

60 PHILIPS 42PFL9703D → £1,900 Approx → [www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)



This Philips' wide colour gamut means a better tonal performance than its predecessors

# Diamond duo make best better

Philips adds wide colour gamut technology and improved Ambilight to its latest LCDs, leaving **John Archer** all smiles



With the credit crunch biting ever harder, now really isn't a great time to be a luxury TV. More and more people are deciding that cheap and decent trumps expensive and spectacular. So I can't help but feel sorry for the Philips 42PFL9703D: a 42in LCD TV that's pretty much the definition of a luxury telly. Or rather, I would feel sorry for it if I weren't so busy snogging its face off. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

The 42PFL9703D comes hot on the heels of another uncompromising Philips TV, the 42PFL9603D, which snagged the gold medal in a recent *HCC* 42in TV group test. And since the 9703D is even better specified than its lauded sibling, I'd be surprised if it proved a let down. So the only question I had as I plonked the TV down on my test bench was whether the 9703D was sufficiently better than the 9603D to justify its extra £100 or so price tag. And I think it is.

## Let there be light

Get this set going, and there's a lovely arc of coloured light emerging from its upper edge.

This arc of light is, of course, part of Philips' unique Ambilight system, which uses LED strips built into the TV's rear sides to pump out pools of light sympathetic in colour to the content of the picture you're watching. And I'm so excited about the light coming from the TV's upper

edge because it doesn't happen on the 42PFL9603, which only deploys Ambilight from its left and right sides. It sounds trivial, but this extra source really does enhance the Ambilight proposition, plugging the gap you get with 'stereo' incarnations of the feature – especially if you're watching on a really big TV like the PFL9703D's 47in and 52in versions.

Note, too, that **this is the latest 'Spectra' version of Ambilight, which delivers much more sophistication in terms of the subtlety** and positional accuracy of the light pools than previous versions of the technology (except that used by Philips' iconic Aurea model).

Couple the 42PFL9703D's expanded Ambilight effect with its sleek, gloss black bezel and distinctive transparent outer 'shroud', and you've got definitive proof that a TV doesn't have to herald from Korea to look gorgeous.

In connectivity terms the 42PFL9703D is identical to the 9603. That's no worry: you get a very healthy four v1.3 HDMI sockets; a USB jack for playing JPEG, MP3, .alb slideshow and MPEG video files; and even an Ethernet port so the TV can be jacked into your home PC network. I'm increasingly looking for premium TVs to offer true multimedia functionality, and the Philips delivers the goods in spades.

## AV/CV

**Product:** 42in Full HD, wide colour gamut LCD TV with Perfect Pixel HD processing

**Position:** Currently Philips' flagship TV until new Aurea and LED sets arrive

**Peers:** Panasonic 42PZ81 plasma, Samsung 40A656 LCD

The 42PFL9703D shares all the same image processing as the 42PFL9603D, too. Again this is good news considering that the Perfect Pixel HD engine in question is not only the most powerful processing engine I've seen on a TV, but arguably also the best.

Here's a recap on the sort of goodies contained within it: there's a new and vastly improved version of Philips' long-running Digital Natural Motion system, designed to reduce judder and blurring when showing motion; 100Hz processing for adding fine detail, especially to standard-definition images; a new contrast boosting element reckoned to deliver a 30,000:1 contrast ratio; and another new element focused on colours that employs a 17bit processor, claimed to produce 2,250 trillion hues.

With the 42PFL9703D also packing the same Full HD resolution and invisible audio system as the 42PFL9603D, I've so far only uncovered one difference between the two models. But there's one more very important difference: the 9703D's use of a wide colour gamut LCD panel.

The performance boost this gives the 42PFL9703D's pictures is immediately obvious, and deeply gratifying. For even though the colour prowess of the 42PFL9603D was among the finest I'd seen, the palette produced by the 9703D is definitely more dynamic, >



**See-through:** The clear bezel design means this LCD TV is certainly eye-catching

more subtle, more vivid and, above all, more natural.

