

REVIEWED
AND RATED

REALITY

REALITY RT40L101-POS

| \$2599 |

★★★★★

LCD TV

See it:
www.reality.net.au

FOR

Big, bright image; superb styling; good contrast

AGAINST

Against: Blacks not as pure as they could be; online sales only

VERDICT

If you're in the market to get a large screen LCD without a large price-tag, this is the one to buy

Best budget LCD yet!

WE CAN TRY TO BE COY AND WAIT TILL THE END OF THE REVIEW TO TELL YOU THIS IS A 'MUST HAVE' TV, BUT WE JUST CAN'T HELP OURSELVES. FIND OUT WHY...

If you'd told us last issue you could buy a high-quality 40 inch LCD screen for less than three grand we would have laughed in your face. We have seen a lot of screens come through these offices, and until now the 'budget marvel' has eluded us. Well, no longer. Online retailer, Reality, has done its homework and come up with a doosie. You can stop reading right now when we say, "This is the TV you have to buy".

Hyperbole aside, this is simply an awesome television for the money. As Reality itself says, why pay two or three different companies their cut for a TV when you can buy it direct?

Reality use an OEM manufacturer from Korea which will be familiar to *SmartHouse* readers – it's the same one used by a certain Australian



"HYPERBOLE ASIDE, THIS IS SIMPLY AN AWESOME TELEVISION FOR THE MONEY."

five-star winner from last issue...

Build quality is tip-top, with a very pleasing (if wide) black bezel and cheese grater speakers. The remote is the same grey remote slab we've seen before, which is laid out logically enough.

Socketry has seemingly been overseen by Noah, with two each of Scart, component and PC (a DVI and an RGB), AV and S-Video connections complete the set. One minor annoyance we had is that the audio input isn't configurable, meaning a set of audio cables for each video source in many cases. For example, both DVI and RGB inputs require audio from the 3.5mm input. Of

course, anyone serious about home theatre should spend the money they save on this TV on a decent 5.1 system.

The panel itself is Samsung in origin, and exhibits excellent picture characteristics. Colours are bright and vivid, without being lurid, motion is smooth and not at all jerky, and contrast is also very good.

Images from that hoary old chestnut, *Planet of The Apes* were incredibly filmic for an LCD, with skin tones a healthy pink and fast movement handled with an expert touch. Jagged edges aren't a problem either, with the TV's image processing cleaning up any errant jaggies quickly and cleanly. At times, the pictures reminded us

of Pioneer's excellent \$6000 plasma, they were that convincing.

Of course, like other TVs from this family, the blacks aren't a true black but very, very dark purple, but during normal viewing this is never a problem.

While Samsung readies its eighth-generation LCD line, at the present time you will not get a better deal than this. The only reservation we have is that due to the online nature of Reality's business, you can't see this in a shop. And while we would normally say, "See it first", trust us when we say this is a phenomenal product. While it's not convenient for everybody, Reality does have a showroom in North Sydney, if you want to be doubly sure.

There can be no doubting that the Sony KLV40A10 is still the best 40 inch TV there is, but it is more than twice the price of the Reality.

The Reality is, without fear nor favour, so far the TV bargain of the year!

Reality RT40L101-POS

Valens Quinn

It's not often a truly good deal comes your way, which is why this trio from Reality seems so remarkable. Budget 40 inch LCD TVs start around the \$3000 mark, but this package bundles a high definition digital set-top box and an upscaling DVD player with a 40 inch high definition LCD TV for the same amount of dollars. A bargain or what? Let's examine whether this package is really worth the sum of its parts.

Reality who?

Reality is a North Sydney-based company that designs and develops digital video displays and audio products. Reality sells its gear via an online store and, while this makes auditions difficult (you can pop into the showroom in North Sydney), it translates into significant cost savings. The company has been around for five years, and generally sources components made in Korea. The panel used in the Reality RT40L101-POS LCD TV here, for example, is actually a seventh generation Samsung A-grade panel. Reality has integrated image enhancing technologies including Digital Cinema Reality Engine (DCRE), automatic brightness control and 3D digital comb filter.

A standard three-year warranty is offered on the Reality LCD TV, with one year warranties on the set-top box and DVD player. For repairs and service, Reality uses Sydney iTec, the same national servicing company used by Harvey Norman, Woolworths, IBM and Fujitsu.

HD all the way

The nice thing about the Reality package is that each link of the chain promotes the high definition experience. The panel on

the Reality RT40L101-POS displays all HD modes broadcast in Australia (576p, 720p and 1080i) and offers a resolution of 1366 x 768. An analog tuner is built-in (handy if you're not in a digital TV reception area) and the Hotchip HN-1000HD pulls in SD and HD digital transmissions.

