

HOME CINEMA CHOICE

homecinemachoice.com

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OCTOBER 2004



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FUJIFILM FINEPIX F710

£360 (APPROX) ♦ 0207 586 1477 ♦ www.fujifilm.co.uk



Fuji has launched the world's first widescreen digital camera. While interest in digital imaging has paralleled the growth of home cinema, it has remained anchored in yesterday's aspect ratio of 4:3. But, after you've invested your child's education fund in a plasma screen big enough to completely fill your peripheral vision, you'll soon grow irritated that the recorded snapshots are often centred in the screen thanks to their native 4:3 format. Enter the FujiFilm FinePix F710, with its unique ability to take true 16:9 digital photographs.

At 3.1 megapixels, the overall design is superb. Necessary to attain the 4x digital zoom, the camera isn't very thin, but it has a satisfying weight to it.

The camera also offers choice over 16:9 and 4:9 ratio photos, but taking the



first wide-angled shot proved to be the revelation we were hoping for. The 2.1" widescreen display oozes quality, and the camera quickly adapts to lighting conditions. The ability to shoot in widescreen seems so natural that you're left wondering why the manufacturers haven't offered the facility before now.

Low-bit rate recording is also offered. Within its technical constraints, the results are excellent both in terms of smoothness and the audio captured. The

quality is great, especially when considering the price of the unit, although you will have to upgrade the measly 16Mb xD-Picture Card. The camera ships with a USB dock, allowing simple charging and transfer of photos to a PC or Mac. Fuji's legacy of quality cameras is continued with the F710 – a new avenue for home cinema fans to impress their mates with. (GC)

PREVIEW

Highs: Compact; 16:9 aspect ratio
Lows: Only supplied with 16MB memory card

Design	★★★★★
Versatility	★★★★★
Build	★★★★½
OVERALL	★★★★½

MIRRORMEDIA MM42P

£4,995 (APPROX) ♦ 01992 789650 ♦ www.mirrormedia.co.uk



MirrorMedia's combination of a Hitachi 42PD5200 plasma television with a two-way mirror has resulted in the MM42P. The product is a large mirror that can permeate to reveal a display as it's turned on. Surely the perfect combination of home cinema and interior design?

Whilst it is clearly aimed at courting this style cognoscenti, MirrorMedia may not enamour itself too well with home cinema purists. The practical result of such a screen is that its reflective properties are not truly eradicated when in general use. The effect can be lessened by use in a dimly-lit room, but there's no denying that another screen lessens the detail and brightness that it can offer.

Judging the Hitachi 42PD5200 as a display, however, and MirrorMedia could hardly have chosen a better starting point. Storming in with our five-star 'Best Buy' in June, it is capable of receiving high-definition component inputs, along with a DVI input. The amount of tweaks that you can perform to adjust the picture are particularly relevant with the mirror, as it is possible to remove some of the glare effects. In particular, the Film Mode is useful for boosting DVD sources, and ALiS technology addresses the problem of

PREVIEW

Highs: Great focal point for the room; stylish frames available
Lows: Not totally suited to filmic use; premium for frame over plasma alone

Picture	★★★★½
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★½

'dead' picture lines. Hitachi's 12W speakers are also some of the best in the business, delivering a solid soundstage with plenty of bass. The mirror frame we were sent was also good quality, but the company offers a choice of classic and contemporary designs. It also offers models both larger and smaller than this £4,995 42in model. Covering LCD and plasmas from 20in to 55in, MirrorMedia clearly expects a number of possible locations for its innovative devices.

Whilst not the solution for AV purists, this mirrored plasma marks the emergence of many similar devices. Whilst something of a gimmick, expect to see these screens adorning the houses of many self-styled millionaires. (GC) ▶▶