

MaginePro

Are Your Smart TV OTT Apps Up To Scratch?

FOUR UX MUST-HAVES FOR BIG SCREENS

Introduction

The direction of travel for in-home video streaming is clear. While mobiles are still enormously popular, especially for short-form viewing, [Smart TVs reign supreme in the living room](#). It's predicted that at least [50% of global households](#) - that's 1.1 billion homes in total - will have one as early as 2026. But with sky-high demand comes matching user expectations. Whether it's launching and logging in, finding the right content, or streaming without a hitch, every second counts.

At Magine Pro, we've spent years refining the [Smart TV OTT app experience](#) across platforms like Samsung, LG, Android TV, Vizio, and beyond. In this e-guide, we'll share our experience on the four essential UX elements that can make or break user engagement with your content and brand on the big screen. We'll offer actionable tips for improving:

- *User onboarding*
- *Navigation*
- *Family-friendly viewing that's accessible to all*
- *Overall performance*

If you're building or optimising a Smart TV OTT app, these are the areas where you simply can't afford to fall short.

Content

- 3 Make It Effortless**
Designing a Smooth Onboarding Experience
- 5 Get There Faster**
Navigation That Just Makes Sense
- 7 Built for Families, Accessible to All**
Smart UX for Shared Devices
- 9 Speed Matters**
How Performance Shapes Smart TV UX
- 11 Looking Ahead**
What's Next for Smart TVs?
- 12 Conclusion**
More Than Just A Pretty UI:
From First Impressions to Lasting Engagement

MAKE IT EFFORTLESS:

Designing a Smooth Onboarding Experience

First impressions count. The longer it takes a user to get into your app, the higher the risk they'll abandon it in favour of faster, more familiar options. Smart TV users are often seated across the room with a remote in hand, so reducing effort is key to keeping them engaged from the moment they open your app.

At Magine Pro, we've seen that a low-friction onboarding process can significantly boost conversion and retention. Here are three practical ways to reduce frustration and increase speed and satisfaction during onboarding:

1. Let Viewers Browse Before They Sign Up

One of the most effective ways to

hook new users is to let them explore your content library without requiring immediate registration. Anonymous browsing not only showcases your offering upfront, it also gives users a more compelling reason to go through the login process because they've already found something they want to watch. You can even allow limited content playback before sign-up, giving a taste of the experience while still encouraging conversion: *try before you buy!*

[Learn more](#) about the benefits and options when adding anonymous access.

2. Remove the Lag from Logging In

Typing email addresses and passwords with a remote control is a pain point nearly every Smart TV user shares. That's why many of our customers now use QR code login. The user scans a QR code with their phone, completes login on the mobile interface, and the Smart TV app automatically connects their account. It's faster, smoother, and reduces drop-off dramatically.

See how QR code login works in practice with [our case study](#).

3. Sync Settings Across Devices

Users expect consistency across screens. If a viewer sets their audio language or subtitle preferences on a mobile device, they shouldn't need to repeat the process when logging into the Smart TV app. Syncing these settings creates a more seamless, personalised experience, which is especially important when the TV is often a shared household device.

[Discover how we enable seamless, persistent settings on every screen.](#)

Want to dive deeper into onboarding best practices for Smart TV OTT apps? [Read our detailed blog post.](#)



GET THERE FASTER:

Navigation That Just Makes Sense

When users open your Smart TV OTT app, they're not looking for a tour, they're looking for content. The faster they can get to what they want, the better the experience. What we've learned in over a decade of helping streaming services launch Smart TV apps is that smooth and intuitive navigation matters almost as much as the content itself.

Make the Most of the Remote

Smart TV navigation takes place with a remote, not a touchscreen. That's why it's critical to use predictable, directional logic: left, right, up, down. We help our customers streamline user journeys by focusing on:

- **Simple layouts with clear visual focus states** - focus state is a UX term for visual indicators like a glow or a border around an item on screen which shows that it's currently selected.

- **Smart defaults** – pre-set selections that match common user behaviours (like highlighting the first episode of a series) to reduce the number of decisions users have to make.
- **Optimised carousels** – horizontal scrolling rows of content that are arranged by theme or behaviour (e.g., “Continue Watching,” “Top Picks”), helping users quickly find what they're looking for without endless scrolling.

