

A Better, Flatter, Lighter TV

Comparing a flat-panel LCD to a regular TV is like comparing washboard abs to a beerbelly. We all know which of the two we'd rather have.

At a suggested retail price of \$1,995, the BenQ H200 LCD TV costs about the same as three years at a midrange health club, but the results are immediate: a crisp, 20.1-inch picture with built-in support for PC video and high-definition TV, all in a svelte cabinet. It's one of the best looking TVs we've ever seen.

The H200 handles a variety of audio and video sources. It's HDTV-compatible, supporting the three major formats: 480p, 720p, and 1080i. Connectors for S-Video, coaxial cable, progressive scan, and RGB are all tucked behind a back panel that keeps the nearly dozen possible cables from looking like a rat's nest. A swiveling coaxial cable input means you don't have to fumble with the nut because you can't get your fingers around it.

The H200 has plenty of configurable settings, including three choices for aspect ratios and backlighting, and a "freeze" button that lets you pause any image while the audio keeps playing. One gripe: Considering the plethora of options, the onscreen menu stays up for an annoyingly brief five seconds.

One advantage that LCD screens have over conventional TVs is that bright sunlight is less likely to wash out the picture. Even with a large, sun-filled window at our backs and the H200 in front of us, we didn't feel tempted to reach for the blinds. Also, the picture remains sharp from a fairly severe angle.

Unless your last name is Schwarzenegger, the H200 isn't light enough to lift with one finger. But, at 25 pounds and with a built-in handle, it's portable, and light enough to mount on a wall. The broad base provides excellent stability, yet a nudge from a cat could easily send nearly \$2,000 crashing to the floor.

The built-in speakers pump out decent sound, but not worth bragging about to your audiophile friends. At three watts, the H200 can fill a large den with sound, but you'll have to pair it with a true surround system for a full A/V experience.



The H200 can double as a PC monitor, if you wish. It's a good fit for home offices, where having a single slim screen for both computer and TV takes up less space. The H200 looks enough like a high-end PC monitor that no one would ever suspect you're watching soaps or sports at your desk. The only drawback to using the H200 as a PC monitor is that it's so bright, your eyes will be more comfortable if you sit several feet away.

The bottom line: If you don't have the room or wallet for a plasma TV, but you're done with conventional TVs, the BenQ H200 is just the ticket.

—Tim Kridel

H200

Rating: ★★★★★☆

Price: \$1,995

Company: BenQ America Corp.

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