



The semi-detached speaker bar is certainly an unusual style statement

# Jack of all trades, master of none

With Freeview recording and an attractive price, this 40in LCD is an intriguing buy. But it takes a lot to impress **John Archer**



**A**s a rather mystified LG employee admitted to me recently, Freeview-recording TVs haven't been the runaway success he might have expected. Maybe the idea of building a hard disk recorder inside a TV is just too far ahead of its time, especially for the normal Freeview (as opposed to Sky) audience. Who knows. But what I can say for certain is that PVR TVs are not selling well – a situation Humax doubtless hopes to change with its line-up of integrated sets.

However, the first thing that you'll notice about this offering has nothing to do with its Freeview recording talents, and everything to do with its size. It's enormous, especially by today's increasingly svelte standards. An expansive gloss black bezel, a further outer frame, and a slightly separated speaker bar running along the entire length of the TV's bottom edge, all equate to a beefy footprint. The set also sticks out further round the back than Beyonce.

Mind you, the LP40's aesthetics are positively futuristic when compared with its connectivity. A solitary HDMI lurks around the back, like a latter-day spiv. This is unforgivable in these times of PS3s, Xbox 360 Elites, upscaling DVD players, Blu-ray players, Sky HD boxes and so on.

You could add an external HDMI switching box, I guess., but that would fly in the face of the LP40's 'no

separate recording box' appeal, surely? Not to mention cost a few quid.

To add insult to injury, the solitary HDMI is a v1.2 affair rather than the latest v1.3 spec, meaning the TV can't deliver DeepColor video. Other connections are solid, though, including a component video input, a D-Sub PC jack and even a digital audio output. But personally I'm still stuck on the one HDMI thing.

Turning to the LP40's inner specs, it's a tad disappointing, as a home cinema fan, to find it only has a native resolution of 1366 x 768. Most 40in TVs are Full HD these days. That said, a 1366 x 768 resolution is arguably more suited to the TV's standard-definition focus.

Other key specifications include a claimed native contrast ratio of 1,600:1, boosted further via an optional dynamic backlight system; a fleshtone correction setting; a noise reduction engine; and SRS TruSurround XT audio processing. But **what is really important here is the in-built recording system...**

## Convergence time

Unlike models from LG, this Humax screen is not certified Freeview Playback (or Freeview+ as it's now known), the standard designed to introduce most of the same recording functionality available on Sky+ boxes to digital terrestrial TV users. While this set, with its twin tuners, allows

## AV/CV

**Product:**  
A 40in LCD TV with a built-in 160GB PVR

**Position:**  
This is the very top model in Humax's digital TV range

**Peers:**  
LG 42LT75

rewinding and pausing of 'Live' TV, all without any subscription charges, it doesn't offer one-touch series recording. Hence, I suspect, the lack of a Freeview Playback badge.

You couldn't do any of the other tricks without a hard disk drive tucked away somewhere. And in the LP40's case, the built-in HDD has a 160GB capacity, like the one in LG's rival 42LT75 Freeview Playback TV.

Unlike that model, however, the LP40 does not record the direct digital bitstream carrying the programme you're time shifting. I know this because the TV allows you to set your preferred recording quality for Freeview storage, an option that wouldn't be available if the recording system wasn't 'intervening' between the incoming digital feed and the HDD.

The three recording options are a low-quality but memory-saving LP mode, a mid-quality, slightly more memory intensive SP mode, and a 'best quality' but more memory intensive HQ mode. But the worry has to be that even using the HQ mode, the results won't be as immaculate as they would be if the TV was recording the direct digital feed.

Sadly this proves to be the case. Even when using the HQ mode, recorded pictures look noticeably softer and fuzzier than the original broadcasts, with less detail and markedly more video noise. They're still perfectly watchable, but not >



**No logo:** It's a TV with an in-built Freeview PVR, but you wouldn't know it from the logo-less bezel

perfect. In today's digital world, that can only rank as a disappointment.

As for the other two modes, my inclination would be to avoid them entirely given that you're already adding noise with the HQ mode.

