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Sony KDL-32W4000 television

Not just extra pixels

by Jamie Carter published on 1 July 2008

As far as we know, there are only two other Full HD LCD TVs at this small 32-inch size. The sudden demand for Full HD at all sizes has caused Panasonic to launch its TX-32LZD80, Sharp its LC-32X20E. But while those two tellies put their hi-res 1920 x 1080 resolution screens at the front of their appeal, Sony's KDL-32W4000 has a lot more going for its than merely extra pixels.

Its three HDMI inputs lead the charge, one of which is on the TV's side. That should please those of us who want to hook-up a PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360 now and again.

Although this TV breaks the mould by looking like a serious piece of kit rather than merely shiny black plastic, its see-through design is a bit of a let down. With speakers attached to either side of the TV's undercarriage, there's a strip of glass running through the centre. Unless you keep the back of your TV spotless (unlikely just yet even if Wi-Fi is slowly taking over our homes), the view from the front is hardly spectacular. And of course the effect is totally wasted if you're planning to put the 32W4000 on a wall.

If do that, though, the 32W4000 can act as a painting. Its Picture Frame Mode means you can either choose your own digital pictures stored on a USB stick (using the rather lovely heart button on the remote), or choose from a selection of prints from "the masters", to display fullscreen - all in "Full HD glory". While this is a low-power mode that Sony is hoping will boost its green credentials, the idea of leaving your TV on constantly won't appeal to anyone with true eco sensibilities.

Although this works well, it's hardly a unique feature and besides, Full HD resolution - however hyped-up it may be - equates to only a 2-megapixel image, so your own digital pics are



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likely to be scaled-down to fit the screen.

That extra resolution is better served by a Blu-ray player, which the 32W4000 is exceptionally set-up for. Aside from its 1080p screen, the 32W4000 is equipped with BRAVIA Sync, which allows you to use the TV's remote control to operate the basic functions of a Blu-ray player. It's also got 24p True Cinema mode that's able to display Blu-ray discs as 24 frames per second - exactly the speed motion pictures are filmed in. In practice this does introduce a modicum of judder to pictures, although in general the 32W4000 presents a smooth and ultra detailed picture.

Still, it's best quality is colour. With Live Colour Creation mode (which is part of this TV's all-new Bravia Engine 2 picture engine) toggled on, pictures benefit massively from a heady dose of colour that's as accurate with skin colours as it is with delicate gradation in large blocks of colour. Those "balls" adverts were right, although a slight greyness to blacks is disappointing though par for the course for most LCD TVs.

If high-def sparkles, digital TV looks awful. Whether piped in from one of the set's two SCARTs, from a posh new HDMI-equipped set-top box or from the 32W4000's own digital tuner, there's loads of blocking and dotted picture noise. At least its Virtual Dolby Surround and BBE ViVA sound modes impress, with the latter offering believable surround sound effects and latter lending some power to voice.

Other connectivity includes a set of Component video inputs, a composite video input, a PC input, PC audio input, three stereo audio inputs, an optical digital audio output and a headphones output.

All this and a fabulous user interface called XrossMediaBar that includes easy-to-navigate scrolling menus that even let you see what's currently playing on digital TV and radio channels.

VERDICT

It's hard to judge whether Full HD is worth it as Pocket-lint.com, the premier gadget news and reviews website in the UK

At a glance

What is it?

32-inch LCD TV

Good

Gorgeous onscreen menus, Full HD pictures, powerful speakers

Bad

Shoddy Freeview picture quality, slight blur on pictures

Verdict

Superbly presented with plenty of connectivity, this is a serious (if small) attempt at Full HD that boasts excellent colour and decent sound

Price £899

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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this size, but the premium price gets you far more than just extra pixels. With great onscreen menus that make it a joy to use, the 32W4000 has plenty for gamers and Blu-ray players - though digital TV is a definite low point. Avoid if you're a Freeview fanatic, but high-def fans after the best 32-incher around should audition the 32W4000 now.