



# Make your day

Epson TW600 LCD projector



With one of the best overall pictures we've seen produced by a mid-level LCD projector, Epson should feel confident about gaining at least a top-three position in the sub-\$4,000 price bracket with its TW600.

At first glance, what really struck us about the TW600 was its imposing size (10 to 15% bigger than Epson's entry-level TW20 reviewed in our Feb/Mar 2006 issue) and increased weight (over 5kg) — but it takes a robust system layout to effectively and efficiently cool a 170W lamp.

With its brighter bulb, we expected a significant increase in the noise produced from the cooling fan, but were impressed to find that the noise levels from this unit are no worse than from any of the smaller Dreamio projectors. According to Epson, noise levels are rated between 26 and 32dB, depending on which viewing mode is selected. Take note though — this unit does vent from a large percentage of its front panel, so if you decide to have it mounted behind your viewing position you may be more aware of the noise than if it was in front of you.

The brightness of the image supplied by that 170W lamp is rated at 1,600 ANSI lumens and this is the first projector to incorporate Epson's new D5 LCD panels. According to Epson, the panels improve aperture ratio, producing higher brightness levels with less light leakage. The result is, effectively, a higher native contrast ratio.

Epson has also introduced in-built Auto Iris sampling technology that can monitor the scene brightness 60 times per second and which will automatically adjust the iris to produce the optimal contrast level for all scenes. The Auto-Iris is touted to deliver a dynamic contrast ratio of up to 5,000:1, but this feature can be disabled if you would like more control over the way your movies look.

The rear panel sports all of the common connection options (S-video, component, D-sub) plus the much-sought-after HDMI socket, and native resolution has also increased on earlier Dreamio models. At a 4:3 ratio the TW600 can produce a quality 960 x 720 resolution image, while 16 x 9 images are rated at 1,280 x 720.

During testing we dimmed the lights, set the projector mode to Theatre Black 1 and decided to go with the good, the bad and the ugly.

First up was the good — Clint Eastwood and Eli Wallach in Sergio Leone's 1966 classic western. The TW600 brought new life to this old gem. While visually this movie shows its age when up against the new breed of digitally produced blockbusters, the TW600 produced a vibrant image that

never once disappointed. The glaring desert scenes that easily highlight the dreaded screen-door effect on lesser projectors were solid and well defined.

Next came the bad, and Robbie Williams's *What We Did Last Summer* Knebworth concert was absolutely enthralling when viewed through the TW600. No rough edges or colour bleeding was apparent, and the brightly lit stage was a blaze of smooth, rich colours as bad-boy Williams banged out his best-known hits.

Finally, the ugly, and Anthony Hopkins's *Hannibal* was a digital pleasure to watch. The movie's foreboding, dimly lit scenes dared the TW600 to produce good black tones, and it managed to pass the test easily.

Overall, through three separate genres of viewing, this projector produced quality viewing with very minimal manual input into brightness, colour, contrast or sharpness levels.

We continue to be impressed by the Dreamio range's horizontal and vertical image-shifting system. These two dials ensure you can position the image anywhere you like without having to resort to the distorting effects of keystone adjustment. During testing, the unit was simply placed on the coffee table and still produced a 100-inch image exactly where we wanted it. Added to that, Epson has finally gotten the remote right (after its pitiful TW20 remote), and it is big, backlit, triple coloured and well thought out.

**Doug Griffiths**

## VERDICT

**PRICE:** \$3,499

**PROS:** Great performance at a good price; good range of connections

**CONS:** Very little; perhaps a little on the bulky side

**PICTURE QUALITY:** ★★★★★

**BUILD QUALITY:** ★★★★★

**FEATURES:** ★★★★★

**VALUE:** ★★★★★½

**OVERALL:** ★★★★★½

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## TECH SPECS

**RESOLUTION:** 280 x 720, 16 x 9

**LAMP:** 170W ETOR lamp

**BRIGHTNESS RATING:** 1,600 ANSI lumens

**CONTRAST RATIO:** 5,000:1

**LENS SHIFT RANGE:** 50% vertical, 25% horizontal

**FAN NOISE:** 32dB high, 26dB low