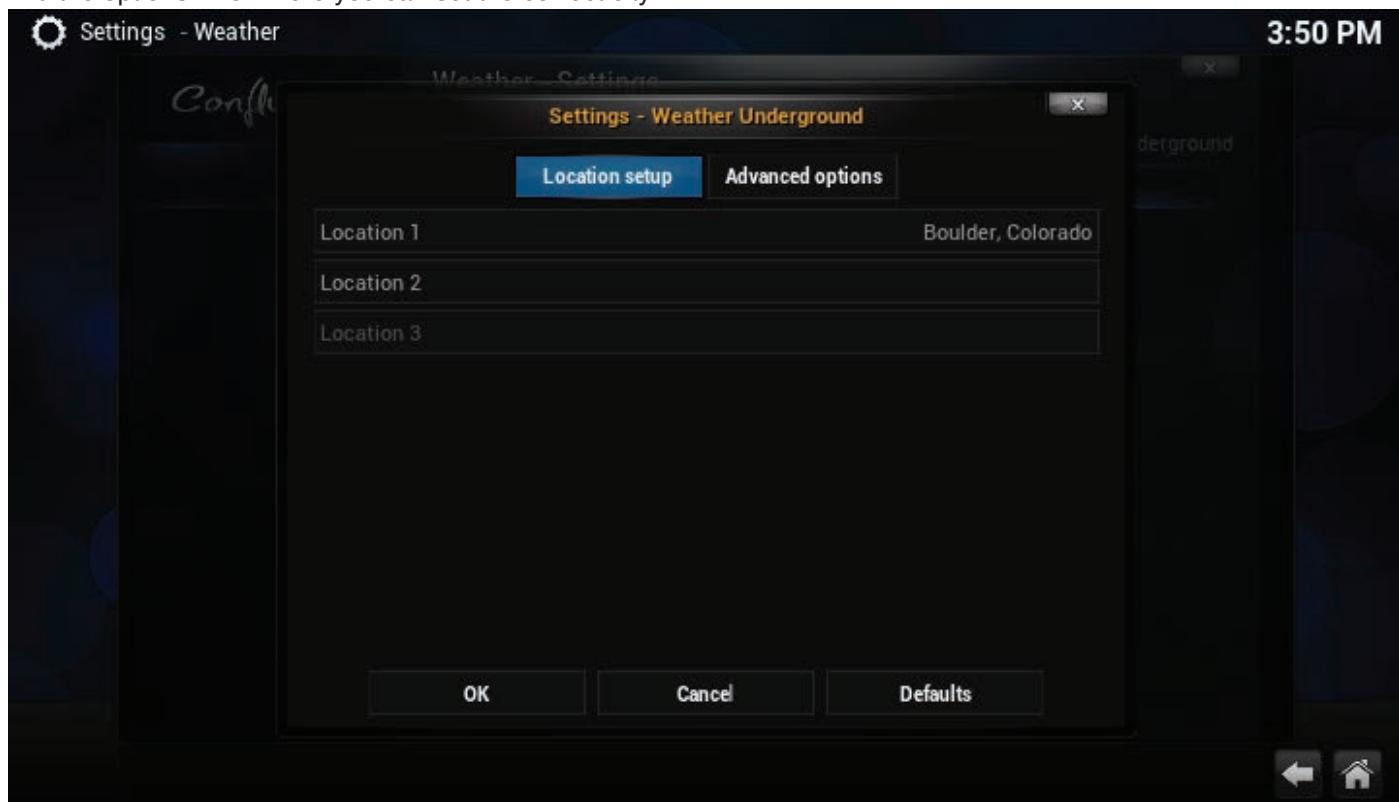


This is only one potential view of the weather, and the city might be wrong. If you want to see more, click the left button until a panel menu slides out. Like this:



From here you can pick different ways to look at the weather, from hourly forecasts to maps. Moving to the left to pull up a panel menu is common throughout the XBMC user interface, so remember how to do so.

You'll also find the settings here. Let's go ahead and set the correct city. Click "Settings" in the panel menu and you'll find the options. From here you can set the correct city:



As you can see, it's possible to add three different locations. Do so and you can switch between them from the panel

menu whenever you want.

Weather, of course, isn't the most important reason to use XBMC. But in learning to set up the weather section of the app you've learned a little about the XBMC interface. Let's learn some more.

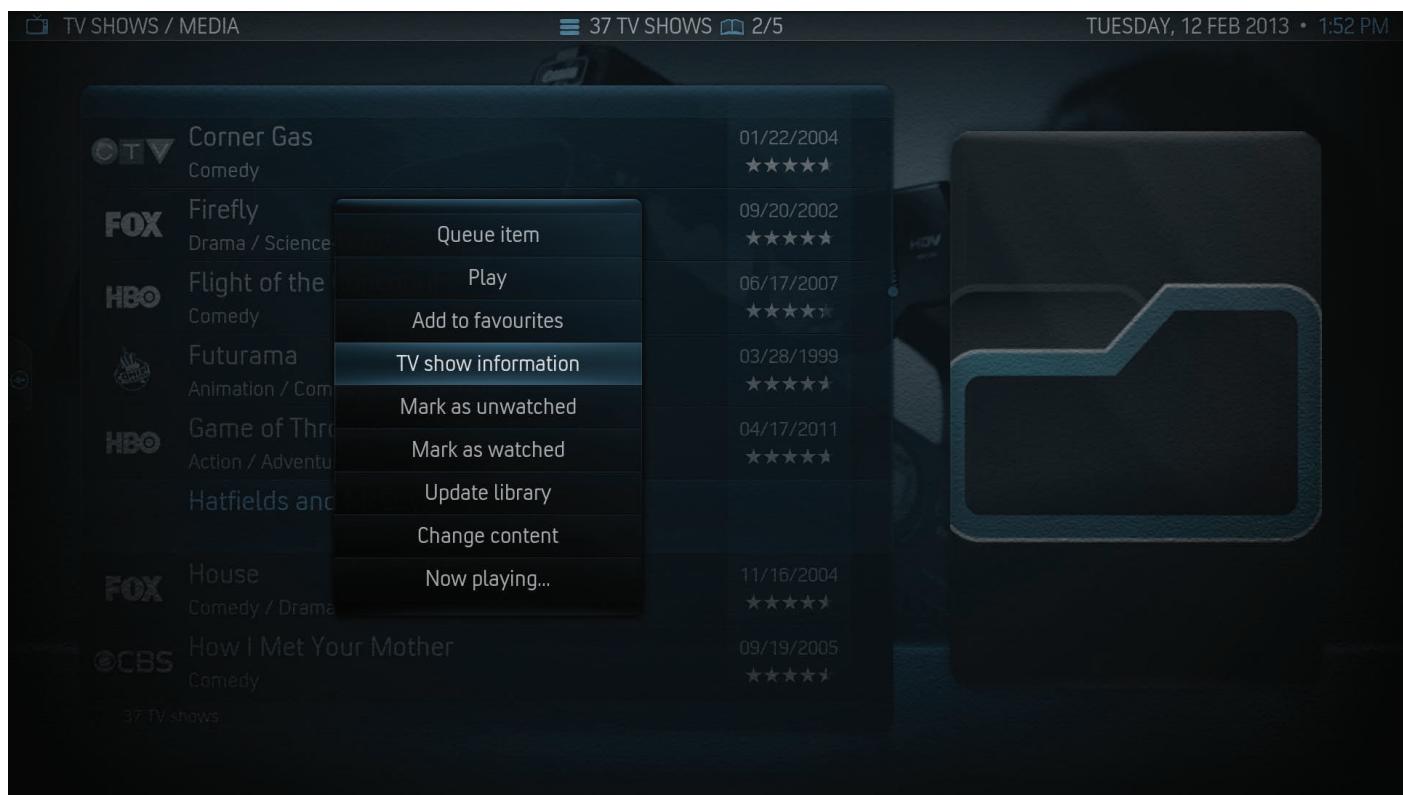
2.4 A Few Keyboard Shortcuts You Should Know

You now know that arrow keys work exactly as you'd expect them to, and that "enter" opens whatever is currently highlighted on XBMC. If you've opened the weather interface you might be wondering how to get back.

There are two ways. "Backspace" will take you one step back; "Esc" will take you all the way back to the main screen, regardless of where you are.

You can learn this and a number of other keyboard shortcuts on [the keyboard shortcuts page in the XBMC wiki](#), but for day-to-day usage you really need a few more.

The "C" key brings up a menu in relation to what's highlighted. Like this:



From here you can mark a file as watched/unwatched or change the media information. It's also how to access settings for any add-on, so remember it.

The "+" and "--" keys control the in-program volume, useful if you need to make XBMC louder than another program you're using for some reason.

While playing a video or song the spacebar will both pause and unpause.

You've got a handle on the controls now, right? Great, now lets get you a remote so you never need to use them again.

2.5 Get A Remote!

Keyboards are cool, but to really get the most out of XBMC you need a remote. Leaning back on the couch just isn't as comfortable with a keyboard. Happily there are various kinds of remotes that work well with XBMC, most of which are extremely affordable.

Windows users should look into affordable MCE remotes, most of which come with IR receivers. They are plug and play, so typically all you'll need to do to use them is hook up the receiver. You'll quickly find the equivalents of the "en-

ter,” “backspace” and “spacebar” buttons.