Every extra click is a potential exit point. That's why we build our Smart TV apps with the “10-foot” (lean back) experience in mind. Users should feel comfortable, not confused.

The Future

Komedi, Drama, Science Fiction, Science Fiction | 1h 31m | 2011

Miranda July tar en titt på samtiden, framtiden och kärlek i en ambitiös uppföljning på succégenombrottet Me and You and Everyone We Know. Paret Sophie och Jason sitter mest



Fortsätt titta



Kärlek på italienska

EN STORLAGEN FILMISK RELÄGNOM TID OCH RUM

VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI
FABRIZIO BRUNETTI
MIRANDA JULY

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI
Natten

Put Playback Front and Centre

The best Smart TV apps surface watchable content quickly. One simple but powerful tactic is placing a play button directly in the featured carousel at the top of the page, so users can launch into something with a single click. In the ideal world, the app should anticipate the user's next move. To help with this, we support:

- Autoplay video previews when a user lingers on a title
- Shortcuts to “Continue Watching” and “Play Next” at the end of an episode or clip
- The option to auto-play the next episode in a series or an item of recommended related content

These features reduce dead ends and encourage binge-watching behaviour, especially when users are tired, distracted, or just browsing.

Design That Reduces Decision Fatigue

The more steps it takes to reach content, the more chances a user has to bounce. To keep them engaged, we recommend:

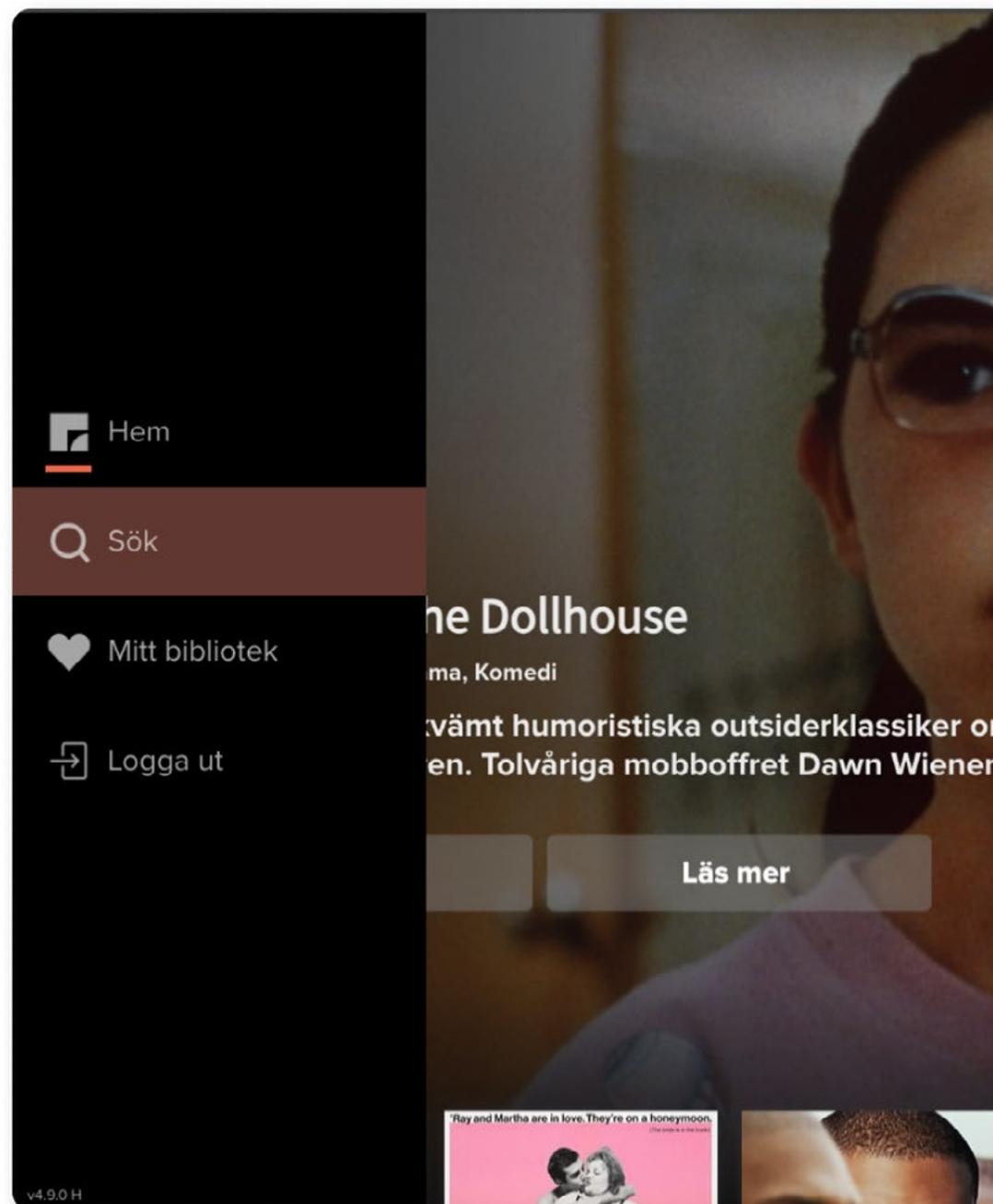
- Minimising menus
- Clustering content by theme or interest
- Highlighting editorial picks or new releases

