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Hitachi's CP-S210W projector

■ DAVID ENGLISH



When used for presentations in small rooms, the CP-S210W has advantages over many sub-$1,000 projectors.



Summary: Hitachi's sub-$1,000 projector offers several features that are small-room friendly
Target Users: Presenters on a tight budget
Platforms: PC and Macintosh

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW MUCH the prices on entry-level projectors have tumbled recently? Mainstream manufacturers, including Epson and InFocus, are offering surprisingly powerful models for just under $1,000. These low-cost projectors aren't for everyone, as they may require significant trade-offs in weight, size, brightness, durability or features. On the other hand, if all you need is a no-frills, general-purpose projector, these models can be a great way to save money.

Hitachi has joined the fray with its new CP-S210W projector. According to Hitachi, the CP-S210W has a manufacturer's suggested retail price of $1,795, but it will be available on the street for about $1,000. With a brightness rating of 1,200 ANSI lumens and a weight of six pounds and six ounces, it's comparable to Epson's PowerLite S1 and InFocus' X1 DLP projectors—both selling on the street for about $1,000. In an increasingly crowded low-end market, is there any reason to choose Hitachi's projector over its rivals?



Air Apparent

The answer depends on how you'll use the projector. If it will be used for presentations in small rooms, the CP-S210W has three advantages that can give it an edge over many of the other sub-$1,000 projectors. First, it's one of the quietest projectors available. Rated at 31 dB in standard mode, and 27 dB in whis-

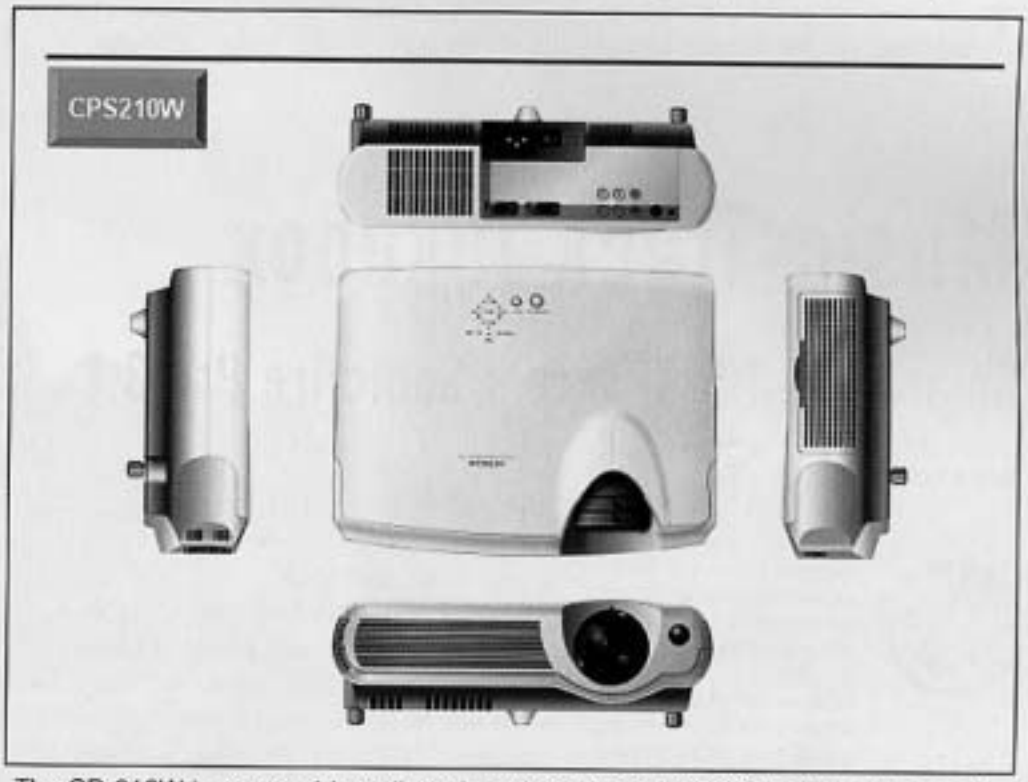
per mode, you won't have to shout in order to be heard over the din of the projector. A quiet projector is particularly important for smaller rooms, because the projector noise tends to bounce off the walls in confined spaces, often drowning out less enthusiastic presenters. Second, the CP-S210W's lens is wider than most projector lenses. It can display a 60-inch image from a distance of 6 feet, compared to a typical 40-inch image from 6 feet. And third, the CP-S210W has a front air exhaust system. The wide-angle lens makes it more likely you'll place the projector near the front of the room, so it's also more likely that your audience will be sitting in back of—rather than in front of—the projector. Not only does the front air exhaust make the projector quieter for those nearby, you won't have to worry about hot air blowing on them.