Mac users can simply use the remote that came with their device – it works with XBMC without the need for any configuration. Enjoy.

Smartphone and tablet users don’t necessarily need a dedicated remote: you can find a software remote on [Google Play](#) if you have an Android device or the [App Store](#) if you have an Apple device. These remotes control XBMC over WiFi, so make sure your phone and your XBMC device are on the same network and you should be good to go. With them you can browse your entire media collection right on your phone, or control XBMC the way you would with a regular remote.

[You can read more about remotes that work with XBMC on the XBMC wiki](#). You’ll even find links to remotes with built in keyboards, perfect if you plan to use XBMC to search web video with some frequency.

If none of these work out for you, get creative. There might be something around the house that will already work. I personally [use the DVD remote from my old PS2 to control XBMC](#), for example. If you’re willing to work at it I’m sure you could figure out a similar trick with something you already have.



3. Adding Your Media To XBMC

Now that we know our way around XBMC – at least, how to control it – let's start adding some media. Because XBMC [supports every major media format you can imagine](#) (and a few that you can't) it's a safe bet XBMC can organize your existing collection in a way you'll be able to quickly browse using your remote. The software even downloads art and metadata for you.

There's a bit of work before we can start, however: you need to make sure XBMC will be able to find your files. To begin, make sure your movies, TV shows, pictures and music are all in folders specific to those media types. This will come in handy later.

Then we need to make sure your video files are properly named.

3.1 Properly Naming Files

Unfortunately, XBMC can't magically figure out which TV shows and movies your video files are supposed to represent. There's a reason for this: most music files come with ID3 tags, which is a sort of metadata that tells media software the name of the artist, album and track. There isn't really an equivalent standard for videos – at least not one used consistently.

Because of this XBMC needs you to carefully name your movies and TV shows in order to find them. It's annoying, yes, but unless you do this you won't be able to benefit from the amazing library functions of XBMC – from artwork to summaries to subtitles. So you need to rename your files.

3.1.1 Movie Filenames

The format for a movie is simple, and identical to how films are listed on IMDB: the name of the movie followed by the year it was released, in brackets. So J.J. Abram's 2009 reboot of the Star Trek series should be named "Star Trek (2009).avi" (assuming, of course, that the original file was a .avi file)

The reason for this is simple: name the file "Star Trek.avi" and XBMC has no idea which of the dozen Trek movies the file may contain. It's not hard to think of other examples where the name of a movie alone isn't enough, so add the year to any files that don't have them just to be sure.

It's also important to actually get the name of a given movie correct – XBMC cannot always guess by context, so any words missing from the title or misspellings will cause problems. Not sure what year a movie was released, or what the exact name of that movie is? Check IMDB. You can't go wrong by copying names and years from that site.

3.1.2 TV Show Filenames

TV shows require similar precision, and then some: you need to format the season and episode numbers properly in addition to getting the name of the show correct.

The name of the show is the easy part: again, just check IMDB. Most shows won't require a year, but if a particular show shares a name with another one you're going to need that (i.e., Battlestar Galactica 2003). Ensure that both the files themselves and the folders the files are in are named correctly, or your show might now show up in XBMC.

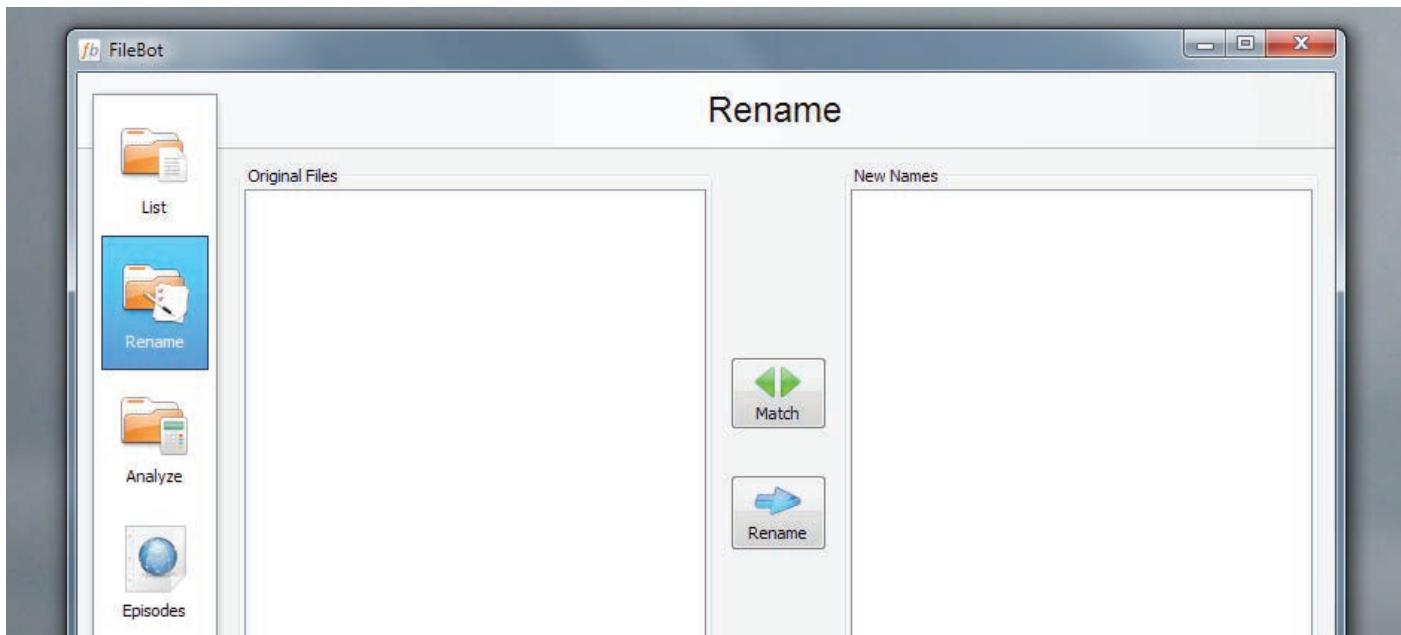
Once you've done that it's time to make sure the episode numbers are correct. If you ripped your TV shows from DVD you may have used a variety of different numbering systems to represent season and episode number. 1x02, for example, could mean Season 1 Episode 2 – but so could 102, 1.02 or seaon1episode2.

For the sake of XBMC you should use the letter "S" followed by the two-digit season number (i.e., S01), immediately followed by the letter "E" and the two-digit episode number (i.e., E02) So, if you were adding an episode of Community, the correct name for the file would be: "Community – S01E02 – Spanish 101.avi"

Note that the name of the episode – "Spanish 101" – is superfluous information as far as XBMC is concerned. Sure, it's nice to have around when you're manually browsing your files, but the name of the episode is not at all necessary for XBMC to find the file.

3.1.3 Filebot Renames Files So You Don't Have To

Renaming TV episodes and movies so XBMC can understand them doesn't need to be time-consuming: a program called FileBot can do it for you quickly. It will scan your videos, ask you what show they're from and automatically rename them so XBMC will recognize them.



Drag your folder full of episodes to FileBot and it will attempt to figure out the proper file names for specific episodes. Depending on how garbled your filenames are it may fail, but it's a lot easier in most cases than manually renaming the files would be.

Note that you'll still need to properly rename your show's folder after doing this, or XBMC might not find the files.

