

**EPSON**

EMP-TW600

| \$2999 |

★★★★

LCD PROJECTOR

See it: [www.epson.com.au](http://www.epson.com.au)

**FOR**

Picture quality; design; impressive feature count

**AGAINST**

Care required not to mess pictures up

**VERDICT**

The TW600 can deliver arguably the best pictures we've seen this side of \$3000

# High-Def LCD comes of age

EPSON HOPES TO JOIN THE BUDGET LCD PROJECTION RENAISSANCE WITH ITS LATEST HOME CINEMA MODEL

In the last issue of *SmartHouse*, two remarkable LCD projectors, Panasonic's PT-AE900 and Hitachi's PJ-TX200, completely confounded our expectations of what affordable LCD projection was capable of.

This perhaps puts the new LCD-based Epson EMP-TW600 in a slightly uncomfortable position. On the one hand it arrives at a time when we couldn't be more upbeat about budget high-definition LCD. On the other hand, it's got a massive job to do if it wants to give the Panny and

to best suit the image content. Playing with everything the TW600 has to offer could literally give you hours of fun (or terror, depending on your levels of technophobia).

Helpfully, the TW600 is an absolute

offered by selecting the right 'colour mode' concerns black levels. In Theatre Black 1 or especially 2, dark parts of the picture suddenly enjoy black levels that are both deep and impressively natural in tone. They also display good gradations

"THE EPSON NEVER FAILS TO DELIVER A GREAT SENSE OF TEXTURE FROM GOOD HIGH-DEFINITION TRANSFERS."



Hitachi trailblazers a run for their money.

Connectivity is satisfactory, including as it does both an HDMI input and component video connectors. There's also a PC jack, an analogue component D4 socket, plus an adaptor for connecting Scart outputs.

The component and HDMI jacks satisfy the connectivity part of EICTA's HD Ready criteria, and the projector happily ticks the rest of the necessary boxes with a native widescreen LCD resolution of 1280 x 720.

This projector's features cupboard is unusually well-stocked, with a classy remote control providing access either directly, or via some bland onscreen menus, to tweaks galore.

The single most important of these is a set of themed picture presets. Admirable support comes from a dynamic iris that automatically adjusts the light aperture

doddle to get up and running. Simple vertical and horizontal lens shift wheels are on hand, and the zoom/focus rings around the lens couldn't be easier.

You can thus start watching a picture on the TW600 within a minute or two of plugging it in. That said, the TW600's 'from the box' pictures aren't particularly great. Black levels look average, the colour tone looks off, and the picture just isn't believable. Perhaps you'll have to head into the picture adjustment menus after all.

The key to getting the best from the TW600 is the set of seven picture presets. Some of these are really quite nasty, but other modes, particularly the two Theatre Black ones, transform the picture into something infinitely more to a film-lover's liking.

The most important improvement

and shadow detailing, helping give a great sense of scale to, say, John Hurt's exploration of the enormous egg chamber in *Alien*.

The colour tone in these two modes also impresses. Skin tones during dark scenes only rarely suffer either the pink or green overemphasis that can characterise less movie-friendly LCD projectors, while bright scenes enjoy rich and vibrant saturations. A frankly gaudy film like *Charlie's Angels 2: Full Throttle* or the graphics of *Project Gotham Racing 3* on Xbox 360 perhaps don't look quite as vivacious as on the Panasonic and Hitachi models mentioned earlier, but the difference isn't significant – and the Epson is \$900 cheaper than the Panny.

The absence of noise on the TW600's pictures also merits praise. This being an LCD projector, there's obviously no trouble with the rainbow effect of fizzing over motion that can trouble budget DLP models. But there's also impressively little of the grain, dot crawl or visible LCD panel structure problems that can trouble cheap LCD models.

As befits Epson's position as the technology leader in the 3LCD camp, it's directly comparable to both the Hitachi PJ-TX200 and the PT-AE900, and never fails to deliver a great sense of texture from good high-definition transfers.