

PANASONIC VIERA TH-42PV30A

The Buying Guide matches the latest Panasonic Viera plasma against the best of Fujitsu, Pioneer and NEC



Figure R34. Panasonic Viera Plasma

The buying guide reviews, the Panasonic TH-42PV30A Viera in detail.

WHAT YOU GET

The Panasonic TH-42PV30A Viera plasma package comes in 2 boxes, the plasma and stand (optional extra). The plasma box contains a user manual, 1 power cable, ferrite cores, 1 remote and 2 AA batteries for the remote.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Super Real Gamma System offers 1024 shades of grey increasing the total number of colours that may be displayed. The human eye is influenced by the colours of surrounding objects. The MACH Enhancer enhances object contours for the eyes perception. SD and PC card slots allow for playback of digital photos. The Panasonic

TH-42PV30A Specification

Screen Size	42", 105.7cm Diagonal
Aspect Ratio	16:9
Resolution	1,024 x 768
Brightness	?cm/m ²
Contrast Ratio	3000:1
Dimensions (WxHxD)	1140x757x139mm
Power consumption	398W
Weight	42kg

Connections

A/V 1, Rear	Composite, S-Video
A/V 2, Rear	Composite,
A/V 3, Front	Component
A/V 4, Rear	Composite, S-Video
PC	Composite, Component RGBHV

Table R6. Panasonic Th-42PV30A Specifications



Figure R35. Panasonic Viera Boxing

has 4 16mm wide built in speakers arranged vertically on either side of the screen, making an impressive design that also performs well.

ASSEMBLING

The Panasonic is very easy to assemble. Like the Fujitsu and most other brand plasma stands, only two vertical bars which hold the Panasonic plasma upright need to be fastened. The Panasonic stand does not allow for vertical tilt or side to side swivel. Like the NEC, Pioneer and Fujitsu, unpacking the Panasonic out of the box is as simple as removing 2 clips from the side of the box and lifting the box away from its base. With the Panasonic, there is no requirement to attach external speakers. Indeed, the speakers are builtin. The Panasonic does have handles to allow for easy movement, however at 42Kg, two people are required to transport it.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Panasonic is a large and heavy plasma, not what you would expect from a modern day plasma display. There are whopping 4 fans to keep it cool! Unfortunately, the Panasonic does not have the air flow and heat sink technology like the Pioneer or Fujitsu to avoid the use of cooling fans. The fans are however not noticeable.



Figure R36. Panasonic Viera Pedestal stand TYST42PX20

The plasma dissipates 398W of power. The Panasonic certainly did a good job of warming up the Buying Guide labs. The Panasonic can double as your home heater! The Panasonic is not thin. Wall mounting is would be appealing if the Panasonic was slimline. The Panasonic is best placed on the table top or glass stand.

THE REMOTE AND GENERAL OPERATION

The Panasonic remote contains numbered (0-9) buttons used to switch channels using the analog

tuner. In contrast to the Pioneer, the Panasonic remote is not large and will certainly fit comfortably in most peoples hand. The Panasonic remote has a number buttons on it, including a DVD operation section, so it may require a short while to master its all its features. Like most



Figure R37. Panasonic Viera extras, including a remote, ferite cores, power cable and instruction manual



Figure R38. Panasonic Viera has 4 fans to keep it cool!

plasma TVs on the market, the Panasonic has a row of buttons which allow switching between video inputs, however the Panasonic sometimes requires two button presses to switch between video inputs. The Fujitsu, Pioneer, and NEC plasmas only require one button press. The Panasonic has an attractive graphical menu interface, similar to the Pioneer. Navigation is also simple. Like the Pioneer, the remote has a glow in the dark feature which helps in dim lit environments.

PANASONIC TH-42PV30A ANALYSIS

The Buying guide tests the Panasonic TH-42PV30A in the categories of Style, quality of skin tones, picture quality in dark scenes, picture quality in light scenes, quality of colour with attention to green levels. Green levels are important for viewing grass sports.

STYLE

The Panasonic, although somewhat large and heavy, has a unique design. Panasonic is pushing the curvey look (see bottom of plasma, Figure R34). Style is one of Panasonic's selling points, and Panasonic markets the Viera plasma heavily on its style. The Viera has two thin 16mm vertical slits for its builtin side speakers. This design is unique to to Panasonic. The



Figure R39. Panasonic Viera rear inputs

Panasonic with glass shelf (optional extra) will look great in most environments.