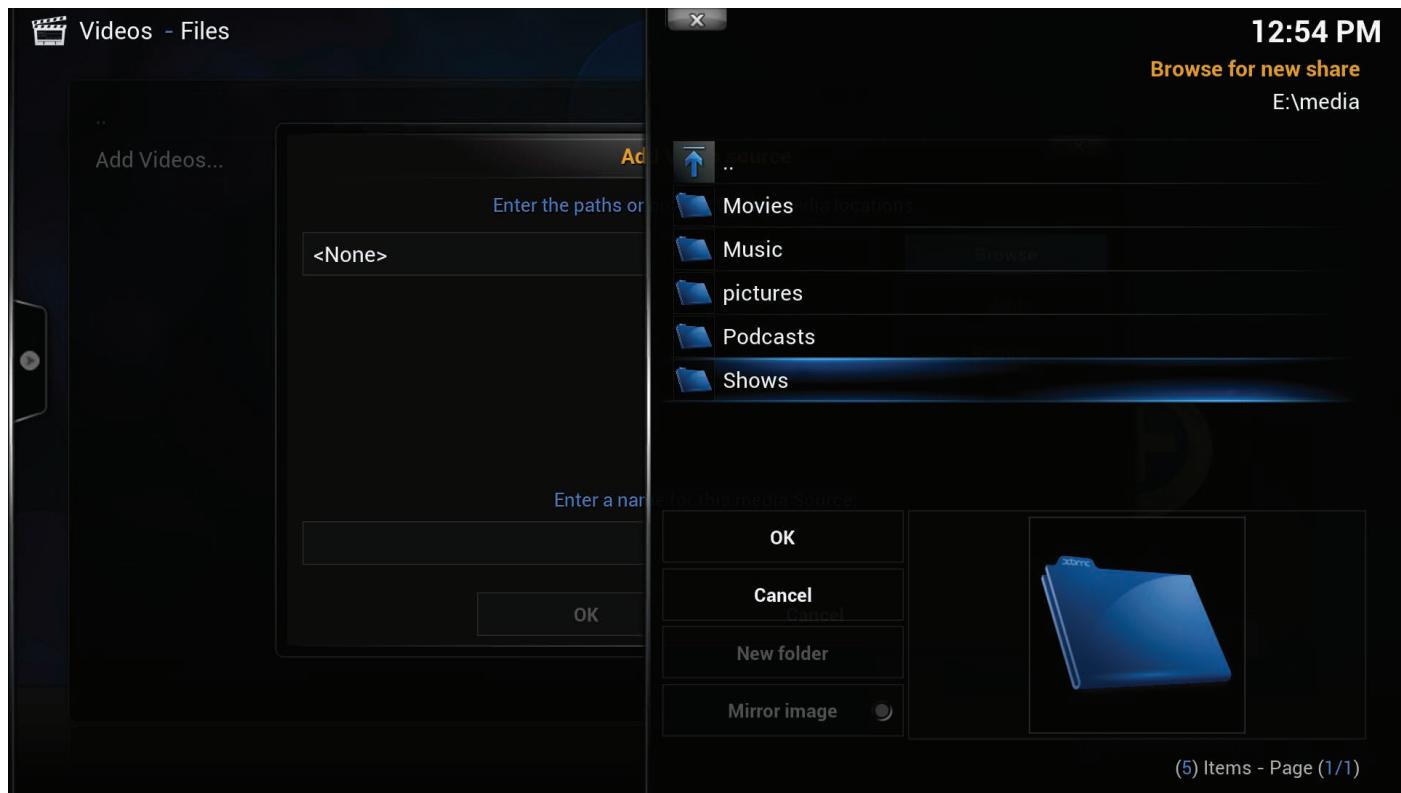
[Read more about FileBot here.](#) It runs on Mac, Linux and Windows computers using Java.

3.2 Adding Media To XBMC

Now that we're done with that craziness, let's get down to the task at hand: adding media to XBMC. From the main screen head to the section you'd like to add to – for example, Videos. When you do you'll see an empty screen, with the option to add new media sources:

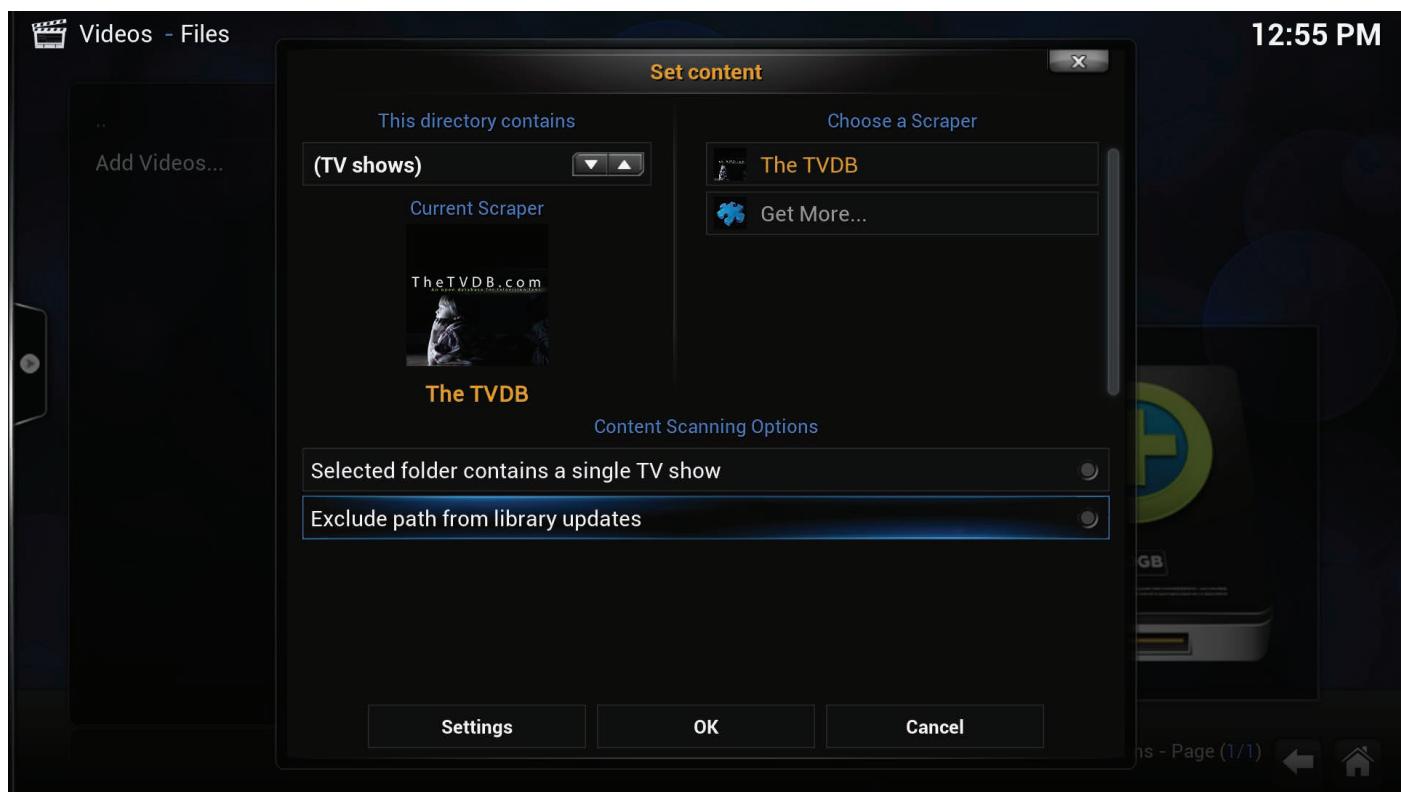


Click that and you'll be able to browse for any source, both on your computer and on your local network. Find the specific folder where you store your media by browsing.



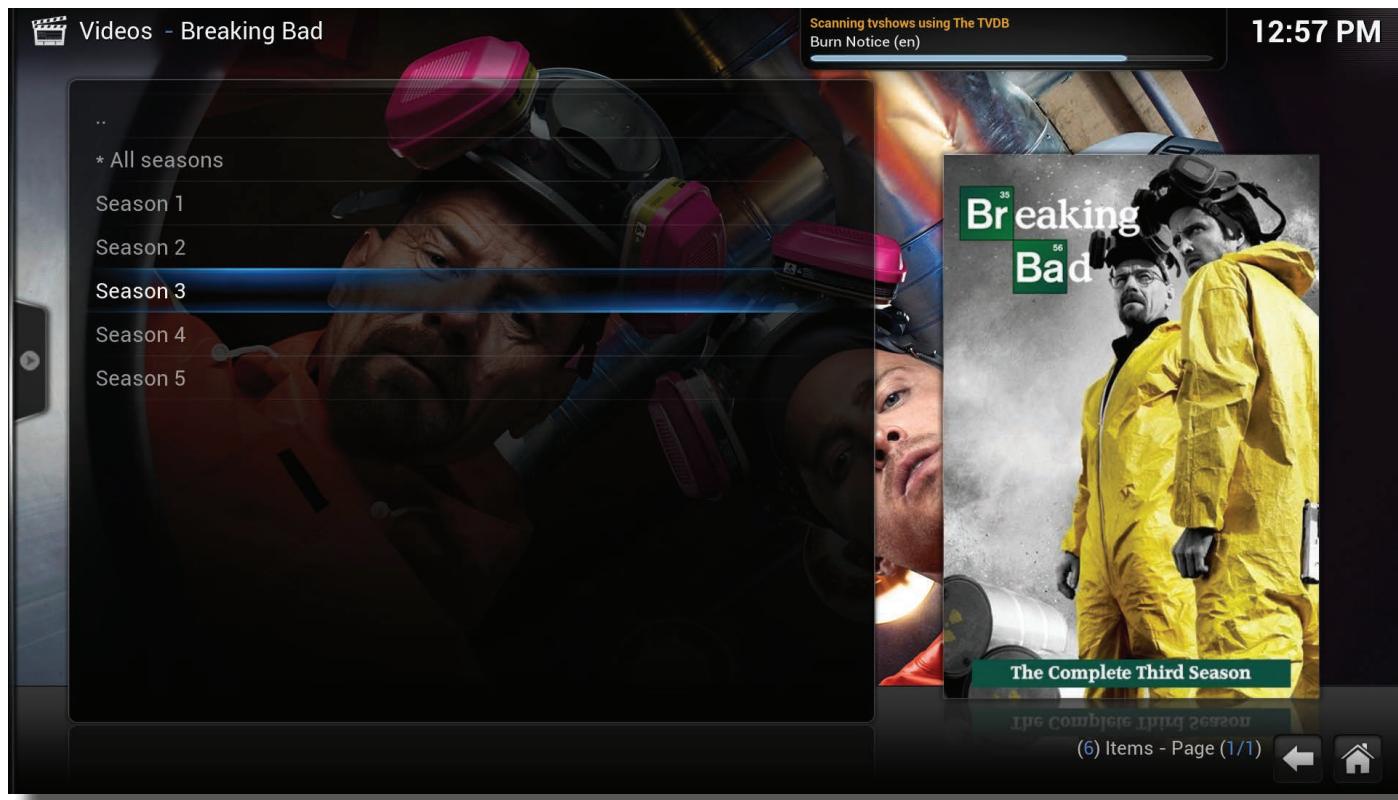
It's also possible to manually add sources by typing a precise IP or website, but most users will never do this.

