

Sim2 Domino18

Sim2 Domino18 projector. \$6999.

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Tall, dark and Italian. That seems to be what some women seem to think is the ideal mate. In the case of the Sim2 Domino 18, some blokes might start to think the same.

The Sim2 range of projectors is extensive, from business oriented LCD projectors, through to various lines in the DLP home theatre market (Domino and Grand Cinema) through to even a CRT projector and rear projection TVs, Sim2 seem to have most aspects of projection covered.

The Domino18 is the entry-level home theatre projector from this Italian firm, but even entry level from Sim2 is by no means short on features. Most notable is a claimed 6000 hour lamp life - some three times the norm.

PAL friendly

The Domino 18 has a 1024x576 resolution panel (perfect for PAL DVDs), Faroujda's DCDi de-interlacer, vertical lens shift and an advertised contrast ratio of "greater than 1800:1". This point alone makes Sim2 a little different from the others. Rather than put in a contrast ratio that the machine might technically be capable of achieving (but rarely will, and certainly not when calibrated for watching movies), Sim2 put in the minimum customers can expect. Dose this alternative way of quoting specs transfer into real life performance? Yes it does.

At the start of *Lord of the Rings: The Return of The King*, where Gollum, Samwise and Frodo are climbing the stairs in the side of the cliff, the blacks are incredibly black, significantly more so than that from my own Panasonic

PT-AE700. Not only though are blacks blacker, it isn't at the expense of shadow detail, and all the fine undulations and patterns on the rocks are evident.

Setting up the Domino 18 is fairly straight forward, with most connections that you would expect to see (component, S-Video, composite and 15 pin VGA), with the exception of a digital connection - no HDMI or DVI connector here. For a digital input you will need one of the projectors further up the line, such as the Domino 20H. This seems a bit of an unusual miss from a company that is so heavily home theatre focused, particularly when potential buyers are asked to shell out seven large for this projector. Still, not everyone will have the need for a digital port, and if you don't, then its exclusion is irrelevant.

Room to breathe

The Domino likes a lot of room to operate, needing almost a six-metre distance to produce a 100-inch screen. Translated into real world operation, the projector is mostly suited to long theatre rooms. This is not only for the throw distance as mentioned, but also so that you can keep your ears well away from the projector. The fan noise on the projector (although not loud) is louder than other projectors I have sampled recently and certainly noticeable in quiet movie scenes.

The quality of the video processing was clear as soon as a



picture burst onto the screen, from the brightness and punch of the image (interestingly no lumen figure is quoted in the literature, but rest assured, it is plenty bright enough for even a 120 inch picture) the neutral skin tones and the depth of colours (helped by the very high contrast). Pleasingly I noticed no DLP side effects - rainbows or eyestrain - from the Domino 18.

I find that DLP projectors usually have a smoother, more film like picture than LCDs, and this is certainly evident with the Domino 18 with generally a smooth, film like picture (thanks to the quality of the Faroujda processing). This smoothness is not at the expense of detail, and the Domino 18 had no problems displaying fine picture details from *The Return of the King*. I did notice some dithering on bright whites (the city of Minas Tirith had some picture noise on the stonework of the city), but this is a minor and infrequent artifact of many DLP projectors and certainly not enough to detract from the overall picture quality.

Profile

The Domino 18 doesn't have the profile that other projectors have (notably the Infocus Screenplay and Panasonic PT-AE700), but I would consider the Domino 18 the quiet achiever. It's designed with home theatre in mind and with a PAL friendly widescreen panel, high contrast ratio (thanks to the Texas Instruments ED2 chip) and Faroujda DCDi processing, and home theatre is what it does very well.

The Domino 18 is in a tricky price point, not quite cheap enough to be a bargain, entry level projector (like the Infocus SP4805 and Panasonic PT-AE700 at \$3000 and \$4000 respectively) but then its performance is better than both of those units. Blacks are certainly blacker than my own AE700, picture detail is awesome with plenty of fine detail and it has a bright, contrasty picture.

Whilst the other projectors mentioned both represent great entry level machines in their price brackets, the Domino takes "entry level" to a whole different league. If you would rather pay a little more upfront for better overall performance and you're not restricted in terms of room set-up constraints, then the Domino 18 is clearly a worthwhile entry on the must seriously consider list—*Tony Davey*

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