Roku’s big announcements today: A new Ultra player, soundbar, and AirPlay 2 support

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- The new Roku Ultra.
- These are the ports on the new Ultra.
- And these are the contents of the box.
- The Roku Streambar.
- Here are the ports on the back of this one.
- And finally, the contents of the Streambar box.

Today was a big day for streaming-box manufacturer Roku: the San Jose-based company announced new products and software features, including another entry into the world of home-theater audio and an update to a popular existing device that adds some of the most requested features.

First up, Roku is making several changes to its highest-end streaming box, the Roku Ultra. It still costs $99, and most of its features are the same. So what’s new? Well, wireless signal has long been a thorn in Roku’s side—many households have weak or suboptimally placed routers. To that end, Roku claims that the new Ultra manages 50 percent more wireless range. It also adds Bluetooth connectivity for the first time,

so you'll be able to use wireless headphones and the like.

The big addition, though, is the introduction of Dolby Vision HDR support (and Dolby Atmos, too). We knocked some prior Roku devices for supporting only the HDR-10 standard, but this update means the Ultra can now deliver good HDR on a whole range of content that was optimized for Dolby Vision.

Second, Roku has introduced what it calls a "2-in-1" soundbar called the Streambar—which is not the company's first soundbar, to be clear. It's 2-in-1 because it doubles as both your standard, apartment-ready, better-than-your-TV-speakers soundbar and as a Roku streaming device like the Ultra that can actually deliver content to your TV. As for streaming quality, Streambar is 4K and HDR, which is what you'd expect from a device launching in 2020, and it connects to the TV via HDMI (provided that your TV supports ARC).

The Streambar has four drivers—two facing forward, and one each pointing at an angle to the left and the right. And if you're looking for a full home-theater, Dolby surround-sound experience, you can add on additional Roku-made speakers and a subwoofer.

Finally, Roku announced Roku OS 9.4, which among other things adds AirPlay 2 and HomeKit support to "select 4K devices." Roku also says that The Roku Channel, its ad-supported free streaming TV network, will get Android and iOS apps.

The two new hardware products are expected to launch on October 15, but preorders are open today. Roku OS 9.4 will hit supported devices in the coming days, but Roku says TVs running Roku OS might have to wait a little longer.

Listing image by Roku

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