As I mentioned earlier: it's ideal that your local movies, TV shows, pictures and music all be in separate folders, each added as separate sources. This is because while adding your media sources you'll need to specify what kind of media is enclosed inside the folder.



Once you do XBMC will scan the folder and add your media. When it's done you'll find that XBMC downloaded post-

ers, banners and background art (fanart) for every movie and show. There are even summaries for individual episodes.



Repeat this process for all of your media folders – your music, your pictures, your TV shows and your movies. XBMC should find just about anything. As mentioned earlier, TV shows and movies need to be properly named in order to be added to XBMC – check the previous chapter for details. Pictures will be browsable by folder; music by metadata.

Oh, and don't just add your entire hard drive as a source – this will lead to mistakes. Believe me: you do not want system files showing up as TV shows. It's just frustrating.

Note that it's possible to add web sources as well as local sources. For example, you can [add a podcast as a media source](#), if you want to. [Read more about adding sources on the XBMC wiki](#) for more information.

Once everything is added you can lean back and watch whatever episode of whatever show you want.

3.3 When Certain Shows Won't Import

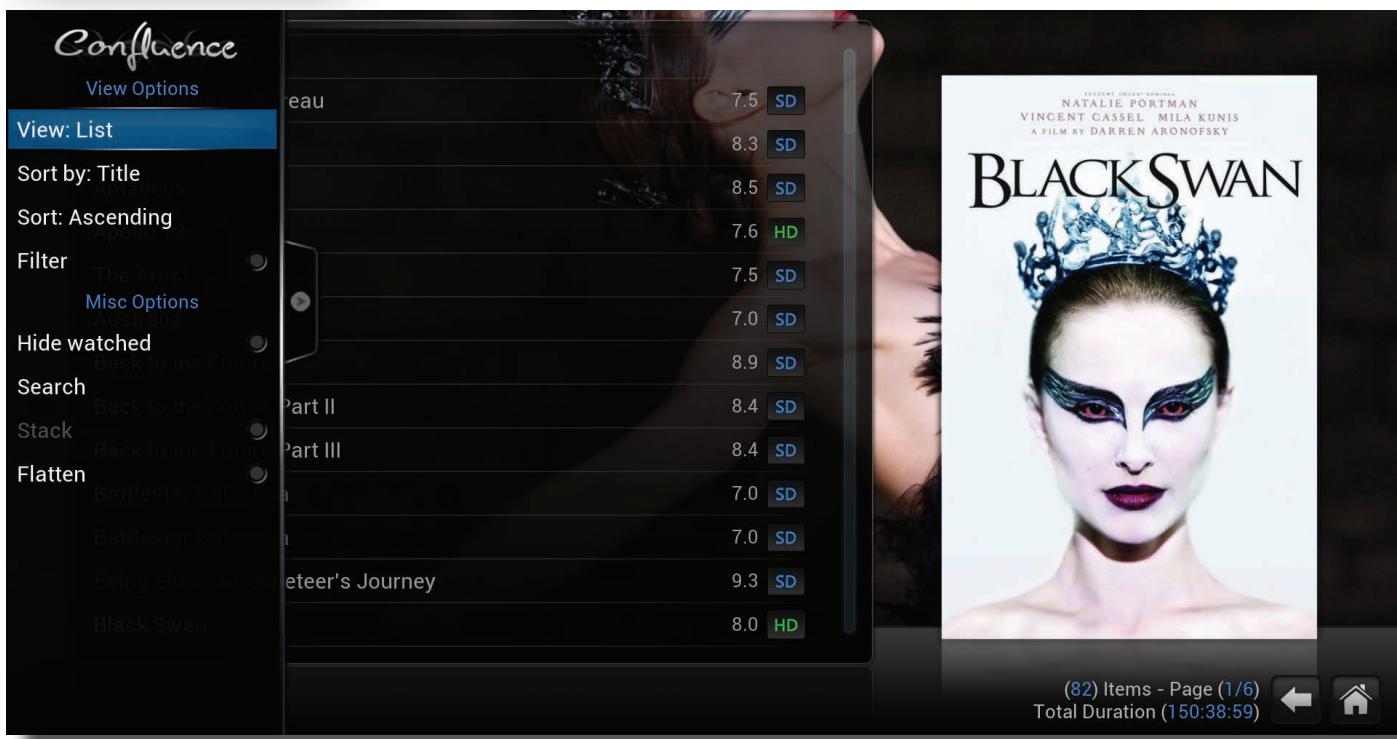
Is a specific show causing you problems? It happens. You can check the previous section on naming your files, or you can attempt to manually add media from within XBMC. Head to the “video” section of the home screen in XBMC, then head to “Files”. Browse to the folder of the show that’s causing you problems, then click “C”. You’ll see a menu; click “TV Show Information”.

XBMC will attempt to scan the folder. If it can't find anything it will ask you for the name of the show. Type a single (unique-ish) word from the show's title and you should eventually see a list of potential choices. Pick the correct show and all should be well.

3.4 Browsing Your Media

Once your TV shows and movies are added you'll find two new items on the main screen of XBMC: Movies and TV Shows. Clicking these items will take you directly to your TV and Movie collection. Lean back and enjoy: your local media is now browsable by remote.

Don't like how your media collection is presented? The default theme for XBMC offers a variety of different ways to look through any list of media. Open the panel, then click “View”.



This will change the way your media is presented. Some views focus on the posters, others focus on the background art. I like to find one that works for my TV shows and another that works for movies, but you have full power to set this however you like.



The playback interface is straightforward. Press “enter” and you’ll see the controls on the screen. Pause, play, or skip forward if you want. You can also download subtitles and change various settings, so be sure to explore.

To get back to the menu, stop the video or press “Esc”. If you choose the later path the video will keep playing behind the user interface.

Okay, everything is added. Let’s enjoy your local content. Bored? Me too. Let’s add some Internet stuff!

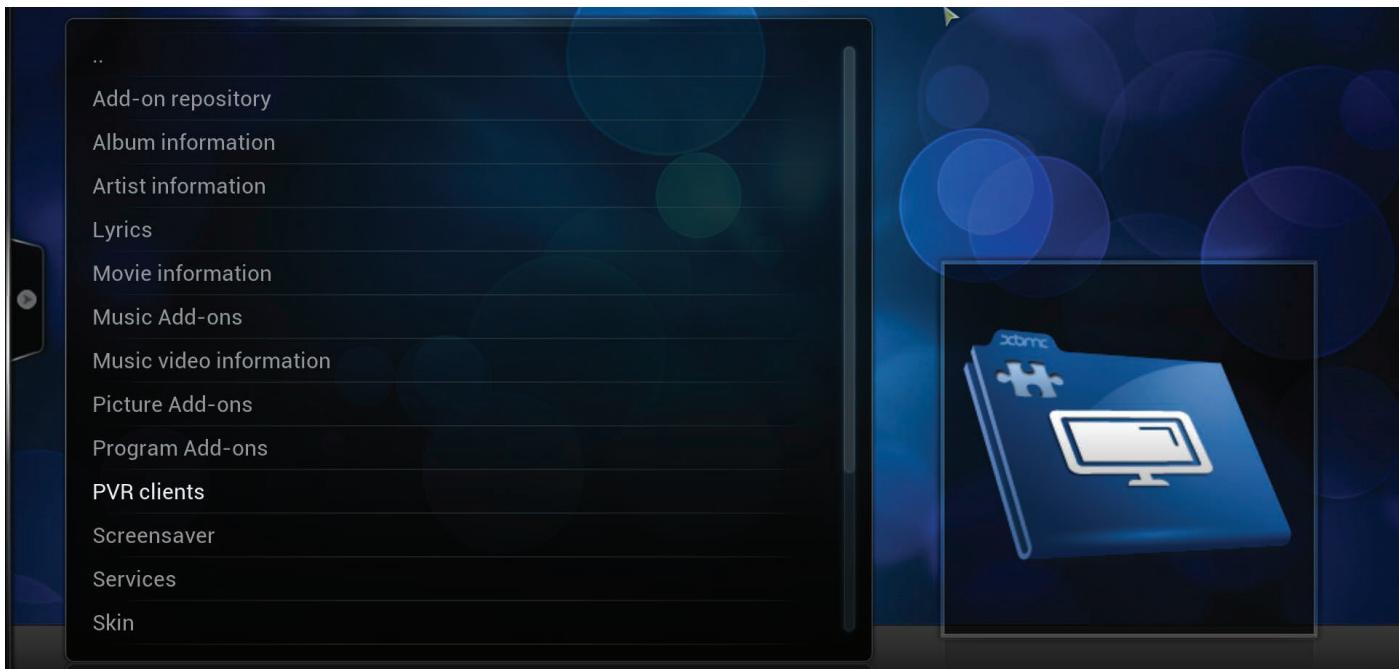
4. Adding Add-ons To Watch The Web

Using XBMC to play your local media collection is great – fantastic, even. But it's only one part of the XBMC experience. The other is being able to watch, listen to or just look at movies, music and photos from around the web. This is possible thanks to add-ons, which help bring content from different sites directly to your TV.