QUALITY OF SKIN TONES

In this category, the Buying Guide looks for natural looking skin colours and smooth skin colour gradients. Figure R41 shows the Panasonic displaying a skin tone. The panasonic seems to show an overly red orange skin tone as compared to the NEC, Pioneer and Fujitsu. The skin colour is probably most similar to the Fujitsu. The Panasonic colour gradient displays colour banding similarly to the Pioneer (but slightly smoother). The NEC or Fujitsu has smoother gradients. To achieve skin colours, manufacturers tend to increase the red level of the plasma TV, as seen in the Panasonic. This sometimes causes the skin colour to look an unnatural red.



Figure R40. Panasonic remote

PICTURE QUALITY IN DARK SCENES

In this test, we looked at the plasmas ability to show detail in dark scenes. The test pictures were challenging because each picture had sections of bright and dark detail. A good plasma displays fine detail in both bright and dark sections. There should be no bias toward increasing detail in only one of the sections at the

compromise of the other. The source signal was a DVD player feeding a PAL DVD 576p signal over a component connection (using premium cabling). The Panasonic showed good detail in the dark sections. The Panasonic has 3000:1 contrast, which is over double the specification of the NEC, Pioneer or Fujitsu! However the Buying Guide noticed that there was no noticeable detail improvement as compared to the NEC, Pioneer or Fujitsu. It certainly was not twice as detailed. This further emphasises the point that contrast ratio should be considered potentially as a sales pitch. It is best to compare plasmas side by side with real world test pictures for a true comparison. Looking closely at the mountain ranges in figure R42, there is a small 2-3 pixel thick outline surrounding the mountain ranges. This outline seems to be the Panasonic's MACH Enhancer at work. To the eye, it seems the outline creates the effect of a sharper image, exactly as intended by the MACH technology.

PICTURE QUALITY IN BRIGHT SCENES

In this test, we looked at the plasma's ability to show detail in scenes typical of every day viewing. The Panasonic had a lighter hue



Figure R41. Panasonic TH-42PV30A skin tone



Figure R42. Panasonic TH-42PV30A displaying a dark scene. Note: There is more detail visible in the dark section than this photo shows. The extra detail in the dark section is not visible because of the limitations of the photo camera.

than the Pioneer but darker than the NEC and Fujitsu. The picture was sharp and did not look over smoothed. The Panasonic

had a sharp picture, but overall would rate it behind the NEC and just behind the Fujitsu (if you dont mind the lighter hue of the Fujitsu) but better than the

Pioneer.

COLOUR QUALITY

The Panasonic showed great colour depth, however the colours were not as natural looking as some of the other plasma screens. For example, the default red level is slightly higher than the Pioneer and NEC, casing a redish orange skin colour. The greens were darker and not as natural as the NEC and Fujitsu. Panasonic colours were generally darker than the NEC and Fujitsu, however similar to the Pioneer.

PANASONIC WARRANTY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Panasonic customer can be contacted on 132600. The Buying Guide found the customer service to be responsive.

Panasonic offer a 1 year standard warranty on their plasma displays which is automatically activated upon purchase of the plasma display panel. The receipt from date of purchase will be required when making a warranty claim.

PROS

- * Card reader facility to view family photos
- * Nice graphical menu system
- * Nice design
- * wide array of options for aspect control
- * Remote has DVD operation buttons, however some may consider this as



Figure R43. Panasonic TH-42PV30A displaying a lighter scene



Figure R44. Panasonic TH-42PV30A displaying a colourful scene.



Figure R45. Panasonic TH-42PV30A displaying greens.

clutter.

- * No requirement to purchase speakers separately.

CONS

- * Has 4 internal fans
- * Heavy and typically consumes more power than the other plasmas. May be a problem to wall mount.
- * No HDMI input option
- * No DVI input option
- * Does not accept a 720p signal

CONCLUSION

The Panasonic is a well built and reliable plasma TV. The Guide feels that the consumer should not be worried by the shortness

of the panasonic warranty. Other manufacturers, like Hitachi, also offer 1 year warranty. The warranty length does not generally correlate to build quality. The Panasonic shows good picture quality, but somewhat raw in quality at times. The styling is great, although if the Panasonic was slimline and lighter it would increase its appeal. Input options are limited as there is no digital HDMI or DVI option, a situation that should be rectified in the next generation. Further, Panasonic should concentrate on reducing power consumption and heat.

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