

## Mini-Review: Elite Screens introduces ezFrame; a low cost high contrast gray, fixed frame projector screen



### Elite ezFrame High Contrast Gray Screen Overview

Elite Screens entered the US market about a year ago, with two low cost lines of motorized screens, complete with remote controls, a line of pull down manual screens, and even those old fashioned tripod "portable" screens. Since then, they have introduced "Instant" setup type screens, and now, finally, have just started shipping, fixed wall mount screens.

Elite's screens - made in China, are dramatically less expensive than the big name US brands, including Stewart Filmscreen, Da-Lite and Draper, but have also had some limitations for the home theater market. Most notably, they only offered matte white surfaces - no gray, or high contrast surfaces.

No longer! With the introduction of their first fixed wall screens, the ezFrame series, they have entered the world of high contrast projector screens that are preferred for many home theater installations.



For purposes of testing, Elite sent me a "mini" screen - about 40" diagonal. Apparently they build these to send to dealers who can show customers what the screen and finish will look like (I doubt anyone would actually use one of these - way too small).

At first glance, the surface is a traditional gray high contrast type material. The frame itself is very nice. It is a wide (3") beveled black frame with a soft "velour" type finish, to absorb the maximum amount of light (which also makes it extremely difficult to photograph - hard to see the angles).

The actual frame behind the black covering is aluminum and is easy to assemble. You can "adjust" the tension, to make sure the surface is flat and tight.

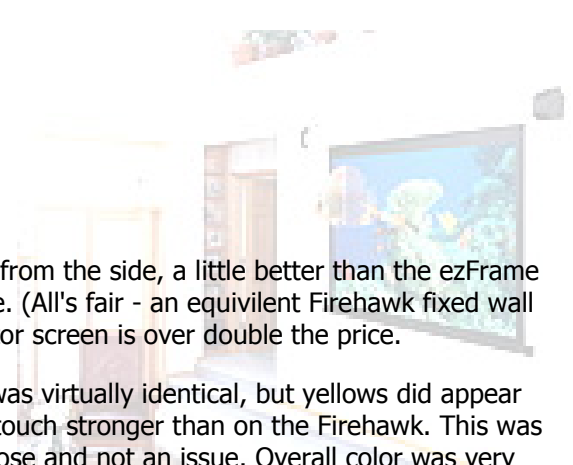
Elite provides a gain rating of 0.9 For testing purposes I set up this tiny screen right in front of the lower left corner of my Stewart Firehawk - a high contrast projector screen with a light gray surface.

This allowed me to see how it compared to the Firehawk, a notably expensive screen with a great reputation. (Sure works great in my theater!).

Here's what I found:

It seemed closer to my Firehawk in gain (the Firehawk - is rated 1.3), than the 0.9 gain that Elite specifies. (0.9 gain is the same as Stewart Filmscreen's Grayhawk.) The image was slightly darker than the Firehawk behind it.

In the images below you can see most of the frame of the ezFrame screen. The image in the lower right is off of the ezFrame. The rest of the picture - above and to the right, is on my Stewart Firehawk



By comparison, the Firehawk screen tends to reject ambient light from the side, a little better than the ezFrame by Elite. (All's fair - an equivalent Firehawk fixed wall projector screen is over double the price.



Color was virtually identical, but yellows did appear just a touch stronger than on the Firehawk. This was very close and not an issue. Overall color was very good.

Where the Elite screen comes up a bit short - is in that it has a visible hot spot. This is not uncommon with vinyl surface screens. It means the image will be brighter around the spot where your eye is in line with the reflection of the image directly from the projector's lens.

So with the projector ceiling mounted, if you are in line with the center of the screen, the bright spot will basically be where you would see the projector if your screen was a mirror.

In terms of available sizes, the ezFrame in 16:9 format starts at 84" (\$589 list price), and comes in these other sizes: 92", 100" (\$689 list), 106", 120" 135", 150", 165, and 200" diagonals. There are quite a few sizes (8) with 4:3 aspect ratio - again, starting with 84" and going to 200".

To give you a better idea of pricing, Elite publishes a MAP (minimum advertised price) that dealers must adhere to, which more closely reflects selling price. The 92" and 100" 16:9 Elite screens have MAPs of \$489 and \$499 respectively.

As is usual, freight on screens is expensive by virtue of most screens treated as "oversized" by UPS, FedX and trucking companies.

Conclusion:

The value lies in the pricing - with a 100" 16:9 Elite ezFrame screen selling for about half of a Da-Lite Cinema Contour with ProTrim (their fancy velourish border), and barely a 1/3 of a Stewart Luxus Deluxe, it allows home theater people to own an attractive looking fixed wall screen, with good performance, at a price that simply isn't available from the larger established brands.

Note: High contrast gray surface projector screens, are generally recommended for projectors with lower contrast ratios - typically LCD home theater projectors, and some of the lower contrast DLP home theater projectors. However, some of today's DLP projectors are pretty bright for fully darkened rooms, so, in that case, this screen type might work well even with a 2500:1 or higher contrast projector.