Adaptability for Every Big Screen and Space

TVs vary in size. The distance from which they're viewed is also different per household. Features like strong contrast modes, adjustable subtitle sizes, and easy access to previews without complex navigation help the experience feel natural, no matter the room layout or lighting.

While there's obviously overlap here with the accessibility features we'll cover in the next chapter, it's important not to dismiss this kind of adaptability as a niche requirement - something that's only needed by people with hearing or visual impairments. These are small things that can make a big difference to how confident every user feels when moving through your app. The impact on customer satisfaction can be significant.

Want more inspiration for frictionless Smart TV UX?
Learn how to craft immersive OTT user experiences in our [UX guide, Behind the Screens.](#)



BUILT FOR FAMILIES, ACCESSIBLE TO ALL:

Smart UX for Shared Devices

Unlike personal mobile phones, Smart TVs are shared by households - often across generations. That makes user experience on the big screen fundamentally different. You're not just designing for "a user," you're designing for parents, children, grandparents, housemates, and sometimes all of them at once.

At Magine Pro, we help streaming services design Smart TV OTT apps that work for everyone in the room - with built-in flexibility and personalisation to keep viewers engaged, but also the safeguards to protect them where necessary.

Family-Friendly Features

Smart TV is the heart of household viewing, so it's essential to get parental controls and profiles right.

We recommend the following features at a minimum, all of which are supported in the Magine Pro OTT platform:

- **Custom user profiles**, so each family member gets relevant content, recommendations, and playback progress
- **PIN-based parental controls** for restricting access to mature content
- **Flexible content rating system** that aligns with regional legislation (e.g., age-based icons with locally recognised graphics)

These features, and the ability to flex them for different users in different regions, are particularly important for SVOD services targeting a broad demographic or operating across different markets.

“

Magine Pro was exactly what we were looking for to provide the best experience to our Brazilian customers through Apps for Smart TVs and mobile. Our audience loved it!

- Gracie Pinto, CEO at FILMICCA

Accessibility Isn't Optional

Smart TV UX should work for everyone, including those with limited eyesight or hearing. That's why inclusive features are becoming an absolute essential for OTT platforms. At Magine Pro, we've helped our customers to enable:

- **Text-to-speech support**, so screen readers can guide visually impaired users
- **Subtitle size adjustment**, allowing users to tailor readability to their screen size and distance, but also their eyesight
- **Clear contrast and strong focus states** for easier navigation

These aren't just "nice-to-haves." In regions like the EU, accessibility features are increasingly mandated by legislation such as the European Accessibility Act. But even where regulations don't apply, inclusive UX is fast becoming an industry standard, and falling behind could impact your reputation, user satisfaction, or even future partnership opportunities.

Want to learn more about how we support family-friendly streaming? [Read our detailed blog](#) on parental controls

Audio

Italiano

English

Subtitle

Off

Italiano

Subtitle font size

Aa

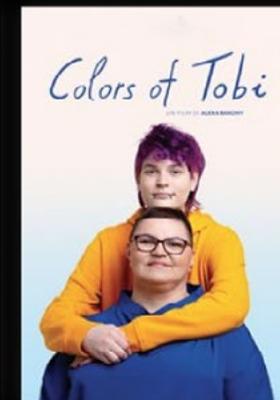
Aa

Aa

Two Mothers

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SPEED MATTERS:

How Performance Shapes Smart TV UX

What goes on behind the scenes in an app also has a big impact on customer satisfaction. Performance, and how quickly the app responds to user input, is a critical ongoing metric for every Smart TV OTT app. It's a UX deal-breaker because a delay of just a few seconds can turn a user's content curiosity into churn.

