

Planar PD7010

A brave new soul enters the UK projection market – and gets off to a rollicking start

With the words 'profit margin' now practically disappearing from the UK AV business vocabulary, it takes serious cajones to enter the market for the first time. But that's precisely what US outfit Planar is doing with its new entry-level PD7010 projector.

This projector only costs £1,350 – very reasonable for an HD-ready DLP projector using Texas Instruments' highly-praised Dark Chip 2 chipset. But also it's very pretty, with a high-gloss black finish wrapped around some sultry curves – perfect 'coffee table' fodder.

Not that Planar necessarily sees the 7010 as coffee table fodder. For while you can buy one yourself, it's created with custom installers in mind – as reflected in the inclusion among its connections of such installer-friendly bits as a 3.5mm 12V screen trigger output, a USB port, an RS232 control port, and a 3.5mm IR jack.

Other sockets include two digital video inputs (one HDMI, one DVI) both able to take HD sources up to and including 1080p; component video jacks; and a D-Sub PC port.

In Planar's hands the Dark Chip 2 chipset's 1,280x720 native resolution is joined by an unusually high (for this level of the market) brightness of 1,000 **ANSI Lumens** and impressive contrast ratio of 2,500:1.

Setting up the PD7010 is very easy even if you're not a custom installer. With a decent selection of adjustments on hand – including both vertical and horizontal keystone tweaks to help you get the sides of the image perfectly straight. On the downside, the optical zoom flexibility isn't the greatest, and



▲ Looking good: Planar's entry-level projector

there's no manual vertical image shift arrangement.

The PD7010's onscreen menus offer more tinker potential than is common at this price point. Highlights include an option to deactivate overscanning while watching a 720p source; white peaking adjustment; five gamma presets; and three lamp power modes to help you find your perfect brightness/fan noise compromise. Helpfully you can store preferred settings in three separate memory slots.

In action, the PD7010 quashes any concerns about its 'debut product' status. Fine details are remarkably clear and abundant, doing a level of justice to high definition material's extra resolution that's very seldom found so far south of £2,000. What's more, this sharpness is delivered without serious problems from grain or dot crawl noise.

The PD7010's black levels, meanwhile, are so deep, natural, consistent and apparently effortless that they leave those of most of the direct competition in their wake.

Good black levels are usually accompanied by good colours, and so it is here. Bright, vibrant movie scenes look, well, bright and vibrant on the PD7010. But

the projector can also do subtle; handling skin tones well even during dark scenes.

The PD7010 also scores points with us for its motion handling. Objects passing across the screen look clear and sharp, and stay largely free of dotting noise problems.

There are inevitably one or two areas where spending more could get you even greater quality, but they don't for one second alter the simple fact that the PD7010 really is as fine a budget DLP projector as we've yet had the pleasure to see.

We say

GOOD POINTS: Picture quality; price; features; design

BAD POINTS: Limited optical zoom; no vertical image shift; slightly noisy runner

Overall: ★★★★★

A hugely promising debut from Planar. We can't wait to see what it does next

CONTACT: 01423 359054

WEBSITE: www.csesolutions.co.uk (UK distributor)

BUY: www.activehome.co.uk/activeprices

£1,350

Jargon buster

- ▶ **Dolby Digital Plus/Dolby TrueHD** High-quality digital sound formats.
- ▶ **DTS-HD** A high-def version of the Digital Theatre Systems sound format.
- ▶ **Firewire** A super-fast link between a PC and devices such as digital camcorders.
- ▶ **Fps** The number of images, or frames, shown each second that make up a
- ▶ **HD DVD** A new format offering high-definition video on DVD-sized discs.
- ▶ **HDMI** A specification that combines video and audio into a digital interface for DVD players and so on.
- ▶ **Multiplex** Aka Mux. A group of channels or frequencies. Each Freeview channel is broadcast on one of six multiplexes.
- ▶ **Plasma** A display where each pixel is illuminated by a tiny bit of plasma.
- ▶ **PVR** Personal video recorders store recorded TV shows on hard disk, rather than tape or DVD.
- ▶ **SD card** Secure Digital card. A secure variant of the postage stamp-size solid-state MMC memory card.
- ▶ **Set-top box** A device that enables a TV set to receive digital TV broadcasts.
- ▶ **S-video** A high-quality video connection.
- ▶ **TV tuner** The part of a TV that receives TV signals.
- ▶ **Upscale** A video process that converts standard-def material to high-definition.
- ▶ **Video on demand** A system that lets users select and watch video content over a network.

For more on Jargon Buster visit
www.activehome.co.uk