Another practical limitation with the recording system is that you can only record one digital channel at a time – unlike Sky+.

**Hi-def hero**

The TV's normal 'live' picture quality is decent, with a good black level response for such a relatively affordable TV. The darkness of the night sky and inky sea at the end of Sky HD's broadcast of *Titanic*, for example, is quite profound, with only a small amount of clouding. In an ideal world there would be more shadow detail retained in the picture's darkest areas, and there's some minor light spillage from each corner, but overall the black level situation is a touch above adequate.

HD pictures are sharp, reproducing the gorgeous countryside of Sky HD's superb *Italian Job* broadcast with bags of detail and clarity, while the colours of the film's iconic Mini Coopers look rich and bright, if only overcooked when it comes to reds. The vibrancy certainly takes a little getting used to.

HD material is relatively free from picture noise and foibles, and motion-handling is fair. There's definitely a little resolution loss when objects move across the screen,

but the edge-smearing problem often found on cheap LCD TVs is well suppressed.

Turning to HD gaming with *Rainbow Six Vegas 2* on the Xbox 360, the Humax does a solid rather than inspiring job. There's an ever-so-slightly gritty look to proceedings that's not evident on the best TVs, and edges as you pan around the environment can leave a little echo of themselves, reducing the image's sharpness.

As for standard-def, the LP40 does a decent job of scaling it up to the screen's native HD resolution – a result, no doubt, of Humax using a variation of the Genesis-Cortez processing system found on Planar's high-end LCD monitors. Noise is kept to very bearable levels, colours retain their tonal consistency and credibility, and **the image looks decently sharp – at least when the source is of a solid quality** in the first place.

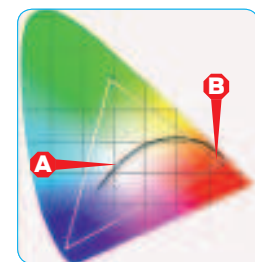
That large speaker bar produces a much more powerful, dynamic and, especially, bass-rich soundstage than is common with flat TVs.

With its affordable price (look out for price drops as Humax launches a replacement series this Autumn), solid live TV pictures, built-in recording and excellent audio, the LP40 is almost an excellent TV. However, the single HDMI, lack of Full HD resolution and relative low quality of the TV's recordings count against it •

→ **Specifications**

- HD Ready:** YES
  - Progressive scan:** YES NTSC and PAL
  - Digital TV tuner:** YES with CI slot
  - Composite video:** YES one input
  - S-video:** YES 4-pin connection
  - Scart:** YES two, one RGB
  - Component video:** YES one input
  - HDMI:** YES one input
  - PC input:** YES one VGA
  - Resolution:** 1366 x 768
  - Contrast ratio (claimed):** 1600:1
  - Brightness (claimed):** 500cd/m2
  - Dimensions (off stand):** 1049(w) x 788(h) x 253(d)mm
  - Weight:** 36.5kg
- Also featuring:** 160GB hard disk; three recording qualities; SRS TruSurround XT audio, 1080p24 support; Faroudja image processing

→ **Tech Labs**



This Humax had a seriously skewed pre-calibration colour temperature, with 65% Red (**Point A**) and 129% Blue (**Point B**). Radical manual adjustment achieved an excellent 6503K reading, but left the picture with a definite red cast. This set has real colour problems!

**Before calibration**

**Colour temperature:** 9827K  
**RGB:** 65/107/129 **Luminance:** 133.8fL  
**Contrast ratio:** 473:1

**After calibration**

**Colour temperature:** 6,503K (user)  
**RGB:** 100/100/100 **Luminance:** 110.9. fL  
**Contrast ratio:** 452:1



**HCC VERDICT**

Humax LP40-TDR1  
 £700 Approx

**Price check:** [www.techradar.com/214747](http://www.techradar.com/214747)

**Highs:** Strong visual performance; reasonable audio; beguiling design  
**Lows:** Lacks 100Hz processing or a PC connection; not Full HD; only one HDMI port

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5