At Magine Pro, we've seen again and again how speed directly impacts viewer satisfaction and retention. That's why we work closely with our customers to optimise the performance of their Smart TV OTT apps across every touchpoint.

Every Second Counts

[Research shows](#) that viewers start to abandon videos that take more than two seconds to start. For each additional second of delay, the abandonment rate rises by nearly 6%.

On Smart TVs, slower connections and hardware limitations often widen that playback window. That means performance optimisation is even more important here than on other devices.

- We help our customers improve perceived and actual performance by focusing on:

- Faster startup time - from app launch to content load
- Smoother in-app navigation and transitions
- Low-latency content playback and buffering reduction





Real-World Enhancements

Some of the most effective changes our engineering teams have implemented to improve performance include:

- **Pagination and lazy loading** - allows content to load gradually instead of all at once, improving responsiveness
- **Smart caching strategies** - reducing repeated load times
- **Preloading previews and thumbnails** - users experience less lag when browsing

While these improvements may not always have a tangible impact on performance, they create the impression of increased speed, which is equally valuable to end users.

Performance Meets Perception

Not every Smart TV user understands what's happening behind the screen.

But they all notice when something feels slow. That's why we optimise both backend processes and UX patterns that influence how fast the app feels:

- Removing unnecessary animation delays
- Prioritising the loading of critical content first
- Ensuring the player responds immediately to clicks or keypresses

The result is an app that feels seamless - even if the underlying hardware or connection isn't ideal.

Want to go deeper into how performance influences UX and retention? Read our full blog: [Speed Matters: How Performance Shapes Smart TV UX](#)

LOOKING AHEAD:

What's Next for Smart TVs?

You've just read about the essential UX elements that can make or break your Smart TV app today. But niche OTT services that want to stay competitive must also anticipate the future. The Smart TV landscape is constantly evolving, driven by both consumer expectations and relentless innovation from manufacturers who want us all to buy new screens. What worked yesterday, or even today, might not be enough to capture and retain viewers tomorrow.

At Magine Pro, we constantly strive to stay ahead of platform developments and user behaviour trends, so our customers don't have to. Based on what we're seeing, here are the key Smart TV developments that every OTT service should be planning for to ensure long-term growth and success.

Operating System Fragmentation

Smart TVs are no longer dominated by a handful of ecosystems. With new players, regional variants, and forks of Android TV emerging, it's becoming more complex, as well as more important, to maintain consistent UX across a fragmented landscape.

We help customers navigate this by using modular codebases, flexible integrations, and platform-specific optimisations. It means they can reach more devices without multiplying their development or support burden.

Smarter, AI-Driven Features

AI is making its way into Smart TV hardware, from voice assistants to predictive content surfacing, and OTT services should think about how they'll take advantage. That might include:

- Better personalisation in the UI
- Smarter search results
- On-device recommendations powered by user behaviour

OTT services that treat AI as a core part of the user experience, not just a backend cost-saving feature, will be better positioned to compete with major platforms.

UX Innovation Will Be Expected

We expect to see increased experimentation in how content is displayed, discovered, and navigated on the big screen. Think beyond the carousel: future Smart TV experiences may involve gesture control, dynamic layouts, or seamless transitions between live and on-demand content.

With each generation of Smart TV hardware offering better memory, processing, and AI support, OTT

services will be expected to keep pace with increasingly capable devices.

Smaller OTTs may not have the R&D budgets to lead the innovation race - but they can stay competitive by choosing a platform partner that does.

Want a deeper dive into upcoming Smart TV UX trends? [Read our trends blog](#) and get ready for the next wave of Big Screens

MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY UI:

From First Impressions to Lasting Engagement

There's no doubt that a great Smart TV experience should make your content look good on the big screen, but that's just the beginning. As we've seen, it should also remove friction, anticipate user needs, and deliver content in a way that feels effortless - even when the technology behind it is anything but.

