

WHAT VIDEO & HI-DEF TV
Best Buy
 ★★★★★

Verdict ★★★★★ Approx price **£1,800**

Planar PD420

One of the best LCDs has just got smaller and more affordable

⊕ Stunning picture quality; hardcore build; plenty of features

⊖ A tad expensive; no tuner or speakers included in the price

PLANAR'S FIRST LCD screen, the 47in PD470, scooped a Best Buy award in Issue 328 and remains arguably the finest LCD picture performer we've seen. So it's with some eagerness that we've chased down its more affordable 42in sibling, the PD420.

receive Deep Color signals from suitable sources such as JVC and Panasonic's upcoming HD camcorders. Disappointing, too, on a premium product, is that you only get two HDMI's, not three.

The PD420 doesn't have a built-in TV tuner or speakers. But this isn't as mad as it sounds, for the PD420 is designed as a custom installation product, meaning it will almost certainly be connected to an external TV source, such as a Sky HD receiver, and accompanied by a separate surround sound system.

Now for the good stuff. For starters, the set's connectivity

Features ★★★★★

While in many ways a very well specified screen, the PD420 does have a trio of shortcomings.

One is the fact that its HDMI sockets only meet the v1.2 specification and not v1.3a that would have allowed the screen to

The rivals

/Pioneer Kuro PDP-428XD
 ★★★★★

Betters the Planar on black levels, viewing angles and connectivity, but lacks some image subtlety. Reviewed: Issue 324

/Philips 42PFL9900 ★★★★★

Features galore, great performance and striking Light Frame/Ambilight combination. Reviewed: Issue 331



includes PC compatibility via a D-Sub port; easy system integration via an RS232C jack; and an optical digital audio output capable of outputting audio from any of the TV's inputs. This means the PD420 can, handily, be used as an AV switching box.

The screen also boasts a full HD resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels and an impressive 'native' contrast ratio of 1,500:1 (rising to a mighty 5,000:1 when the dynamic contrast feature is enabled).

Where the PD420 really justifies its price, though, is with its picture processing. The single most important and currently unique element is its single, Genesis Cortez-Plus LCD TV control chip,

Handles motion with impressively little trouble from LCD's customary smearing issues

which accommodates a whole raft of premium processing technology from highly respected third-party outfit, Faroudja. Key elements include Faroudja's 10-bit DCDi Cinema Video converter for eliminating jagged edges from contours; its TrueLife system for enhancing colours, depth perception and detailing; and Faroudja's Intellicomb 3D for reducing artefacts when upscaling standard-definition sources to the PD420's full HD pixel count.

An Advanced Colour Management 3D function is also included to boost tone and luminance control, resulting in dynamic yet lifelike video.

Final tricks worthy of mention include a hard-coated, anti-glare surface, an exceptionally robust, diamond-polished, brushed aluminium finish, high-definition picture in picture and 1080p/24fps support, plus extreme picture adjustment flexibility.

Ease of use ★★★★★

In some ways, the PD420 is commendably easy to use, considering its complexity. The onscreen menus are mostly well organised, while the remote proves pretty straightforward, despite being arguably a touch cluttered.

However, the onscreen menus are stupidly small, meaning you

have to be quite near the screen to read them when setting up.

Picture ★★★★★

These are every bit as outstanding as those of the PD470. This is largely due to their remarkable expressiveness, by which we mean the screen's ability to pick out unique levels of fine detailing and colour subtlety. With HD sources at least, the picture thus enjoys a purity, transparency, immediacy and sense of three-dimensionality that is unprecedented in the LCD world.

The set also handles motion with impressively little trouble from LCD's customary smearing issues.

Also unusually good for a full HD LCD screen is the PD420's

presentation of standard-definition sources, which are hardly blighted by blockiness, jagged edges or general dot crawl.

Another PD420 hit is its colour response. As promised by the Faroudja TrueLife colour

application, the screen enjoys a terrific combination of high vibrancy and natural, beautifully subtle tones. The latter strength makes the PD420 particularly effective at displaying skin tones.

Colours as credible and vivid as those of the PD420 wouldn't be possible without a good black level response. So it's no surprise to find the PD420's dark areas looking reasonably free of LCD's usual grey clouding problem, as well as retaining superlative amounts of shadow detailing.

In an absolutely perfect world black levels could be deeper still, perhaps. And we should also stress that you will need to take great care when setting up the TV's picture options, since without sufficient fine tuning, pictures can quickly go from awesome to average. But of course, the custom installation team handling the PD420 for you should calibrate it properly on your behalf.

We can't comment on the audio performance because the PD420 doesn't ship with speakers, on account of its 'monitor-only' status.

Value ★★★★★

The PD420 is pretty expensive versus most 42in screens that come our way these days. But then you are paying for a genuinely premium performance level ☉

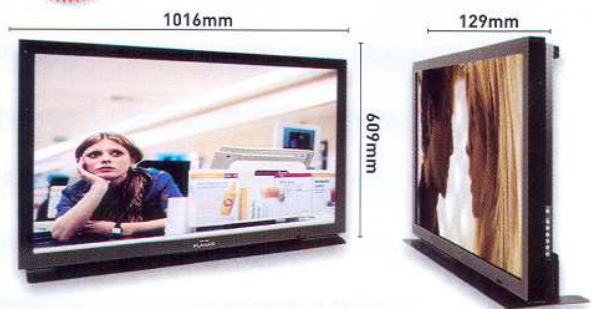
Fact file

- / 42in LCD TV
- / 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
- / Genesis Cortez processing chip
- / 1080p/24fps support
- / Designed for custom installation



Lab report

- / Time in Lab: 4 days
- / Serial No: HHA5XL6780141



Playback Test	Rating
Colour temperature	6,488K
Contrast ratio	596:1
Luminance	36.14ft
Colour	●●●●●
Frequency response	●●●●●

Power consumption:	
Standby:	3W
In use:	129W

Lab notes: Mere numbers on a page really can't do full justice to the PD420's true majesty

Spec check

Screen size & shape: 42in, 16:9	Advanced Colour Management, IR and RS232 control for system integration, gamma adjustments, dynamic contrast system
Tuner: None	
Sound system: Nicam stereo (speakers optional)	
Resolution (pixels): 1,920 x 1,080	/Sockets: Inputs: 2 HDMI; 2 component video; 2 composite video; S-video; D-Sub PC; 4 RCA stereo audio, 1 3.5mm stereo audio. Outputs: stereo audio; optical digital audio (of all audio inputs)
HD Ready: Yes	
Quoted contrast ratio: 5,000:1 using dynamic contrast	/Contact: 01423 359054 www.csesolutions.co.uk
Quoted brightness: 500cd/m ²	
Processing: Genesis Cortez	
Screen dimensions: 1016(w) x 609(h) x 129(d)mm	
Weight: 24.5kg	
/Other features: Faroudja DCDi and TrueVivid technologies, 6.5ms response time, HD picture in picture,	

WHAT TV We say

Reference levels of picture performance make this admittedly expensive screen worth every penny