Let's explore the add-ons offered by default, then check out some from third-party repos. Don't worry: it will all make sense when we're done.

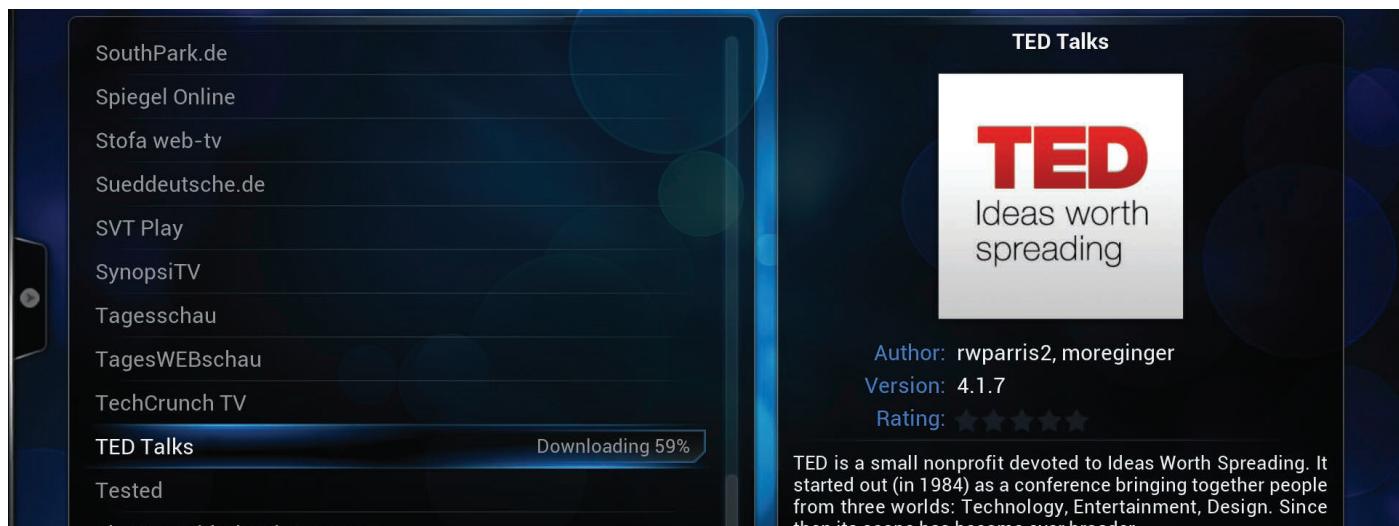
4.1 Installing Add-Ons

On the main screen of XBMC head to "Settings", and from there to "Add-Ons". You'll be presented with a variety of different "types" of add-ons.



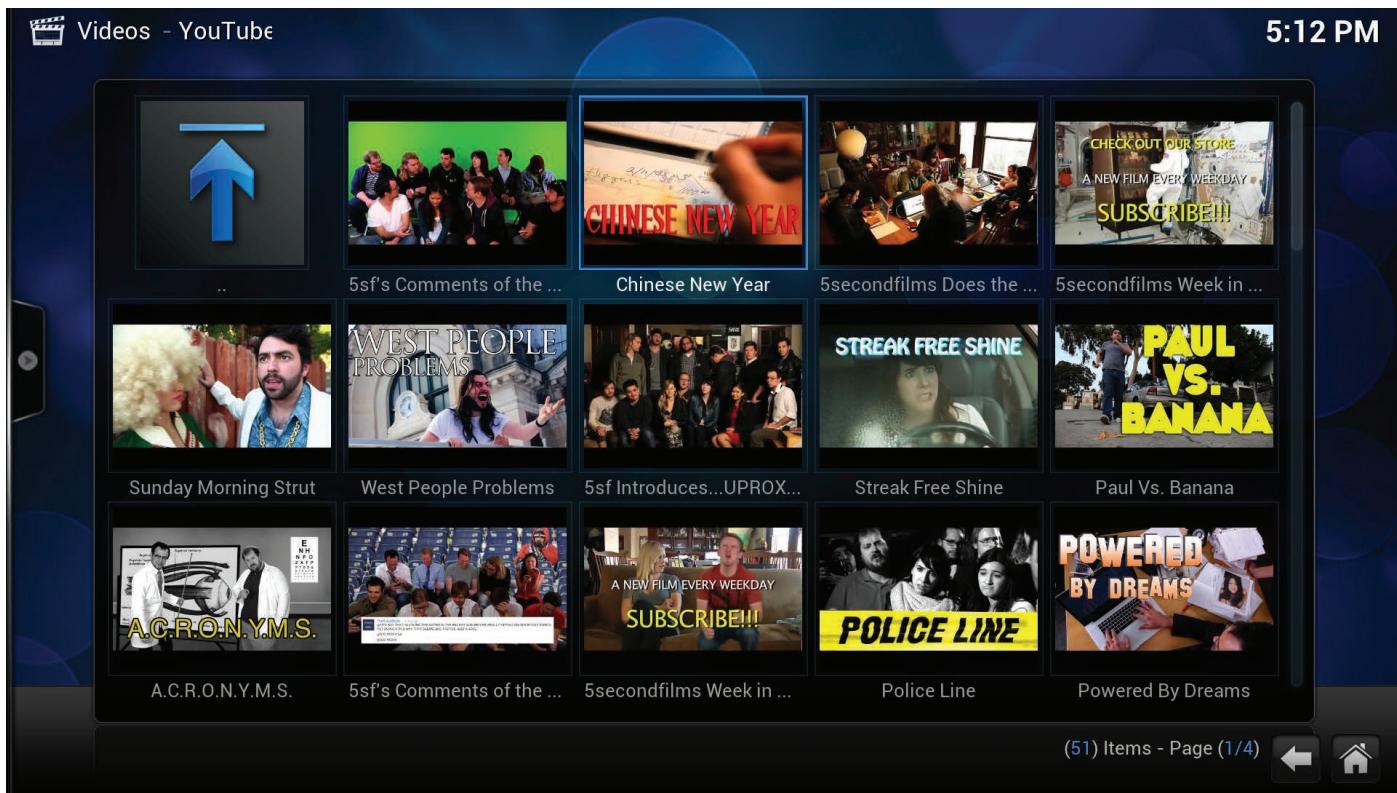
These different types of add-ons all serve specific functions. Some change the services that XBMC uses to find information about your TV shows and movies, for example. Some let you record live TV – assuming you have a TV tuner card. Others let you tweak various things about XBMC.

You can explore these – and you should – but here we're mostly going to explore add-ons that offer you additional media content. Head to "Video Add-Ons" and you'll be able to explore a variety of add-ons that bring media from specific sites to XBMC:



Feel free to explore, adding add-ons for sites and services you like. When you're done you'll be able to find your add-ons in the appropriate section. Video add-ons, for example, show up in the video section of XBMC; music add-ons show up under music. You get the idea.

I recommend everyone begin by installing YouTube. With this app you can browse your subscriptions, your favorites or simply search the web's favorite source of viral distractions:



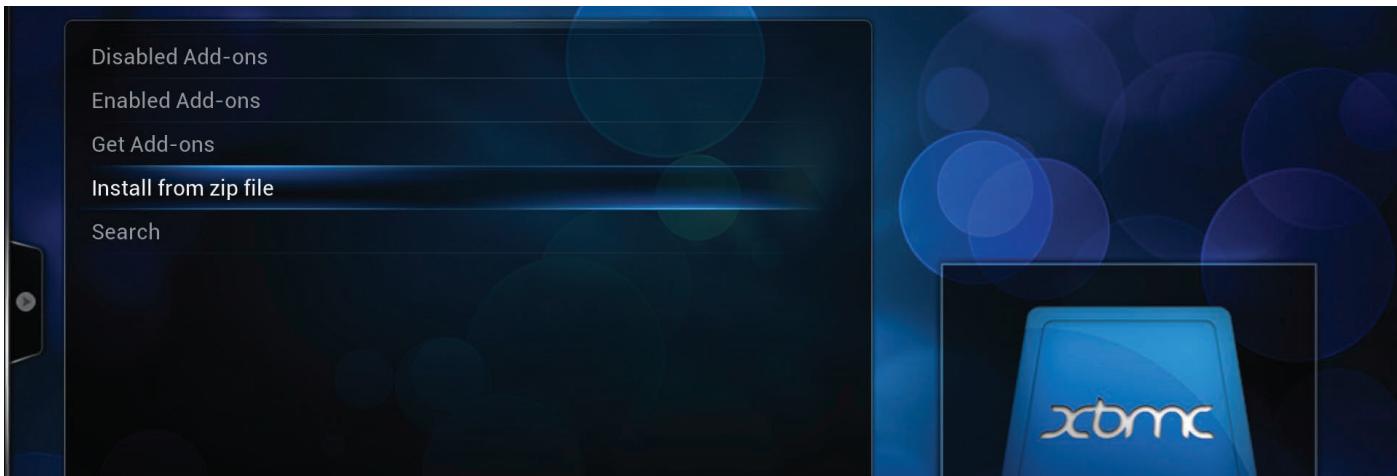
Install as many add-ons as you like. Can't find one for sites you love? Keep reading; I'll show you how to find more.

