

One more thing, better to stand in it's own post, I think. The sound from my little Roku box comes through the HDMI port and it works just fine, but I have had some problems that I'd like to pass on.

When I first got the box, I connected it and it just worked, straight out of the box. I hooked up power, plugged in the supplied HDMI cable to the TV and followed the onscreen dialog to find my wireless connection. No big deal, it hooked up and started doing it's thing. I watched part of a movie and a couple TV shows. That's what I really bought it for, to catch up on some TV series without waiting for the Netflix disks to arrive.

Next day after, I was going to let little Eddie watch a cartoon through the Roku box and there was no sound. The Roku box was slightly warm - I tend to leave solid state devices on 24/7 - so I thought maybe the problem was heat related at first, possibly an infant mortality box, just didn't make it through the first day. I also checked online and found that there are a lot of sound problems reported when using the HDMI port. Of course, HDMI is one of those pseudo-standards, and I've had other stuff not want to connect or be sort of clunky when connected via HDMI. I thought that might be it too. People on the Roku support forum seemed to be all over the map, but it is evident that there have been more than a few reported sound problems using the HDMI port. Some have no sound, others have choppy sound.

I had both symptoms. At first, that day, there was just no sound. Then I rebooted the box a couple times, messed with cables, stuff like that. At first, nothing, then suddenly I had sound but distorted and "choppy". I noticed the Roku support forum had others with these symptoms. One guy said his magically went away. That sort of made me lean towards the thermal explanation. But then a thought occurred to me, a memory of an earlier HDMI problem connecting my plasma TV in the living room to the BluRay and/or U-Verse box.

When I first bought the TV, it was supplied with a HDMI cable that worked well. But since I had two inputs, I needed another and went to my local Best Buy to pick up a second cable. I wasn't interested in one of those hundred dollar cables with fake gold boots, but I didn't want the el-cheapos either. But doing the Best Buy deal, that's all my choices were - either a hundred bucks or twenty bucks. I bought the cheapo.

Bottom line, the cheapo cable didn't work. Worse than a hard failure, it was intermittent. It would work for a couple hours, maybe a couple days, then just die. No picture, no sound, might as well not even be there. Dead. Sometimes you could reseal the cable and get it to work, sometimes it seemed like putting tension on it one way or the other helped. Sometimes it seemed like nothing would make it work. At first I thought it was a mechanical connection (since placing tension on it one way or the other seemed to work) but later I began to realize that it might be the way the conductors layed inside and, really, no matter what the cause was, at twenty bucks I was losing money by wasting time with it. Best to treplace it and not waste any more time studying it to learn why it failed. Bought another cheapo cable online and it worked like a charm. That first Best Buy cable was just plain bad.

That made me think this may be what's happening in the Roku world, and what may have happened to me. When you buy the Roku box, you can buy a little cable kit for twenty bucks that has component, optical and HDMI cables. Of course, I had to get that to prevent my earlier HDMI cable fiasco, right? Well, I'm wondering if I didn't revisit my HDMI cable problems by buying that cheapo cable kit when I bought the Roku box. Could be that's what is plaguing so many other Roku owners too.

Did I learn my lesson though? Nope. I plugged and unplugged the cable a few times to "reseat" it. Seemed to fix the problem. I could go from choppy sound to good sound just by unplugging and reconnecting the HDMI cable while watching a show. So I think probably that's the problem. For now, I'm OK, the box works good. But if it acts up again, I'm ordering a new HDMI cable.