To keep up with the streaming giants - Netflix, Amazon, Disney - you need a Smart TV UX made up of many interconnected parts:

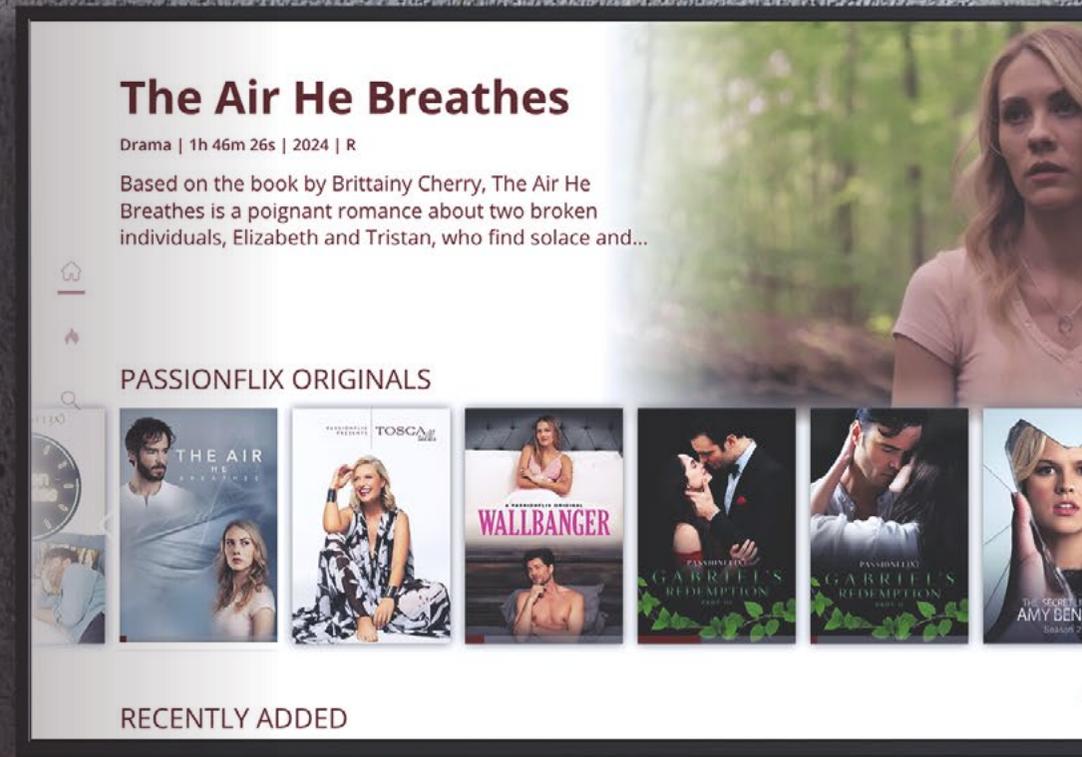
- Smooth onboarding that turns curiosity into commitment
- Clear navigation that minimises drop-off
- Family-friendly features that respect household dynamics
- Accessibility and performance that open your platform to more users

- A future-ready mindset that keeps you competitive as the ecosystem evolves

At Magine Pro, we believe Smart TV should be a growth channel - not a burden. That's why we've built our platform and our partnerships to help streaming services get the big screen experience right from day one.

Want to see more great Smart TV UX in practice?

Learn how niche services like Passionflix use Magine Pro to create seamless Smart TV apps for Samsung, LG, Android TV, and more. Download our e-guide: [Go big or stay small?](#) Why the Smart TV experience is essential for online streaming services.



Flexible video streaming services & apps

Deliver your Live, Linear & VOD entertainment to audiences worldwide.

Want to learn more about how Magine Pro helps streaming services build and grow on the big screen?

[Contact us](#) today to discuss your Smart TV app strategy.

The central image is a composite graphic. At the top left, a smartphone screen displays a TV schedule for 'fredag 13/10' with a 'LIVE' badge overlaid. In the center, a video player shows a scene from 'Orlando' with a 'LIVE' badge. To the right, a 'Data Analytics' chart shows a line graph of users from March to July, with a callout for '48k USERS'. At the bottom right, there are logos for 'Apple Pay', 'Roku', and 'firetv'. A 'Your Brand' logo is also visible on the left side of the video player.

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 AirPlay
 ROKU
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