The Reality HD-390i DVD player supports the HDV standard, a high definition DVD format marketed in China but, because discs are not available locally, of little relevance to Australian buyers. The player also converts standard DVDs to the same high definition modes supported by the panel. A common feature in many mid- and upper-range DVD players, this upconversion technology can't create more detail than exists in the original video, but can scale the signal to give the appearance of a smoother picture with greater detail.

When it comes to delivering the high definition experience, then, the Reality setup appears, unlike many other TV packages, a well-matched system. Now, let's look at the components in more detail.

The big picture

This triumvirate's main attraction is the 40 inch LCD. It's made from a combination of high-density black polymer, with metallic framing, and the speakers are located to the left and right of the screen. The speakers are not removable and, should you prefer speakers integrated below the display, Reality has another model it can offer.

Overall, the Reality has a distinctly classy appearance, the smooth lines of the fascia broken only by the on/off switch. Volume, input and channel selectors are hidden on the right-hand edge of the panel, as are quick access ports for S-Video, composite and the 3.5mm headphone jack. Component inputs to cater for HD games from Xbox 360 and the forthcoming PlayStation 3 would have been nice here.

'Round back there are two sets of component connectors, plus DVI and VGA ports for linking digital video components and a PC. There are also two SCART connectors, but no HDMI. For hooking into sound, there are two RCA jacks and a PC audio-in plug.

"The Reality surprises with image quality as well. Fed a 720p signal from the DVD player and a 1080i transmission from Channel 10, the image was fantastic."

A memorable experience

When it comes to the experience of watching TV and movies, the \$3000 Reality system is surprisingly good. The six speakers have a combined output of 15 watts, which is louder than it sounds on paper, but there's little bass, which is to be expected. SRS WOW support adds an interesting surround sound effect to soundtracks.

The Reality surprises with image quality as well. Fed a 720p signal from the DVD player and a 1080i transmission from Channel 10, the image was fantastic. Colours, especially reds, are vibrant, and flesh tones are realistic. Green is also represented well, with smooth gradations between varying shades in our 'forest' test.

Contouring was hard to spot on HD material, but more visible with SD programming. Trying to match a 576i SD broadcast signal to the panel's higher resolution really put the display's circuitry to the test, but artefacting was minimal and, three metres from the screen, all but invisible. Some juddering was evident during fast panning scenes, but this is a limitation of many more expensive LCD TVs as well.

Nifty DVD

Reality's HD DVD390i supports a wide variety of video formats, from DVD to Windows Media, MP3, DivX, Kodak Picture CD and much more. It also claims to scale the resolution of DVDs up to a maximum of 1080p, but with the panel handling only 1080i we selected this mode and, indeed the image was visibly better than standard.

Connections include HDMI (useful for pairing with HDMI AV receivers), component and S-Video and, coaxial and optical audio. With six analog RCA connections and onboard processors for Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1, you can connect the player to a set of powered surround speakers, bypassing the need for an AV receiver.

Tuned in

The HotChip HN-1000HD supplied with the Reality duo is a no-frills affair. Setup is easy—simply select the state you live in and channels are automatically and quickly locked in. There's about a second's delay when switching between channels, and while PIP is not supported, a Freeze Image feature allows you to capture information such as phone numbers, addresses or recipes. Connections included optical and coaxial audio, VGA and component, but regrettably, no DVI or HDMI.

Worth the money?

When it's all hooked up and working together, this package offers a satisfying high definition entertainment experience, with a convincing image and decent audio quality. The TV looks great from an aesthetic point of view, but it'd be nice if the DVD player and HD set-top box matched as nicely. Also, three remotes are a pain to manage, so a universal remote would be a welcome option.

When it's all said and done, Reality's trio offers exceptional value for money, a quality set of components and a warranty and service package the equal of many better-known brands.

Specifications

- **System:** RT40L101-POS 101cm/40 inch LCD TV; Reality HD DVD390i DVD player; HotChip HN-1000HD set-top box
- **Price:** \$2999
- **Warranty:** RT40L101-POS 101cm/40 inch LCD TV: three years; HD DVD390i: one year; HotChip HN-1000HD: one year
- **Contact:** Reality, 02 9955 8666, www.reality.net.au, sales@reality.net.au
- **Reality RT40L101-POS LCD TV**
- **Screen:** 40 inches (101cm) diagonal; 1366 x 768 resolution; Brightness: 500 cd/sqm; Contrast: 1000:1; viewing angle: 178 degrees; 8 millisecond pixel response
- **Audio:** 6 speakers; 7.5 watts + 7.5 watts max output
- **Video inputs:** 2 x composite; 1 x S-VGA; 2 x component; 1 x VGA; 1 x DVI; 2 x SCART
- **Audio inputs:** 2 x RCA; 1 x 3.5mm headphone; 1 x PC input
- **Dimensions (WDH):** 1145 x 595 x 99mm
- **Weight:** 28 kg
- **Reality HD DVD390i**
- **Video modes:** 480p, 576p, 720p, 1080i/p
- **Video formats supported:** DVD, SVCD, VCD, CD, MP3, WMA, Photo-CD, CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD+RW, DVD-RW
- **Video outputs:** 1 x HDMI, 1 x component, 1 x composite, 1 x VGA
- **Audio outputs:** 1 x digital optical, 1 x digital coaxial, 6 x RCA out (Dolby 5.1 / DTS); 1 x RCA stereo
- **HotChip HN-1000HD**
- **Video modes:** 480p, 576p, 720p, 1080i, 1152i
- **Video outputs:** 1 x component, 1 x VGA
- **Audio outputs:** 1 x digital optical, 1 x digital coaxial, 1 x RCA stereo

