



Once standard with Pioneer plasmas, the separate media box returns with this KRP model

Kuro in the fast lane

The latest plasma monitor from Pioneer sees a return to modular design. **Jim Hill** is appreciative

If you haven't seen one of Pioneer's Kuro plasma TVs, you're probably wondering what the hell all the fuss is about. Why do hardened home cinema hacks crumple in front of them as if they've had some kind of alien encounter? It's just a big telly, right?

Wrong. Pioneer has effectively redefined what is possible in the world of flatpanel TV with a range of mind-blowing screens, and has an entire industry scrambling to beat it. This 60in model uses the latest 9th-gen glass, and is the largest, slimmest and, probably, the best-looking TV the brand makes. It comes with a separate media box with Freeview and satellite TV tuners built-in, has Ethernet connectivity, a brand new GUI and a cool-looking metal remote control. In short, this is a no-holds-barred flagship screen for those looking for something special.

Love that black

The glass is Full HD 1920 x 1080 and each of its four HDMI v1.3 inputs can accept 1080p24 signals.

Powered up, the screen flicked on, sucked on the HDMI input, and delivered a picture with startling clarity – even though I was only inches away. I'd never realised there was so much detail in the tarmac of Disney Pixar's *Cars* (Blu-ray). Shouldn't there be some pixel structure, some softening of the colour boundaries, or some visible artefacts at this range? Apparently not.

In pure picture performance terms, it's the KRP-600A's black levels that set this screen apart from the herd, but what's not generally trumpeted so much are the dazzling peak whites, which are remarkably clean and radiant.

Media darling

Connecting the media box by its long proprietary cable means messy cabling is kept away from the screen. At only 64mm deep, the screen is also sumptuously thin.

Because it's aimed at a pan-European market, the tuner module comes with a generic DVB-S2 satellite tuner. It's not tied to any particular service such as Sky or Freesat. A comprehensive menu deals with choice of satellite, type of LNB and so on, then you can add channels manually or automatically. Since the receiver is HD compatible, this includes the BBC HD channel (but not ITV HD which is an interactive service). You do get a basic EPG, but no genre-sorting and timer setting facilities.

The KRP-600's other noteworthy aspect is its LAN (Local Area Network) connectivity. This can be used to place the screen on a home network or media server, so that picture, video and image files such as MP3, WMA, MOV, MPEG and JPEG can be shared and displayed on the screen. Bizarrely, the system is not compatible with AVI files, the format you would think would be most useful. The same is true of files shown via the media box's USB slot.

Clearly this set was developed with high-definition material in mind, so unsurprisingly, the SD feed from its own DVB and Freeview tuners is a big climb down from Blu-ray at 1080p. At least the smart remote and greatly improved user interface make accessing them refreshingly simple.

Pioneer's return to the separate media box brings a welcome level of flexibility that will please both the pro-installers and the well-heeled AV fans that this set is aimed at •

AV/CV

Product:
60in 1080p plasma TV with DVB/satellite media box and media streaming ability

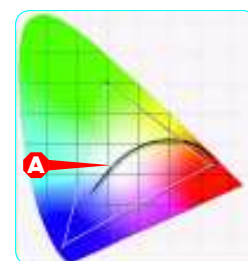
Positioning:
Flagship plasma monitor

Peers:
LG 60PY3D;
Pioneer PDP-LX6090;
Panasonic TH-58PZ800U

→ Specifications

HD Ready: YES up to x 1080p24
Digital TV Tuner: YES DVB and satellite tuners, plus CI slot
HDMI: YES four HDMI inputs
Component: YES 1 input
PC input: YES VGA socket
Resolution: 1920 x 1080
Sound: 2 x 18W
Brightness (claimed): N/A
Contrast ratio (claimed): N/A
Dimensions: 1,465 (w) x 876 (h) x 64 (d)mm
Weight: 49.9kg
Features: 3 x Scart; 1 x USB input; 1 x Ethernet input; DLNA certified; PiP/PaP options

→ Labs



Pioneer continues to push the boundaries of plasma technology with this enigmatic 60in monster. Performance is remarkable – blacks couldn't be more black, brightness levels are impressive, and there's no sign of picture artefacts. Even so the Standard picture setting of 9,025K is somewhat high (Point A), yet a wide range of manual controls makes it easy to reach a perfect colour temp

Before calibration

Colour temperature: 9,025K
RGB: 98/97/139 **Luminance:** 15.74fL
Contrast ratio: 54,140:1

After calibration

Colour temperature: 6,506K (user)
RGB: 100/100/100 **Luminance:** 16.93fL
Contrast ratio: 56,271:1



HCC VERDICT

Pioneer KRP-600A
£5,000 Approx

Price check: www.techradar.com/487206

Highs: Awesome black levels; colour accuracy; slim panel
Lows: Doesn't support AVI files; satellite tuner is basic

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5