

‘It’s the Masterpiece’s suppression of picture noise that most impresses compared to the other leaders in this group test’



FEATURES

DMM/DML modes; picture-in-picture; motorised stand; glass fascia; auto-tuning; high-def and prog scan; AV box built into rear; HD recorder; four recording qualities; pause live TV; teletext; noise reduction; Dolby Virtual; one-touch record; timer functions; multiple aspect ratios; audio presets; loudness mode; Dolby Virtual audio option; Dolby Digital decoding; black level booster; contrast 800:1; brightness 450cd/m2

CONNECTIONS

DVI in; component in; Scart x2 (1 RGB); S-video in; composite in; stereo audio in; headphone jack; VGA in; RF in; stereo audio ins; IR-link in; RC5/RC6 remote in; Loewe System Link; 5.1-channel line outs; digital audio ins; digital audio out; System link; control jack

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Loewe Masterpiece R37

In an effort to be competitive in the LCD price war, some manufacturers skimp on features and connections that, in the coming era of high-definition, really ought to be on board. Not Loewe...

Not only does this 37in LCD carry every future-proof connection our heart desires, it's presented in a gorgeous black casing with screen frame and floor-stand in one. The fact that the R37 Masterpiece is among the thinnest screens we've ever seen does seem a little wasted, because it sits on a hydraulically powered circular pedestal that rotates left and right from the remote control – so it's never going to be wall-mounted. But for almost £6,000, we want opulence.

What's in a name?

Of course, we don't let first impressions last long: it's that 37in screen we're most interested in. Does this self-named Masterpiece live up to its name?

A glance at the connections starts to explain the price. Housed in a multimedia tuner box positioned in the stand's rear is a DVI input with HDCP (high-bandwidth digital content protection), essential if you plan to take advantage of Sky's HDTV transmissions next year. High-definition and progressive scan footage can also be carried by the component video inputs, while there are two Scarts, two coaxial digital audio inputs, a coaxial digital audio output, a PC audio input, two infra-red link jacks, a VGA input and a control jack. Six audio line outs to

back up the TV's onboard Dolby Digital decoding complete an impressive roster.

Ever the modular type, Loewe has set up this TV to take add ons – such as a TV online module for those who want surf in luxury (£499), a multimedia kit for connecting a PC (£395), a VGA Module (£65) and a wireless home automation kit (TBC).

There are also plenty of surprises already built-in, such as a hard-disk recorder that allows you to pause live TV and record at different quality settings on its massive 100GB drive. On its highest setting, recorded pictures are identical to the source, while even the medium setting impresses beyond our expectations. Other features include a 'movie mode' for DVDs, noise reduction and Dolby Virtual sound processing. The remote is a little complicated, but luckily there's an innovative on-screen instruction manual to walk you through this set's many features.

Brooding beauty

However, it's on the LCD screen where the real booty is. The low-lit and brooding *Lost in Translation* proves the perfect test disc, revealing a terrific and probably unsurpassed black level response. This means that despite the murky nature of a scene in the hotel bar where a jet-lagged and jaded Bob meets Charlotte for the first time, there's plenty of depth of field and contrast in close-ups and camera pans.

This strength also allows colours to shine, while remaining natural-looking, but it's the

Masterpiece's suppression of picture noise that most impresses compared to the other leaders in this group test: there's little sign of any grain or dot crawl, and edges are well defined. This applies to progressive scan DVD, digital TV and high-definition viewing (analogue tuner pictures are obviously more susceptible to picture foibles).

Audio performance from the R37 is in keeping with its Loewe siblings. That is to say it's replete with bass without threatening the treble and mid-range, which sonically makes movie-watching an absolute dream.

Whether the R37 Masterpiece's picture is any better than those from the Sony, Philips and Sharp in this test is dubious. Those deal slightly better with texture and detail, but for us it's this set's lack of noise that wins out: it turns out that by naming it the Masterpiece, Loewe wasn't too far off the mark. **WP**

THE FLAT FACTS

- 37IN 16:9 LCD TV
- £5,800
- RESOLUTION
1,366 x 768
- DIMENSIONS
W: 992
H: 1100
D: 90 (mm)
- SPEAKERS: YES
- TV TUNER: YES
- SCARTS: 2
(1 RGB)

RATINGS

PICTURE	★★★★★
SOUND	★★★★★
CONNECTIONS	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆

VERDICT ★★★★★

A pricey but great-performing LCD screen that lives up to its name