During a run-through of Warner Home Video's *10,000 BC* on Blu-ray – nice picture quality, shame about the movie – the skin tones of the curiously well-spoken near-Neanderthal stars look both more believable in tone and less 'plasticky', as **the extended colour range available means the screen can provide extra finesse in tonal shifts and blends**. Put it this way – the bright yellows and blues on show during the film's CGI-laden 'climax' are so vibrant they almost make you forget how awful the movie is. And that's saying something.

Thankfully, the Philips' enhanced colours don't have any negative impact on the Perfect Pixel HD picture strengths witnessed on the 42PFL9603D. Fine detail levels, therefore, are still class-leadingly high, doing a fine job of highlighting the shoddy CGI employed on the fur of my test disc's sabre-toothed tiger.

### Smooth mover

The motion-handling of this Philips is still arguably the clearest and smoothest in the LCD world. This TV doesn't stumble at all during the mammoth (as in, hairy elephant) climax. Dark scenes like the one in the crowded Egyptian jail cell are dealt with equally

impressively and packed with subtle shadow detail.

Standard-definition sources are sharp and clean, and up there with the best that Full HD TVs have to offer. And perhaps most significantly of all, provided you're careful with the TV's settings, side effects from all the intense processing are substantially reduced versus any previous Philips flat TV generation.

With the 42PFL9703D also proving capable of some more-than-solid audio to accompany its truly spectacular pictures, really the only negative thing I can say about the TV refers back to my comment that you need to be careful with its settings. For if you don't commit to tinkering around with the phenomenal amount of picture tweaks available, you'll undoubtedly end up at times with pictures that aren't as good as they could be.

But surely if you've coughed up £1,900 on a TV it's not too much to ask that you show it plenty of time and respect, right? This is not just a plug'n'play toy.

### Please don't go

In the end, Philips' 42PFL9703D is a genuinely impressive reminder of why having a premium TV market matters. So if the credit crunch results in TVs like this no longer being viable, it's my humble opinion that the world will be a far, far drabber place ●

### → Specifications

**HD Ready:** yes including 1080p/24  
**Progressive scan:** yes NTSC and PAL formats both work

**Digital TV tuner:** yes plus CI slot  
**Scart:** yes two (both RGB)

**Component video:** yes one input

**HDMI/DVI:** yes four v1.3 HDMI

**PC input:** yes one VGA input

**Sound:** Nicam stereo with pseudo surround option

**Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

**Brightness (claimed):** 500cd/m2

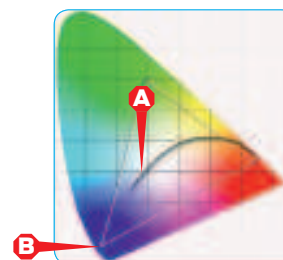
**Contrast ratio (claimed):** 30,000:1 (dynamic)

**Dimensions (off stand):** 1054(w) x 658(h) x 100(d)mm

**Weight:** 22.7kg

**Other features:** Wide colour gamut display; Ambilight Spectra 3; HD Natural Motion; 100Hz; Perfect Sharpness/Colour/Contrast; Active Control; Network capability; multimedia playback

### → Tech Labs



The pre-calibration colour temperature of this set is among the hottest we've ever measured, with a 10,539K reading (**Point A**) caused by excessive Blue of 150% (**Point B**). The good news is that manual adjustment to a perfect 6500K and 100/100/100 R/G/B reading is a simple matter

#### Before calibration

**Colour temperature:** 10,539K  
**RGB:** 90/98/150 **Luminance:** 100fL  
**Contrast ratio:** 1,779:1

#### After calibration

**Colour temperature:** 6,500K (user)  
**RGB:** 100/100/100 **Luminance:** 84.95fL  
**Contrast ratio:** 1,456:1



## HCC VERDICT

Philips 42PFL9703D  
£1,900

**Price check:** [www.techradar.com/467270](http://www.techradar.com/467270)

**Highs:** Stunning picture quality; beautifully designed

**Lows:** Pictures can become messy if you're not careful with some of the settings; expensive by 42in standards

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5