

Pros Embrace Master Monitor Panels

By Douglas I. Sheer

With the advent of the professional flat panel display, over the past decade, and its distribution in so many screen sizes ranges, perhaps the most hotly debated issue has been in the provision of a reliable category of master monitors to replace the aging, outmoded and rapidly failing box-type master CRTs. Initially, there was considerable resistance to the use of panels, generally, and master grade panels particularly. That resistance is now melting

That is, according to the findings of the latest pro display report from D. I. S. Consulting Corporation called *Professional Displays World tm 2011*, this part of the professional flat panel display market, master monitors is finally beginning to satisfy the needs of demanding professionals, after a prolonged period of skepticism and complaints leveled at manufacturer's early arriving solutions. Many broadcasters and other professionals found that models provided in the past years to be far from satisfactory and that opinion slowed the acceptance of test grade quality panels amongst professionals. Instead, many chose to hang on to their CRTs longer than they would have liked, rather than sacrifice quality for price.

The D. I. S. global study, conducted this past winter and published in mid-June, focused on gathering only professional grade displays ownership, past purchases and purchase plans information and excluded consumer and computer flat panels from consideration. The study also honed in on these by each of the main screen sizes in eight size ranges. Among them was a broadening size range for master quality displays – those with under-scan and test signal capabilities – that now ranges primarily from 17-inch (diagonal measure) to 27-inch and encompasses a wide number of brands. The 17-inch size is a relatively new one – certainly new to the flat panel master grade category – and has grown very popular this year. The previous normally sought size had been almost exclusively the 24-26-inch range.

8% of all buyers of professional flat panels have indicated plans to purchase one or more master quality flat panel monitor in 2011, in the 17-26-inch range, making it one of the singularly most active screen size groups within all pro flat panels, as well as a significant sign of the success of panels as replacements for CRTs in the most difficult-to-please category of master grade.

With so many traditionally entrenched master-grade CRTs, the move away to embrace utilization of flat panels for this purpose was slow, as many end-users felt that the early examples were lacking the quality, predictability and durability of the boxier forebears. There were also concerns about how long the highest priced panels would last, as flat panels generally have a reputation for early failure and thereby much shorter life spans than CRTs. Given the higher prices of these particular panels, professionals have held back until very recently and continued grudgingly to use their aging CRTs.

Professionals, in particular, are intently interested in the exact specifications and features of their flat panels and this is certainly most true in those being depended upon for mission-critical master grade uses. This is also true as there are in the master grade monitors many more features than in their presentation grade counterparts (in the same size range). Master grade models are expected to have

certain basic qualifications as well as performance abilities. And, they are expected to be more rugged, precise and dependable than their presentation grade counterparts. And, they are also expected to contain waveform and vector-scope abilities as well as time-code displays and under-scan, multi-format inputs and HD/SDI, Composite, Component and YC in most cases. 12-bit processing is common along with 10-bit drivers. wide color gamut, LED back-lighting and color management abilities. The ability to capture and store pre-sets is an essentially sought factor as well in most such displays. Auto-black and auto-white as well as various forms of auto-set-up calibrations are commonly sought and often found features as well. .

This intensified interest in panels and growing acceptance of master grade models has led recently to a increase in manufacturers offering master products as they have rushed to take advantage of the new found growth.

Top of the range master prices tend to fall in the \$25-30,000USD range for a full fledged (24-inch or larger) panel and accommodate the full HD (or in specialized cases 2K, 4K or other resolutions this can escalate). Of course, not all master monitors cost that much money. Even in the 24-26-inch range, there are companies with models that fall below \$10,000USD and sometimes far below that threshold. The good news is that with so much competition, in pro flat panels today, you can be a miser and still own a master.

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