

# FIRST TESTS

We check out the latest crop of plasmas and LCDs to land on our test benches



## FEATURES

Picture Master processing;  
Alternate Lighting of  
Surfaces (ALiS) panel;  
1,000:1 contrast;  
1,200cd/m2 brightness;  
HD-Ready; built-in analogue  
tuner; Nicam stereo sound

## CONNECTIONS

HDMI in; DVI (HDCP) in;  
Scart x3 (2 RGB); component  
video in; PC RGB in; S-video  
in; composite video in x2;  
stereo audio in; headphone  
jack; composite video out;  
stereo audio out x2; RS-232  
in; PC audio in x2; RF jack

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# Hitachi 42PD7200

Two digital inputs and a great price tag – is this screen too good to be true?

## THE FLAT FACTS

- 42IN 16:9 PLASMA TV
- £2,500
- RESOLUTION 1,024 x 1,024
- DIMENSIONS W: 1,050 H: 676 D: 110 (mm)
- SPEAKERS: YES
- TV TUNER: YES
- SCARTS: 3 (2 RGB)

Getting hold of a decent plasma for less than £3,000 can be a struggle. But Hitachi has been good enough to produce one for just £2,500. And as if that wasn't enough, the 42in 42PD7200 is also fully high-definition compatible.

With its simple outward appearance, this classy addition to the Platara line might not look like anything special, but it has more than enough tricks up its sleeves. It has both an HDMI and DVI input, so can handle not one, but two, high-definition feeds. This, along with the inclusion of a component video connection, puts it in a league of its own. But connectivity is what this TV is all about. If you include the component sockets' compatibility with digital videotape and other broadcast sources transmitted with a copyright protection tag (known as HDCP), you can, in effect, connect three high-def sources to the 42PD7200. There are also S-video, composite, stereo audio and headphone sockets, all of which appear on a clip-on 'floating' cluster.

Clearly not satisfied with merely providing a great connections collection, Hitachi has

also included some advanced picture processing. At the centre of this is the proprietary Picture Master processing system, which gives you all-digital image scaling, eschewing the need for messy analogue to digital scaling. In short, this should lead to a purer picture. It also adjusts brightness and contrast for individual sections of a picture to produce maximum results, as well as sorting out noise, dot crawl, colours and motion. Additionally, there is the Alternate Lighting of Surfaces (ALiS) panel, which is also high-definition-compatible.

### Friendly flatscreen

This, like everything else about the 42PD7200, is easy to use. Indeed, user-friendliness seems to be a concept that Hitachi is more than comfortable with. For instance, the remote control is laid out in such a way that you don't have to spend ages looking for the right button. It also looks pretty good, with its stylish transparent keys and no-nonsense labelling. As for the on-screen menus, they are clearly

laid out and intuitive, so installation is nice and easy. Simple as they might seem, they actually allow for plenty of fine-tuning, so the more technically accomplished user should have plenty to play with. This dual appeal is refreshing, and should be applauded.

### Natural performer

As for the picture quality, the 42PD7200, as you might have already guessed by now, is a great performer. When viewing our test DVD, *Hero*, the colours of the outdoor sequences were vibrant and well saturated. The oranges of the autumn leaves and the deep blues of rushing rivers were almost as beautiful as the real thing. What's more, the colourful costumes lost little of their impact. Movement is handled well too, something that was apparent during *Hero's* frenetic fight scenes.

Thanks to its high-definition capabilities, the 42PD7200 handles fine detail like a dream. From the epic, sprawling battle scenes, right down to close-ups of the hero, each soldier or eyelash was rendered with astounding precision. Even with analogue



**Fujitsu P50XHA40 p20**



**Tatung TLT2601S p25**



**Thomson 15LCDM03 p22**

**FIRST TEST**

and more...



**‘Thanks to its high-def capabilities, the 42PD7200 handles fine detail like a dream... everything is rendered with astounding precision’**

broadcasts, pictures have the kind of solidity and impact that you would expect only on a much more expensive screen.

**Nightmares?**

The only area where the 42PD7200 falls down is contrast. While greyscale is good, deep blacks aren't rendered quite so well, which has obvious consequences for night-time scenes. There was also the occasional case of colour banding, but luckily neither this nor the black level response problems are enough to detract from the 42PD7200's overall picture prowess.

When it comes to sound, we noticed a bit of audio distortion when some of those louder war cries were yelled, particularly when the TV was set to Matrix surround mode. But the speakers nevertheless delivered all those satisfying sword clinks more than adequately. It's just when you really crank up the volume that problems might occur. And anyway, it would be a crime not to hook a screen of this calibre up to a dedicated surround sound setup.

Despite a couple of minor flaws, the 42PD7200 is a star performer and comes at a price that you really can't refuse. **WP**

**RATINGS**

PICTURE .....★★★★★  
 SOUND .....★★★★☆  
 CONNECTIONS .....★★★★★  
 FEATURES .....★★★★★  
 EASE OF USE .....★★★★★  
 VALUE .....★★★★★

**VERDICT ★★★★★**  
 Great connectivity and pictures, with a price to match. Hitachi does it again