4.2 Repos

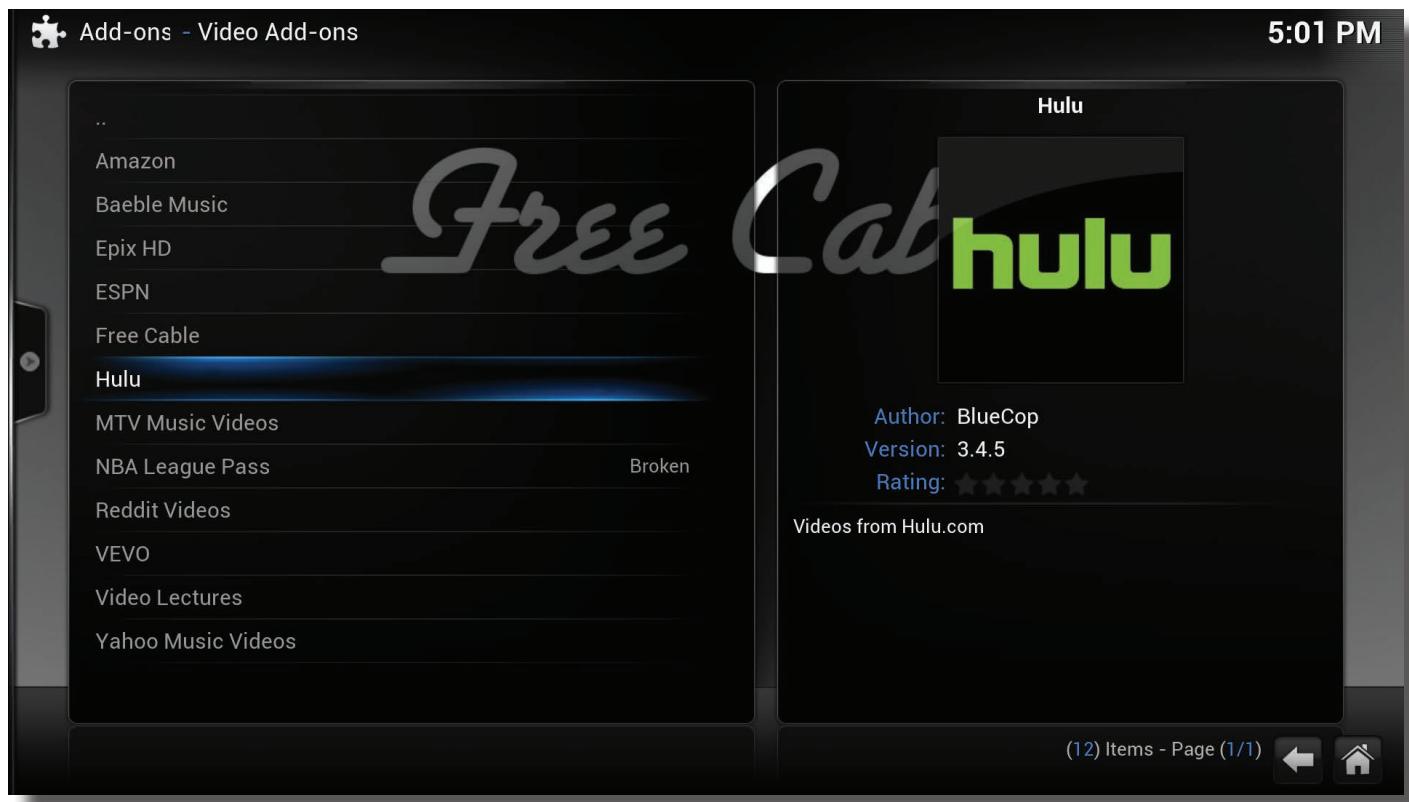
Add-ons for XBMC are sorted into repos, which is short for repository. What you just explored were the default repos for XBMC – that is, the collection of add-ons XBMC points you to right after you install it. This repo is great, but it's only the beginning in terms of the add-ons you can find for the platform.

For example: the Hulu add-on, which gives you access to free episodes without a Hulu Plus subscription and everything else with one – is not offered in the default repo. Don't worry: you can add it. It just so happens that the Hulu add-on lives in the Bluecop Repo, which you can find a link to on the [XBMC list of third-party repositories](#).

To add the Bluecop repo you must first download the zip file for that repo. Then head to the XBMC Add-on screen in the settings and select "Install From Zip".



Browse to where you downloaded the ZIP file and install it. You will now find Bluecop's plugins in the "Get Add-Ons" section.



Don't see any add-ons here? Press "C" while selecting the repos and force it to refresh – everything should show up after that. You can now install the Hulu add-on for XBMC, and a whole lot more.

4.3 Recommended Add-ons

Wondering what's good? I've been using XBMC for a while, and I've discovered a few great add-ons. Not everything, I'm sure, but a few gems. There's a lot to explore, but here are a few of my favorites.

4.3.1 From The Default Repo

YouTube: This one needs no introduction. If you follow your subscriptions religiously be sure to sign in using your account – two-step authentication is supported if you've enabled it. You can also explore your favorites or search to find the best videos on the web. For best results, type "Nyan Cat".

PBS (USA Only): The amount of free programming PBS offers on their website is staggering, and this add-on presents it all to you from within XBMC. Browse through this long enough and you're bound to learn something. "History Detectives" is highly recommended.

Revision3: Love it or hate it, Revision3 offers a wide variety of web shows. This plugin gives you quick access to all of them in one place. Sure: you could just subscribe to the shows you like using YouTube. But it's nice to have the option.

TED Talks: These inspiring talks are all worth checking out, so why not install this add-on and spend an evening learning from your couch? Scroll through the latest talks and get inspired.

Giant Bomb: If you like video games at all, this one is worth checking out. You'll find trailers for upcoming games and play-throughs of games that are already out. An informal take on gaming and a great way to find out what's worth buying.

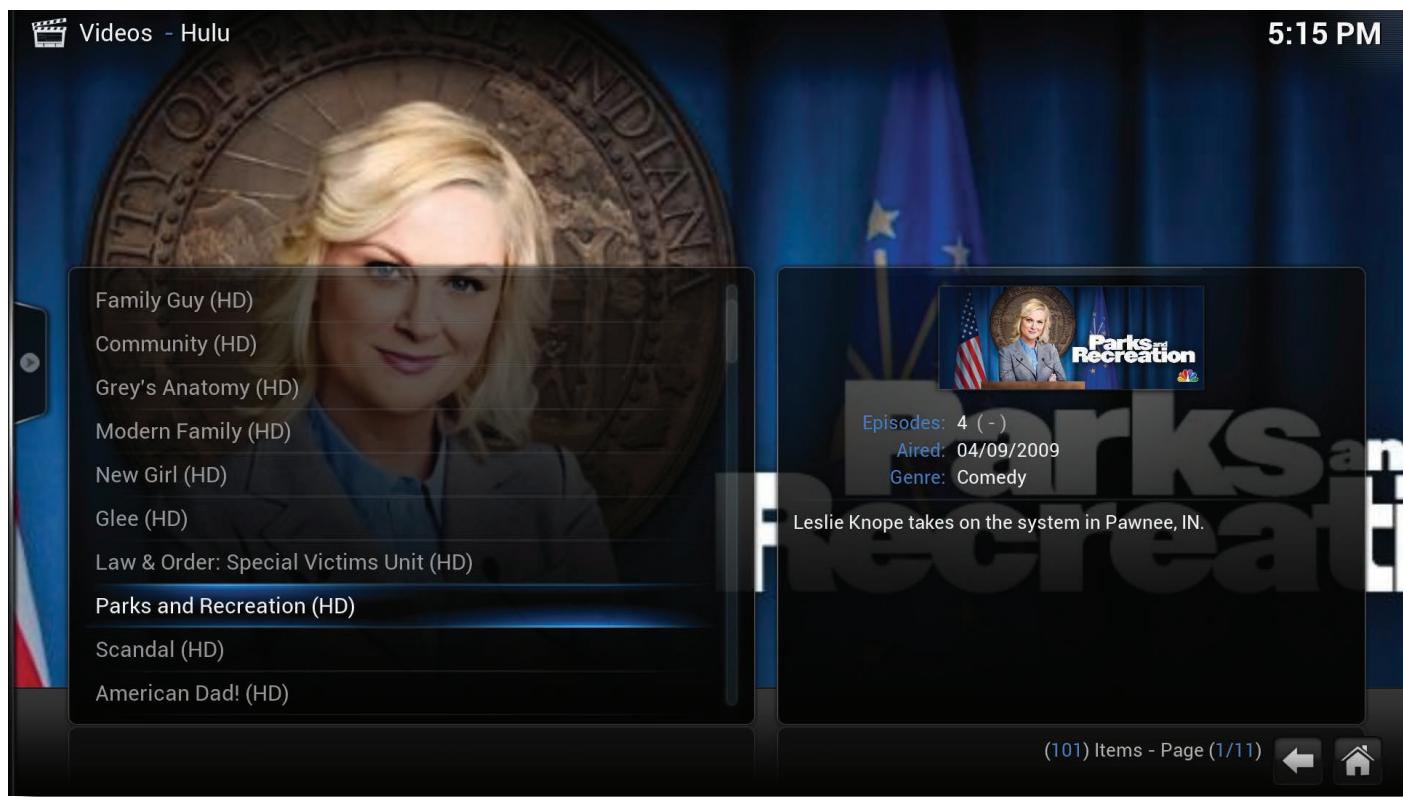
The Big Picture: Not everything needs to be about watching things. This add-on, which you'll find under "Pictures", lets you see amazing photography from around the world. If a major event occurred recently, and it was photogenic, you can be sure this app will show you amazing photography from it. Highly recommended.

