



First look

The new name
for 'Product
news'

TVs and high-definition DVD players become compatible

A juddering halt

TELEVISIONS

The sublime KDL-32D3000 Bravia is the latest 32-inch LCD TV from Sony. Vibrant pictures, decent sound and many other features make it a worthy Best Buy. It's available for £1,000 and goes one better than being merely HD ready: it's suitable for use with high-definition DVDs.

We said in August (p39) that the two rival high-definition DVD formats (Blu-ray and HD-DVD) did not work properly with most current HDTVs because of a mismatch between the number of pictures recorded per second on the discs (frame rate) and the number that players and TVs play. The result is juddery movements during fast-motion or camera-panning scenes.

This TV solves the problem by matching the frame rate on the screen to the frame rate of the new discs. The Best Buy Toshiba 37X3030DB, the Samsung LE40M87 BDJ/XEU and two new plasma TVs from Pioneer (the PDP-4280XD and PDP-428XD) all manage the same trick.

But crucially the high-definition DVD player also has to match the TV and disc



Sony's new BDP-S1E Blu-ray player matches TV speeds

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HD Full
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speeds. We're currently testing the new Sony BDP-S1E Blu-ray player and it fits the bill. But the first few machines on the market are already obsolete – see 'Product news', p11, February 2007. With the right equipment, high-definition DVD pictures look fantastic without any motion problems.

Yet it's difficult to tell which TVs and DVD players work and which won't. Labels like HD Full and 1080HD are misleading and do not guarantee proper high-definition DVD compatibility. Sony uses '24P True Cinema' but unfortunately, unlike HD ready, there is no official labelling scheme in place.

VERDICT To view high-definition DVDs you need to buy a DVD player and a TV that are fully compatible. We'll have more details, and a guide to what the labels mean, in next month's TV report.

BBC's iPlayer worth a try

ON-DEMAND TV

Downloading television programmes on demand is the latest viewing trend – so we've had a look at the BBC's new iPlayer, launched following similar services from ITV, Channel 4, Five and Sky.

It allows you to download BBC output from the last seven days and watch it on your computer for up to 30 days afterwards. It's currently available only to Windows XP and Internet Explorer users. Some con-



The iPlayer: not polished yet

tent, such as sport, isn't included.

Broadband is a must; downloading an episode of *EastEnders* took about 25 minutes with a 2Mbps connection. On-screen picture

quality is quite good and you can view subtitles, too. However, many users have experienced slow download times and other technical difficulties. One problem is that if your ISP is not UK registered, you currently won't be able to use the service, even if you live here.

We think the iPlayer is worth a try if you are able to access it, especially as it's free. It's not very polished yet, but in time we're confident it will improve and become more accessible.

Just out

HP Photosmart A826 £200

HP's new egg-shaped printer is unlike anything we've seen before. It produces postcard-sized prints and an internal paper tray saves its designer curves. It also has a stylus for simple navigation and editing and a seven-inch touch-screen LCD display. Available now.



PowerShot G9 £429

This 12.1Mp camera is Canon's new top-of-the-range compact. Its features include 'Face select and track', which allows you to follow a single face on a crowded beach, for example, and keep it properly exposed and focused – for better photos of your beloved.



A sporty Panda

FIRST DRIVE

Fiat has launched its zippy £10,160 Panda 100HP – a sporty city car with low running costs for those who lust after a VW Golf GTi but can't afford to buy one.

The model's 1.4-litre engine makes it quite speedy. It also feels well suited to rural roads because of its sharp responses, particularly in sport mode. Economy was a little disappointing: we averaged around 39mpg against the official 43.5mpg.

Some important safety kit, such as electronic stability control (£420) and side airbags (£450) is optional. A CD changer is £250 but an MP3 input isn't available.

VERDICT This is an intriguing addition to the Panda range. It will appeal to younger drivers thanks to its combination of low price and running costs.



Fiat's new Panda – intriguing addition