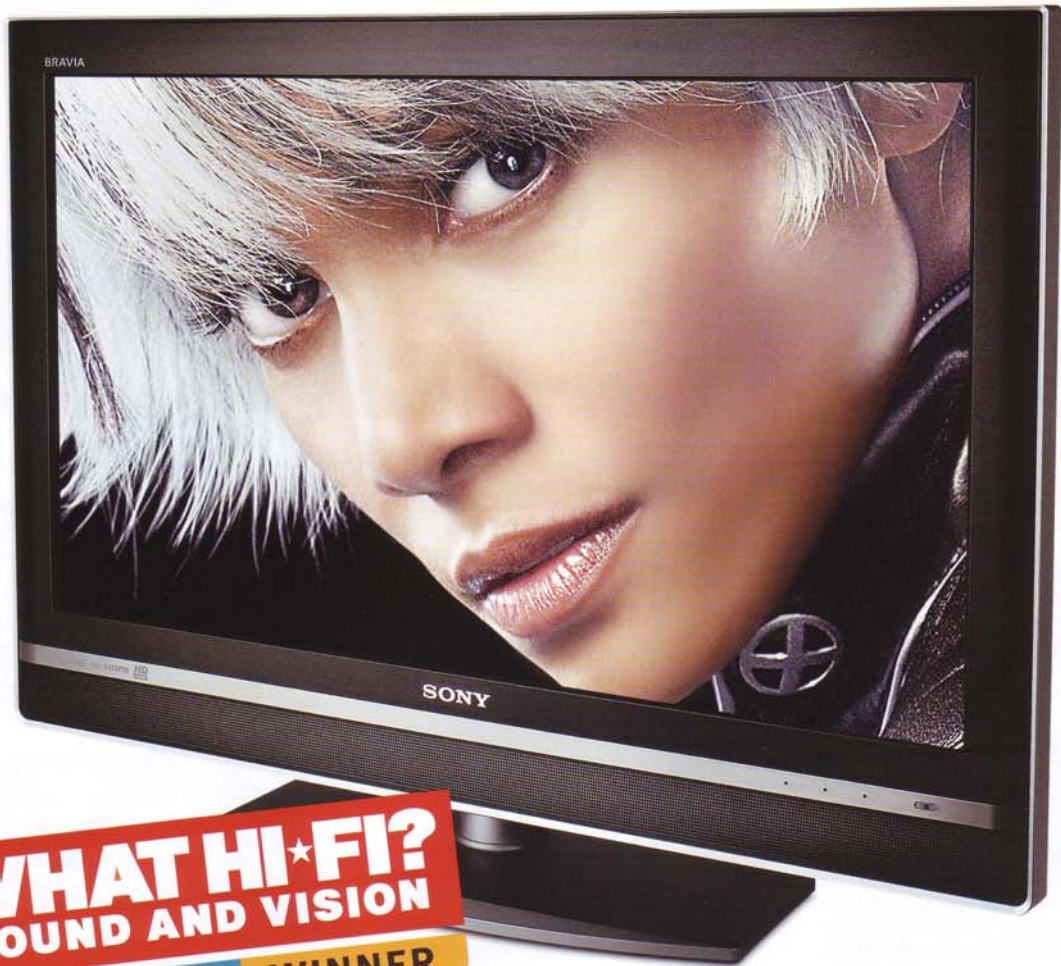


WHAT HI*FI?
SOUND AND VISION



SONY'S LCD TV **MARVEL**

Why the new 32in high-def Bravia is the best ever



WHAT HI*FI?
SOUND AND VISION

SUPERTEST

WINNER



Sony KDL-32V2000



£1500

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
SUPERTEST WINNER

Is it built to last?

Sony's elegant Bravia look is unchanged in this new generation of set – but we don't mind a jot. Few TVs can rival the Sony for on-shelf appeal: it's slim, solidly made and very easy on the eye – and that's before you turn it on



What does it offer?

Given the effort that has been poured into its design and quality, it seems a shame that Sony has only seen fit to endow the Bravia with one HDMI input. We could tolerate that on last year's model – now it just seems mean

How does it look?

No doubt about it: if you want the very best image available in this size class, the Bravia is your boy. It's beautifully smooth and colourful, free from noise and blessed with superb levels of detail. The picture is wonderfully punchy, too

What's special?