PseudoTV (note currently working in Frodo): This is perfect for channel surfers. Turn your media collection into a series of virtual “TV channels”, then change the channel until you find something you like. It will only show you things from your personal collection, but it’s a pretty neat trick if you’ve got a big enough collection.

Rom Collection Browser: And now for something completely different. This handy add-on, listed under “Programs”, can scan your highly illegal collection of ROMs and download art and summaries for them – much the same way XBMC does for your movies and TV shows. It takes a while to set up, but once you do you’ll have a great interface for your ROM collection. If you’re an [emulation](#) fan this one is a must.

4.3.2 Plugins From Other Repos

Hulu (USA Only, [Bluecop repo](#)): It’s the most famous streaming site on the planet, and with good reason: Hulu has agreements with many major TV stations in the US, so episodes are frequently offered here the day after airing. [The Hulu app for XBMC](#) brings all this to your TV, easily. This being an unofficial app you can even turn off the commercials, if you want (don’t).



Free Cable (USA Only, [Bluecop repo](#)): Some TV shows aren’t on Hulu, however, and that’s where Free Cable comes in. This handy little add-on pulls in media content from a variety of different TV networks’ websites: NBC, CBS, Fox, ABC, SyFy and USA, just to name a few. Basically: if a show is offered online in the USA, legally, this plugin lets you watch it. Because of the sheer number of sites supported some will break from time to time, but if you want to watch just about anything this is the quickest legal way to do so.

Reddit ([Bluecop repo](#)): Watch what the hivemind thinks is cool. This brilliant plugin looks through Reddit for video links and shows you the most popular ones. I have to admit: this plugin isn’t nearly as fun as it was two years ago – the quality of videos is simply not as high. But every once and a while I stumble upon something amazing with it, so it’s worth checking out.

iPlayer (UK only, [Hitcher's Repo](#)): I’ve not tested this, as I don’t live in the UK, but it offers you complete access to the BBC’s online offerings. This means you can watch BBC 1, 2, 3 and 4 live whenever you want. It also means you can browse their online TV collection.

There are **region-specific media sources** for just about every country out there, and I can’t possibly hope to list them all here. I’d recommend consulting Google to find legal XBMC plugins for where you live, or simply exploring the default repo – many can be found right there.

Netflix: Unfortunately, Netflix does not offer an official XBMC plugin. An unofficial one, called [XBMCFLicks](#), does give

you access to the service – in the USA. Yes, Netflix is offered in many countries, but there's only an API for the American version. Even worse: because Netflix is built on Silverlight, this plugin only works on Windows and Macs. So it's not perfect, but if you're an American using a PC/Mac as your media center you're in luck.

1Channel ([XMCBhub](#)): Highly illegal, this app turns the Internet's many file sharing sites into your own personal DVR. TV Shows and Movies are all just a few clicks away, all within a nice user interface. It's a lesson in just how easily piracy can be on the web, but only use it for academic purposes.

NaviX ([Download](#)): It's perhaps the [ultimate plugin for XBMC](#), but it's also not altogether legal. Supports downloading. Again: academic purposes only.

NHL Gamecenter ([carb0's repo](#)): I'm a huge hockey fan, so for me paying for an NHL Gamecenter subscription is a no-brainer. This unofficial XBMC plugin lets you watch live hockey games from within XBMC, which is nice if you don't want to mess around with a browser on your television. Picture in picture isn't supported, and neither is the DVR function, but on the plus side the blackouts aren't either.

You'll find similar apps for major sports leagues, so feel free to explore.

News Apps: [There are more than a few ways to watch the news using XBMC](#), so check them out. Some are live while some offer summaries, so find what works for you.

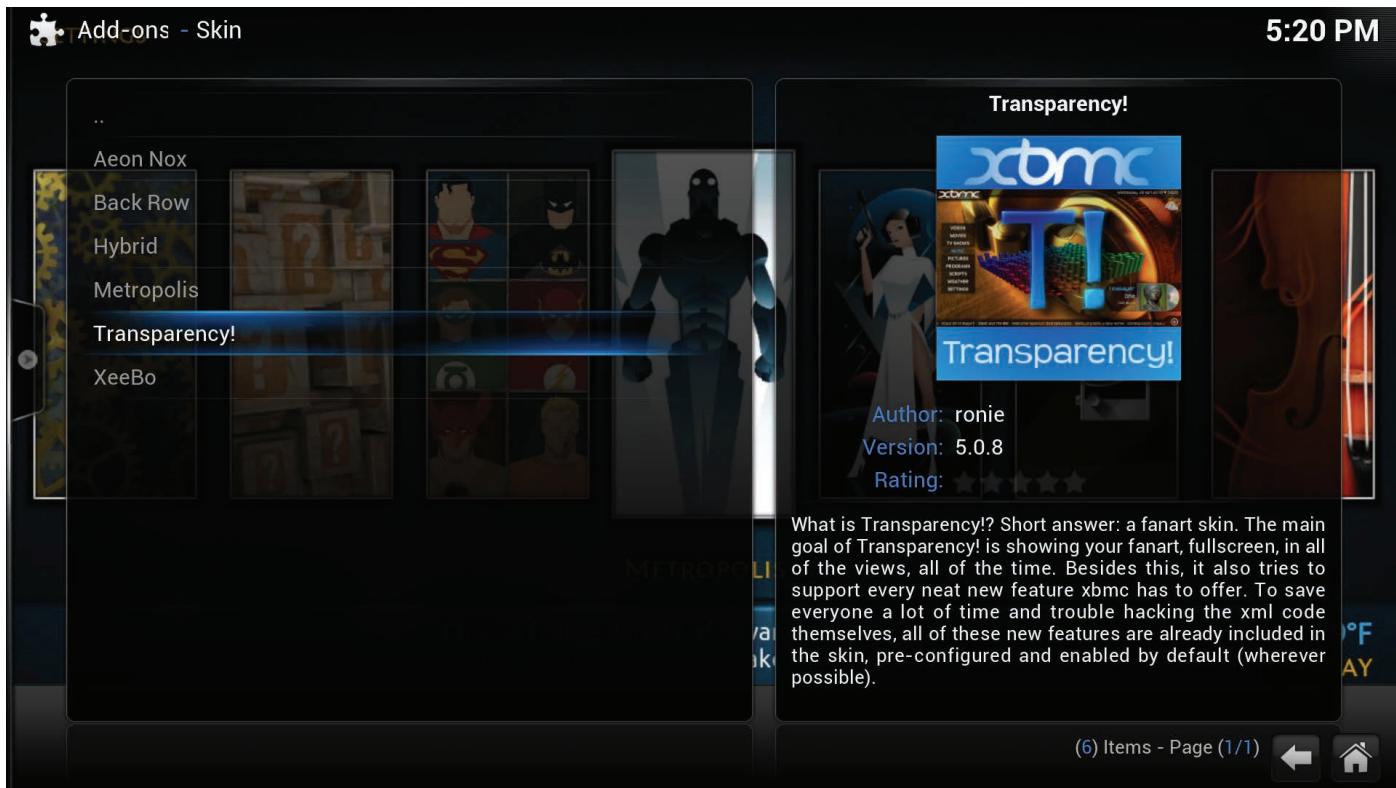
4.4 On Region Blocking

Some of the above plugins only work in particular countries – Hulu only works in the USA; iPlayer, the UK. This has nothing to do with XBMC: the sites in question are simply blocked outside their target nations.

There are ways around this, which I won't get into here. [Read this article about ways to access region-blocked video](#), however, and you should be up and running in no time. [Tunlr](#) works especially well.

5. Themes

Love XBMC, but don't love the way it looks? You're not alone. Happily some of the people who agree with you spent their time designing themes for the program instead of just complaining. You'll find a few of them in the default repos:



As with plugins, there are a wide variety of themes out there, so feel free to search if none of the default offerings work for you. [Read about six cool themes here](#), if you want to learn a bit more.

Personally, I'm in love with [Aeon Nox, which I've written about earlier](#). This theme is beautiful, but also highly configurable. Let's go over setting it up briefly, so you can get an idea of how configurable these themes can be.

5.1 Setting Up Aeon Nox

Installing Aeon Nox is simple: you'll find it in the main XBMC repo under Themes. Install it and you'll be asked if you want to use it; do so. Then head to the settings; you'll find theme options at the bottom of that screen.