The CP-S210W is reasonably well-equipped for video. Its S-VGA (800 x 600) native pixel resolution can handle most video sources. The projector provides a generous selection of video inputs: component, composite and S-Video. It also has a 16:9 setting that's handy for displaying anamorphic DVDs, as well as a 3:2 pull-down capability for a smoother presentation of film-originated content. Testing the unit with several DVDs (including *Monsters Inc.* and *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings*), the CP-S210W exhibited accurate and fully saturated colors. Its 300:1 contrast ratio, however, is limited, especially when compared with DLP projectors. The CP-S210W uses three 0.55-inch polysilicon active-matrix LCD panels for its imaging system.

While Hitachi touts the projector as being HDTV compatible, it has to downconvert HDTV resolutions, such as 1,080i, that lie outside the projector's native resolution. As with any LCD-based projector, there can be a slight ghosting with fast moving video. It wasn't objectionable with most video and computer-generated content. There was some visible stair-step pixelation with diagonal lines, though that's not unusual with inexpensive LCD projectors.

As you might expect given the low price, the outer cabinet consists almost entirely of plastic. That probably accounts for the fact the unit is bulky for its weight. If you're thinking that a six-pound projector would be easy to carry with you on the plane, you would be mistaken with this model. The 13 $^{1}/_{6}$-inch x 10-inch x 3 $^{5}/_{8}$-inch case might fit in your carry-on suitcase, but it would be too much for most briefcases or notebook-projector combo bags. To give you an idea of just how bulky this projector is, it takes up more space than five InFocus XP120 projectors. The plastic cabinet and bulkiness would be less of an issue if the projector is moved only from room to room. While smaller is almost always better, a much smaller projector will cost you considerably more (about $1,700 more in the case of the 1.98-pound XP120).

Hitachi certainly hasn't skimped on CP-S210W's menu system. It has options for correcting vertical keystone angles, selecting the whisper mode (in exchange for the lower noise, you get hit with a 20-percent drop in brightness), engaging the video noise reduction (you can select high, middle, low or off) and applying the 3:2 pull-down (available when converting from interlaced to progressive). Selectable aspect ratios include 4:3 (the native mode), 16:9, 5:9 and 32:15 for computer-based signals, and 4:3, 16:9, Wide and Zoom for video-based signals. You can save as many as four groups of settings, which can be handy if the projector is shared among several locations. Other



The CP-210W is reasonably well-equipped for video. Its SVGA-native pixel resolution can handle most video sources.

menu features include an automatic power-off timer (it can be configured from one to 99 minutes), auto picture adjustment (it worked well in a variety of situations), and filter timer (it reminds you to clean or replace the projector's air filter).

Go Away Button

The supplied wireless remote control provides direct access to most of the essential features and settings. I particularly liked the button that blanks the screen—a go away button. Basic menu cursor controls are available on the remote control and on top of the projector, so all the menu settings are accessible from either location. The zoom and focus dials surrounding the lens assembly are indented and notched for finger-touch identification and adjustment.

If you're on a limited budget and don't mind a bulky projector, the CP-S210W is well worth considering. It's the kind of workhorse model that a large corporation might distribute to each of its departments, or a small non-profit organization might buy to share among its employees. It also has a three-year warranty, compared with the two-year warranty with the similarly priced PowerLite S1 and X1 DLP. Check out the other sub-$1,000 projectors to see if one of them might be better for you, but definitely consider the CP-S210W if you plan to use it primarily in small to medium-sized rooms. ■

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