Sony claims an eight millisecond response for its new LCD panel – meaning its pixels respond to instructions to display images in just 8ms. Last year's LCD TV average was around 15ms – small wonder the new Bravia handles motion so well

“Sony's new 32in Bravia TV is the most expensive set here, but for state-of-the-art LCD picture quality, it's worth every penny”

SONY'S NEW BRAVIA range has a lot to live up to: the company has done a deal to make these the displays of choice for the launch of the Sky HD service. If you've seen a demonstration of the Sky HD box, you've probably seen it on a Bravia, and if you buy a Sky HD box before mid-August, you can get a £100 cashback on this, or indeed any, Bravia set. This, plus the fact that discounting should kick in fairly rapidly on this

“The range of hues in *Memoirs of a Geisha* is handled remarkably”

brand-new flatscreen, should see that premium price take a tumble.

For all its use of an enhanced Bravia Engine picture processing system, the new Wide Colour Gamut backlight and a re-engineering of the liquid crystal system to give a wider viewing angle, on paper the Sony can look a bit ordinary. It has a 1366 x 768 pixel display,

↑ FOR

Superb picture, with natural colours and excellent visual dynamics; great performance via component and HDMI video sockets

↓ AGAINST

Comfortably the most expensive set here, and others better it on connectivity, but still worth every penny

→ VERDICT

If all the new Bravia models are as good as this, Sony has a winning range on its hands: it's far from cheap, but it's capable of excellent pictures, whatever the source

just like the others here, and digital and analogue TV tuners, but there's only one HDMI input, and one set of component video connections, alongside the usual composite, S-Video and Scarts.

But it's when you get the Sony up and running that it really justifies its price. With a bit of tweaking it's possible to get a picture with a beautifully natural colour balance, fine detail from highlight to shadow, and serious impact.

Colours and connections

The range of hues in *Memoirs of a Geisha* – from sunlit cherry blossom to lamplit interiors – is handled remarkably, with excellent detail and texture in those long close-ups of faces, and not a hint of noise whether on component video or HDMI. If you're going to connect Sky HD via HDMI, you won't be shortchanged running your DVD player in via component. And whichever input you use, motion-handling sets new standards in this class, being smooth and free from processing artifacts. Truly amazing for an LCD.

Watching off-air TV can seem creaky, but that's due to iffy broadcasts, with low bitrates on some Freeview services ruthlessly revealed. However, both are good with a strong signal and a high-quality broadcast. OK, this is the most expensive set here, and it could be better-specified, but for state-of-the-art LCD picture quality, it's still worth every penny.

Test it with

Memoirs of a Geisha



One tester suggested that the formal garden scene (chapter 17) of *Memoirs* looked just like the demo loops we journalists often get shown on flatscreens – all those long, slow shots of peacocks, cherry blossoms and kimono, so nothing to challenge the picture processing too much. But Chapter 16's amazing dance sequence, or the making of a geisha in Chapter 11 – with its combination of action and gorgeously detailed close-ups – will show just how much detail the Sony can reveal, and how natural is its colour balance.

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TEST
RESULT

And so the quality available from LCD moves up another step, with some recent stars outgunned by the new **Sony**

MUCH SHAKING OF heads took place during the course of this *Supertest*, and it was all in amazement at just how far the quality of LCD TVs has come in the past year or two, and how much more affordable the screens have become in the process. Think of it this way: our 2005 Award-winning TV, the Philips 32FP9830 32in LCD set, was £2000 at the time, while even a decent 26in LCD would have cost you £1500; now, amazingly, you can pick up a 32in model for just £750.

This test saw some surprising results for big-name sets – Panasonic's Viera was clearly beaten by the leading screens here, and matched by less expensive

models, while the Hitachi suffered a spectacular fall from grace from which not even its motorised stand could save it – but it was very far from cut and dried. We've said it before, but this one was close, and resolved only after we spent ages comparing the way the TVs we have on test coped with everything from the cherry blossoms of *Memoirs of a Geisha* to the shadow detail in snooker players' trousers!

Colour, contrast and motion

It came down to a straight shootout between Toshiba and Sony, and while there are so many things the former does

“Our Award-winning 32in LCD in 2005 cost £2000; now, amazingly, you can pick up a flat TV of this size for just £750”

well, not least of which is the detail it drags out of low-light scenes, the admittedly much more expensive Sony had it beaten on colour rendition, contrast and super-smooth motion-handling. We'd pay the extra for that superb Sony picture – and the £100 cashback when you buy a Sky HD box will help soften the blow.