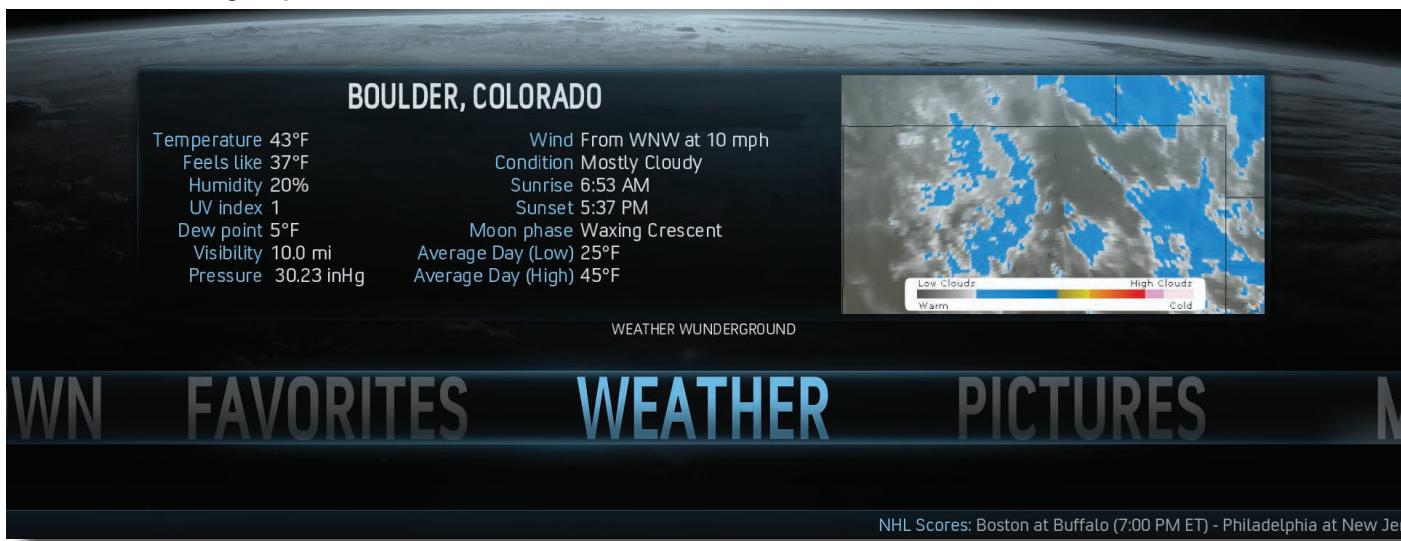
Head to Customizers, then head to “Main Menu Item Customizers”. Select “Main Menu Customers” and you can configure the main page to work however you like:



There's a lot of freedom here, so I'm not going to go over every single detail. Just know that, from here, you can add direct links to specific plugins right on the home page – perfect if there's a particular add-on you use constantly. For me, it's the NHL Gamecenter App I pointed out earlier.

You can also change the wallpaper behind every menu item. I set it to rotate my TV Shows behind TV Shows and my Movies behind my Movies, but you can also use your own personal photos if you want as well. It's entirely up to you with this theme.

There are also widgets you can add. I recommend the weather one:



I also love the “Random Episodes” widget. It does what it says – shows you random episodes – and is perfect when you're not sure just what it is you want to watch.

The main thing to remember is that when you install a new theme it's very likely you can customize it, so check the System menu for theme-specific settings before you give up on one. Explore and enjoy.

6. Other Tips and Tricks

I could spend decades writing about the various tips and tricks out there for XBMC users, and perhaps someday I'll do that. For now, however, I'm just going to outline a few key tips.

Sound not working – help!

This happens for quite a few people: the sound doesn't work after a fresh install, or stops working later. Don't panic: you can fix this in seconds. Head to the Settings menu on from the main page, then find the Audio Input section. Scroll down and you'll find the Audio output device – change this until your sound works.

If this doesn't work it's possible you've muted the XBMC volume. To fix this use the plus and minus keys on your keyboard – as I said earlier, they adjust the volume.

Finding Your Configuration File

If you read enough about XBMC you'll frequently see reference to the UserData folder. You might need to edit files in it for certain tweaks, but where is it? Well, that depends which operating system you're using. Here's a quick chart:

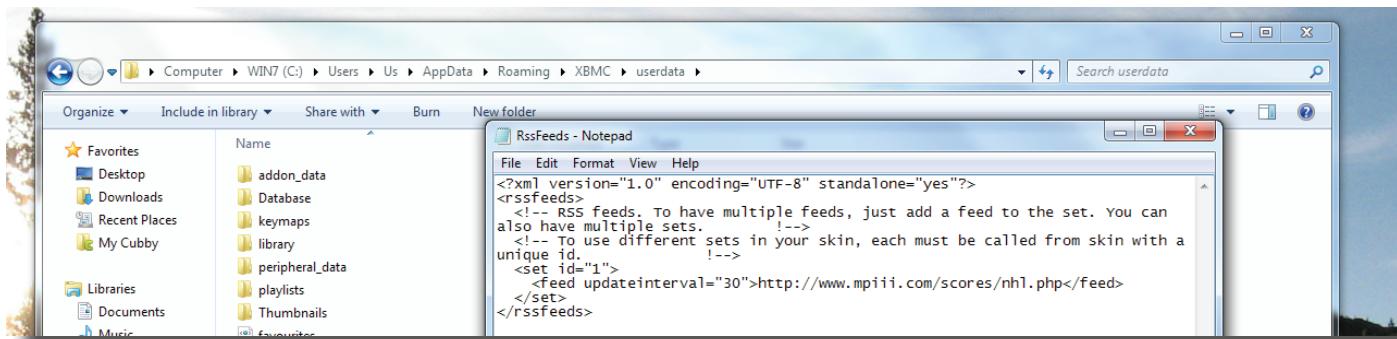
OS	Where The UserData Folder Is
Android	Android/data/org.xbmc.xbmc/files/.xbmc/userdata/
iOS	/private/var/mobile/Library/Preferences/XBMC/userdata/
Linux	\$HOME/.xbmc/userdata/
Mac OS X	/Users/<your_user_name>/Library/Application Support/XBMC/userdata/
Windows Vista/7/8	Users%\userprofile%\AppData\Roaming\XBMC\userdata\
Windows XP	Documents and Settings%\userprofile%\Application Data\XBMC\userdata\

The files in here are the configuration for pretty much everything XBMC, so don't mess around with stuff unless you know what you're doing/are trying to learn what you're doing. If you break things terribly you can always delete the folder to start from scratch.

It's a good thing I explained that, because the next tip kind of requires it...

Change the RSS feed on the main screen

At the bottom of the main screen in XBMC is an RSS feed, letting you know the latest happenings in the XBMC world. Don't care about that? Change the feed to something else. Head to the UserData folder (above) and edit the file called RssFeeds.xml.



Replace the existing RSS feed with one of your own choosing. I chose NHL scores, but you can use whatever you want.

Enable Airplay

If you're an Apple user – that is, if you own a Mac or iOS device – you're almost certainly familiar with AirPlay. This service allows you to use one device to play media from another device. It's one of the key selling points of the Apple TV.

Well, good news: XBMC works with AirPlay. You'll first need to [install Bonjour on Windows](#) or install the "avahi-daemon" package in Linux. Once you do that you'll find AirPlay in the System menu, under "Services":



Enable this and your device should show up as an AirPlay receiver in iTunes and software like it.



Send YouTube Videos To XBMC From Your Browsers

If you like exploring videos on your laptop and watching them on your TV, good news: there's a browser plugin for that. [Read more about it here.](#)

If you're a Chrome user, I've written an article about [completely controlling XBMC from Chrome](#). Check it out, because there are more than a few good Chrome extensions for doing this.

Use XBMC with your PVR

The most recent version of XBMC – 12.0, codenamed Frodo – offers integration with a variety of personal video recorder setups. This means you can watch live TV and browse your recordings, all from within the XBMC interface.

I can't test this myself – I don't own a PVR – but the process consists of setting up the PVR software of your choice and configuring a compatible plugin for XBMC. [Read a full tutorial on the XBMC wiki.](#)

Adding Multiple File Movies

This is a minor annoyance at best, but it came up for me so I thought I'd go over it. Your collection may contain instances of one movie taking up multiple files – for example, if you ripped your extended edition of "The Two Towers" you likely ended up with two files. You could combine these files using video editing software but most people don't bother.

Anyway, if you've got movies like this in your digital collection you're probably annoyed to see that XBMC added multiple "copies" of your movie – one for each part.

The solution is simple, if not obvious. Put all parts of your movie in one folder, and name that folder the way you would otherwise name an individual video file (e.g., "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)"). Then name the files in

that folder the same name, followed by a dash (-), the letters “cd” and a number (e.g., “The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)-cd1.avi”, “The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)-cd2.avi” and so on).

Remove the previous instances of your movies from XBMC, then rescan. XBMC will now recognize these multiple videos as a single movie, and automatically play them back for you in the correct order. You probably won’t even notice they’re different files anymore.

7. Conclusion

You’ve now mastered the basics of XBMC. Your media is all at your fingertips, and you’re beginning to see the potential of add-ons.

This is only the beginning, though. Keep exploring: you’ll find new ways to use XBMC and make it into the perfect media center for you. Enjoy. s



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