

Metz Artos 82

A "flash" TV from Germany By Steve Ballantyne

Metz Artos 82 widescreen television. \$5499.

Mr Editor Sir told me not to make too big a thing about it, but I can't help it. I have to tell you that when I was a lad, working on photography magazines in London, the Metz brand name meant only one thing – electronic flash guns, and mighty fine ones at that, capable of blinding a camera-shy celebrity at thirty paces.

Actually, Metz has been making TVs since 1951, a little longer than it's been making flashguns – presumably the TVs have been kept in Germany for most of that time.

But now Metz is sending its TVs out our way, and if the Artos 82 I looked at is anything to go by we should be pleased to see them. This is Metz's top-of-the-line widescreen model; not untypically for German TVs, it's a handsome clean-lined unit available in black or discrete brushed silver finishes, with an optional matching cabinet. A small LED display centrally located below the screen presents information that other TVs distractingly put on-screen – stuff like the channel number, volume level and so on.

Metz has also been making 100 Hz TVs since 1989, which suggests a long-standing concern for image quality. Unlike some manufacturers, Metz doesn't make grandiose claims for its tech-

nological innovations; for the most part, it merely delivers a crisp, evenly illuminated picture across its 32in 16:9 screen, with no bothersome flicker and not much in the way of distracting ambient reflections. Shadow detail was particularly good, giving a good rendering without any sign

of smokiness or compromise of maximum black.

Metz's Artos brochure says that it

uses special screen coatings to improve picture quality, prevent reflections and cut down on dust-attracting static charges; screen coatings may not sound like much, but it all helps makes the Artos deliver a picture that's remarkably easy on the eyes.

Too easy, almost; I found myself slipping into movie-watching mode, rather than critically scrutinising the Metz for flaws. But Mum, there weren't any flaws, honest, not once the factory preset sharpness enhancement was turned down as low as it would go to get rid of some nasty outlining of shapes silhouetted against the sky. That's just about standard operating procedure with fresh-from-the-factory TVs.

Thankfully, there was nothing wrong with the level of colour saturation; default settings gave colours that were well saturated and vivid, but certainly not unconvincing. Could it be those magic screen coatings again?

Or perhaps it's the electronics. The Artos has all the internal sophistication you'd expect – digital motion compensation, noise reduction, comb filter, 2000 page teletext memory, the works – and in addition it has a few other features designed to make it easy to live with.

For example, the Artos automatically adjusts its picture to compensate for the ambient light level of the room, and has enough brightness and contrast headroom to be easily watchable in a normal well-lit New Zealand living room on a sunny day.

Also, it can save individual settings for each channel, so you can compensate for variations between differences in volume level, colour, contrast and so on. For such comprehensive adjustments the little LED display on the front of the TV isn't enough, so the Artos resorts to a reasonably self-explanatory system of cascading menus operated by the remote controller.

Be warned – some of the options are well buried, so it's worth keeping the Artos' paper manual at hand as you set up the various options.

The remote supplied with the review set was a slightly old fashioned looking piece of kit – it did the job, but it wasn't



the same as the much smarter looking one pictured on Metz's website.

Sky users will be delighted to find the three SCART connectors on the back of the Artos, two of which handle RGB input so you can set up Sky Digital and a RGB-equipped DVD player with ease. Console gamers and camcorder owners will find three RCA sockets on the front of the unit, and an s-video connector.

Metz claims a total of 80 Watts audio output from the Artos through two tweeters, two midrange drivers and a subwoofer, but since this is a TV that cries out to be included in a home theatre system you'll probably prefer to make your own audio arrangements.

The Artos retails for \$5499, with the matching cabinet going for another \$899. That's not cheap, but I suspect you'd forget about the cost after a few days exposure to the Artos's lovely screen image and well-mannered performance.

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