tech talk

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PLASMA or LCD TV?

Each year at this time I receive numerous enquiries from adjusters and friends interested in purchasing a new piece of equipment for their TV room/home theatre. In years past the questions have covered a broad spectrum of subjects from subwoofers and surround sound system to dvd players and most everything in between. This year there seems to be just one questions on everyone's mind, "which is better, Plasma or LCD TV."

While this is a hotly debated topic by the manufacturers, media and sales people alike, one thing you should remember is that while Plasma and LCD TVs are competing technologies, both achieve the same end result, crystal-clear images, with vibrant colors in very thin packages.

The interest in these technologies has never been higher and it seems to stem from a number of motivating factors. No matter what your motivation, this article is attempt to simplify the issues, provide you with some up to date information while cutting through some of the myths and rumors surrounding these technologies. This should allow you to better understand the benefits of each technology and determine which might be right for you if you're getting ready to purchase a new TV.

Interesting Facts and Figures or what you really need to know!

Fact: Plasma is typically considered superior for Home theatre, sport and video gamer's. ***Plasma offers a better contrast ratio which means better blacks and improved detail in dark scenes. Plasma exhibits a richer more natural color in rooms with normal to lower lighting.***

Fact: LCD offers lightly wider viewing angles, lower light reflection and the cabinet is slightly thinner and lighter. ***LCD gets a slight edge if the majority of your viewing will be done during daytime hours.***

Fact: In order to view HDTV content on your new HDTV you require more than just the HD Television. You'll also require the appropriate cables and a High Definition Source to take advantage of the superior picture HD can produce. Some examples of HD sources are HD satellite or Cable TV Box, HD or BlueRay DVD Player, Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3 gaming systems, some newer computers or an HD antenna signal. You'll also need to connect there sources with one of three types of cables to pass the video signal between components component video, dvi or hdmi cables. ***Remember, if you don't have both the source and the right cables you're not watching HDTV!***

TECH TIP

Plasma and LCD TV's are competing technologies, but both achieve the same end result, crystal-clear images, with vibrant colors in very thin packages.

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Fact: "Image Retention" Burn-in on Plasma TV's and Image sticking on LCD TV's is no longer much of a concern with the current generation of name brand plasma and LCD televisions, especially for people with normal TV viewing requirements. ***LCD does have a slight technical advantage over Plasma if your viewing habits regularly leave static images on your TV for long periods of time.***

Fact: The life span of current generation name brand LCD and Plasma TV's is now rated at 60,000 hours. Based on these numbers, a family that watches an average of four to six hours of television a day would see well over 20 years of use from their TV before it needs to be replaced. By then you'll be enjoying your new 3 dimensional holographic projector.

Fact: High Definition TV is to Standard Definition TV what The CD was to the album. Once you've seen it you'll have a hard time going back!

Fact: LCD holds a larger share of the current TV market then Plasma does. This is mainly due to the fact that Plasma TV's are not sold in sizes under 42'. Both LCD & Plasma now have sets available in sizes exceeding 100".

What about 1080p, does it really make a difference? The consumer electronics industry has always been driven by numbers, bigger or more is usually presented as better. At the present time there is a very limited amount of source material for 1080p playback. BlueRay DVD is the primary source at the moment. There is presently no 1080p content on satellite or digital cable. This is not to say that 1080p won't be a factor in the future sources, but it certainly isn't at this time. So to answer the question of is 1080p worth it...***if you plan on finding the source material, have a discerning eye, wish to future proof your purchase or will be sitting very close to you large TV, the answer is yes.***

While this article is intended to focus on Plasma and LCD TV's, front and rear projection TV's still offer a legitimate option for those seeking the largest picture at a lower price point as their ultimate goal. Below you'll find a short overview of these technologies.

Rear projection CRT - This is a technology that's at the end of its life cycle. They are still available in limited quantities in 51" and 57" sizes.
Pro's: These sets will display a high definition picture. This is a great alternative for those that are looking for the biggest bang for their buck on a limited budget.
Con's: They require more space so they are not optimum where space is at a premium. While they will display Hi-Definition content, it's not quite the picture you've come to expect from Plasma and LCD.

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Rear projection LCD or DPL - These TV's offer a great alternative for those looking to purchase a large TV, but are working with a more limited budget. They are more up to date in technology, but often sell for 1/3 to half the price of a comparable Plasma or LCD in the larger sizes.
Pro's: large clear picture without the expense of LCD and Plasma's at the larger sizes.
Con's: bulb life and size.

Overhead Front Projection - These are great for those looking for the largest possible picture. Typically 80" and larger.
Pro's: Enjoy the spectacular theatre like price for a fraction of the price of any other technology.
Con's: Usually requires professional installation, requires a dark room to achieve the best quality picture. Bulb life - the bulb typically needs to be replaced every 2000-3000 hours.

This article is designed to answer the question of "which is better, Plasma or LCD TV." and to serve as a guide to help you make your decision if you're purchasing a new TV. While the differences between the two technologies have really narrowed, al things being equal my answer to the question on which is better is almost always Plasma. For large screen viewing I find the picture that Plasma displays is more pleasing to the eye; it has a more 3 dimensional image that LCD cannot yet achieve. With Plasma sizes not starting until the 42" size LCD TV's make a great choice for the bedroom, office, kitchen or in rooms with a lot of ambient light.

This article is designed to provide you with an overview of questions for some of the most popular Equipment.

If you would like to receive expert help in developing a specific strategy for addressing this subject please contact the author
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