Pros

- Complete HD system and a 40 inch LCD TV for not a lot of money
- Samsung panel means good-image quality

Cons

- Digital video connections not maintained through entire chain
- Three remote controls a bit of a pain



Reality

RT40L117-POS HD LCD TV

Straight out of the box and installed in the viewing area, it was obvious the 46 inch (117cm) 16:9 Reality LCD HD TV was a good looker, with very restrained lines, slim screen framing and an absence of front-of-set clutter.

Power on, it gave an immediately superb picture, with no tweaking or adjusting of brightness, contrast or colour saturation necessary. During both day and night tests, the display was able to deliver a presentation virtually on par with a top-quality CRT set, in regards to brilliance in picture quality, with only the blacks lacking in density (but this is the bane of all LCD TVs).

The Reality's background is interesting. While the unit itself — LCD panel, electronics, etc — was manufactured in Korea, the specifications and user features are developed by the Reality company in Australia, specifically for the local market. You can't purchase a Reality TV through any normal retail outlet, either — only directly from the company, from their North Sydney showroom or via the Internet site (see information box below). Even so, the opportunity to acquire such a big screen at the very meagre asking price is rare in Australia, and a very attractive option.

Equipment

The display resolution is 1366x768, and the Reality LCD can process incoming programming at 480i/p, 576i/p, 720p, 1080i and international standards PAL/NTSC/SECAM. The unit will access Teletext and store up to 4000 pages, and both a 3D Auto DNR system and 3D digital comb filter are installed. The screen brightness is logged at 500 cd/m² and contrast tabbed at 1000:1.

The set weighs in at a heavy 45kg (including the inbuilt stand) and you will find that you need an extra base or cupboard to mount it on to bring the screen's centre to a comfortable viewing height. Wall mounting is another option, but you'll need to acquire the mounting hardware elsewhere.

Frequently accessed operational buttons for input selection, as well as channel change, volume and menu access are conveniently set into the set's side.

The main area at the rear housing the inputs is generously set up: a DVI-D input,



analog 15 pin D-Sub VGA computer, DVI-PC sound input, S-Video, composite AV and audio L+R, two component inputs (along with their accompanying audio L+R signals), two SCARTS, a headphone jack and a 75 ohm antenna input are included. Repeated on the right side of the set, for greater user convenience, are inputs for S-video, composite video and L+R audio channels as well as an outlet for headphones.

The remote offers a generous selection of controls including single-button access to channels, external programming sources (such as DVD and VCR), picture and sound parameters, Teletext pages, PIP, still picture freeze and sleep mode.

Performance

A couple of operational features make the Reality stand out from the crowd. Noise reduction helps clean up a less-than-optimum picture, and the WSS (Wide Screen Signal) mode automatically adjusts picture size by detecting signals received from broadcasting stations.

The set is sold without an internal digital HD tuner and the review session was conducted with the help of a Reality-branded Hotchip 6000HD set-top box (we also enlisted the help of a Reality HDV High Definition DVD player — its output was truly stunning).


In working with the Reality TV, we were impressed by the menu system and its bright and lucid icons that guide you through the various adjustment processes. In these days of technical complexity and innumerable input options for television viewing, it is heartening to experience a system that is extremely user friendly, as the Reality was.

As mentioned earlier, the picture quality was top notch, with wide horizontal viewing

angles and a quick response time that rendered fast action scenes with precision. Audio from the 2-way/six speaker/7.5 watts per channel amplifier was of a high standard, with generous levels of audio delivered with nil distortion and a well-delivered stereo sound stage.

Conclusion

The Reality LCD has arguably one of the best in-set audio systems on the market — but that is not to say that you shouldn't invest in a 5.1 or larger audio system to enhance the cinematic experience produced by this big, bright, top-quality screen.

Reality also markets a package consisting of the 46 inch (117cm) TV along with a 390i HD DVD Player and the HN1000 set-top box, for only \$4399. A set-top box upgrade — to the HN6000 STB — is available for an extra \$150. 

Reality RT40L117-POS HD LCD TV

Price \$3999

Warranty Three years



- Good looker
- Excellent picture quality
- Powerful audio output



- No internal set-top box

Contact Reality TV
02 9955 8666
www.reality.net.au
sales@reality.net.au