

SHOPPING NEWS

THIS MONTH **BLU-RAY QUALITY** FAIRY LIGHT DON'T BUYS **SUPERMARKET BEST BUYS OF 2010**

TESTS SHOW BLU-RAY FILM QUALITY IS HIT AND MISS

Films on Blu-ray typically cost twice the price of a DVD, so you'd expect them to live up to marketing that promises 'the maximum high-definition experience'. But our test lab has revealed a gulf in picture quality between the best Blu-ray films and the rest, with some hardly better than the DVD version.

Our experts used two identical TVs to simultaneously watch Blu-ray and DVD versions of 17 films. Only five Blu-rays, such as newer films *Avatar* and *Casino Royale*, and classics, including *Zulu*, were of the highest high-definition quality we were expecting. A disappointing eight were only marginally better or looked virtually the same as the DVD version. For example, the colours on the Blu-ray *Ghostbusters* were exaggerated and over-saturated whites wiped out some detail. The resolution wasn't much better than on DVD and the level of grainy 'picture noise' was far higher than we'd expect for a full HD disc.

We asked the body that represents major studios in the UK, the British Video Association, to shed some light on the differences in quality between the good and the bad, but they failed to answer the question, instead saying that research showed most consumers thought that Blu-ray looked better than DVD. We don't dispute that Blu-ray generally does look better than DVD, but based on our test, a big step-up isn't a given.

The most likely explanation is that the better-quality films may have been transferred from the original high-quality source, the worst merely converted to HD from subsequent standard definition copies of the original.

To find out more about the 17 films we watched, visit www.which.co.uk/blu-ray. And keep an eye out for reviews and online forums about film quality, and post your own experiences at www.whichconversation.co.uk/tag/blu-rays.



FAIRY LIGHTS THAT DON'T GLOW

For the first time ever, all the products in a test have been rated as Don't Buys.

Which? Gardening's test of 13 types of solar-powered fairy lights failed to reveal any that could produce even the dimmest dusk-to-bedtime display, despite being advertised as suitable for winter. Five switched off within 20 minutes.

If you do want to use solar-powered lights over Christmas, don't rely on the sun to charge them. Get a set that also takes replaceable batteries – such as the £12.99 Cole & Bright 30 LED Star string lights, available from independent garden centres. And keep your receipt so you can get a refund if they fail to deliver.



2010 SUPERMARKET BEST BUYS

Waitrose produced the most Best Buys of all the supermarkets in 2010. Over the last twelve months, supermarket Best Buys have featured in a huge range of tests, from baked beans and chocolate, to washing detergents and tissues. Not all supermarkets

offer own-brand products in all the areas we tested.

Branching out into electricals paid off for Tesco and Sainsbury's – we have a Best Buy Tesco PVR and a Best Buy Sainsbury's kettle. See p60, 68 and 70 for more supermarket Best Buys.

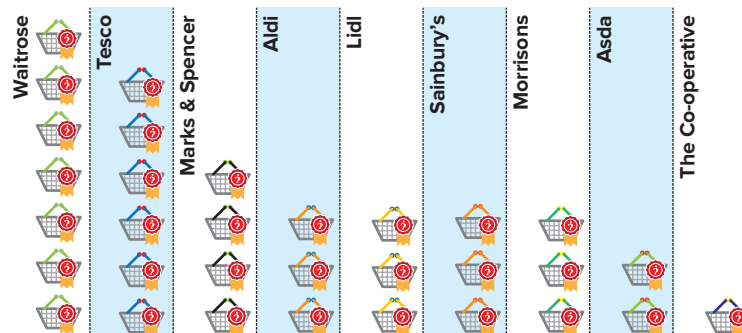


ILLUSTRATION BY: PAUL BUTT



CHRISTMAS NEWS

THIS MONTH **WHAT NOT TO BUY FOR CHRISTMAS** WILDLIFE HOMES **GOOD FOOD APP** COFFEE MACHINES

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS TO AVOID

which?
DON'T
BUY

If you're doing some last-minute Christmas shopping and find yourself tempted to buy the first thing you see on the shelves, just make sure it isn't one of these. In our lab tests, all of these products were rated as Don't Buys, meaning

they put in such a poor performance that we can't recommend that anyone buys them under any circumstances.

To see the highest-scoring products we've tested, turn to p39 for the top Best Buys of 2010.

TV **BUSH LED22USBFHD 30%**
Poor picture and sound quality, and incredibly awkward to use.

DIGITAL PHOTO FRAME
CLARITY CPF7-15 28%
Photos look awful on this low-resolution screen.

PVR **TECHNIKA SMARTBOX 8320 HD 32%**
Difficult to use, with a poorly designed remote.

DIGITAL RADIOS **ARGOS VALUE RANGE 29%, ROBERTS CRD-37 CDAB8R 35%**
Sound on both of these DAB radios is disappointingly poor.

HEADPHONES **CREATIVE ZEN AURVANA 20%**
Poor sound quality, and uncomfortable to wear.

HEADPHONES WITH BUILT-IN MP3 PLAYER **SKULLCANDY DOUBLE AGENT 35%**
Average sound quality, and MP3 player is difficult to use.

IN BRIEF

WILDLIFE HOMES

Shop-bought homes for wildlife are a waste of money, a *Which? Gardening* test has revealed. In a year-long trial, no butterflies used the Gardman Butterfly Haven (£14.99), bees avoided the Wildlife World Bumble Bee Nester (£26.99) and only one ladybird checked in to the Crocus Ladybird Hotel (£9.99). If you want to attract wildlife to your garden, build a logpile, start a compost heap and plant nectar-rich flowers instead.

FOOD ON YOUR PHONE

Book dinner out the easy way this festive season with *The Good Food Guide 2011* app. Designed to help you find the best restaurants, pubs and cafés wherever you are in the UK, the new app will be launching soon. New features include the ability to make reservations, automatic updates and an interactive map. The app will be available for the iPhone and the iPad from the iTunes store. For more about *The Good Food Guide*, visit www.thegoodfoodguide.co.uk.

COFFEE MACHINES

Want help choosing a new coffee machine? Our new interactive online tool shows you the pros and cons of each type of machine and lets you explore the different features they offer. Find out whether a traditional espresso machine, bean-to-cup model or a capsule version would best suit you at www.which.co.uk/coffeetool.