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NEC 42XR4 Silver Plasma

Can NEC's 42-inch be the monitor of choice for gamers?

by Chris Pickering published on 15 September 2006

Considering my spare time is frequently filled to the very brim with the latest gaming titles, you can safely say that high definition is right at the very forefront of my imagination. With the Xbox360 and PS3 intent on utilising the latest televisual technologies to their max, it's time for us gamers to splash the cash and replace that aging 28-inch CRT you've had since as long as you can remember. NEC, believes its 42-inch plasma is the answer to tempting us to part with our monies. Weighing it at quite a hefty chunk more expensive than similar units, combined with the fact that both stand and speakers are sold separately (so make sure you know exactly what you need before you order) the 42XR4 doesn't appear too attractive a proposition at first glance. Add to the fact that even a TV tuner is down as an optional extra, the costs can soon rack up. The kit doesn't look too appealing at second glance either, with a remote control looking mysteriously cheap and unappealing. Certainly not the kind of thing you want to be wielding after spending so much cash. Thankfully the screen itself is where the true qualities lie. With some perfectly fitting handles on the back, even the most weedy of early HD adopters would be hard pressed to not get this hooked up to the (included for this product test) stand. Equally luckily, the well-placed sockets mean that hooking up all your goodies afterwards isn't the chore that some screens force upon you. Like Toshiba, NEC offer a pair of HDMI inputs so good for both your PS3 (when it eventually launches) and another HD product like an upscaling DVD player, combined with another pair of component inputs, as well as a VGA input, you'll be unlucky to find yourself running out of connections. But it's the screen itself that needs to be up to scratch if it's to be a decent buy. Coming in a native resolution of 1024 by 768 pixels, it's not much of a slouch. Hooking up an Xbox360 brings about the most impressive looks. Text is as clear as the proverbial bell, and the



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front end certainly looks damned impressive. However, in game and the dreaded "jaggies" unfortunately come into view. Try every HD mode you can, and those dreaded jagged edges to characters and vehicles loom their ugly heads. It's an unfortunate affair, and one that can be severely off putting. Tweaking the setup does indeed begin to combat the situation, but compared to other screens I've witnessed, this certainly isn't up there with the very best. With bog standard DVDs running through an average DVD player, things are unsurprisingly poor. The blurring of edges is as clear as day, and you're certainly not going to find yourself drooling over the huge screen when your eyes are drawn to these unfortunately blurred edges. Another use for the 42XR4 could be for a quick substitute radiator too. The heat this unit gives off is something obscene. Make perfectly sure that you keep any cabling well away, and make sure the unit's well ventilated.

VERDICT

Maybe I've become a little spoilt when it comes to HD televisual opportunities, but the 42XR4 certainly doesn't weigh in with the goods. If priced competitively, then this would certainly be up there among the front runners. But for the extra outlay they're asking for to purchase this, you could spend your money much more wisely.

At a glance

What is it?

42-inch plasma

Good

HD Ready, plenty of connections

Bad

Refresh rate couldn't cope with all games, gets very hot

Verdict

Maybe I've become a little spoilt when it comes to HD televisual opportunities, but the 42XR4 certainly doesn't weigh in with the goods

Price

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10