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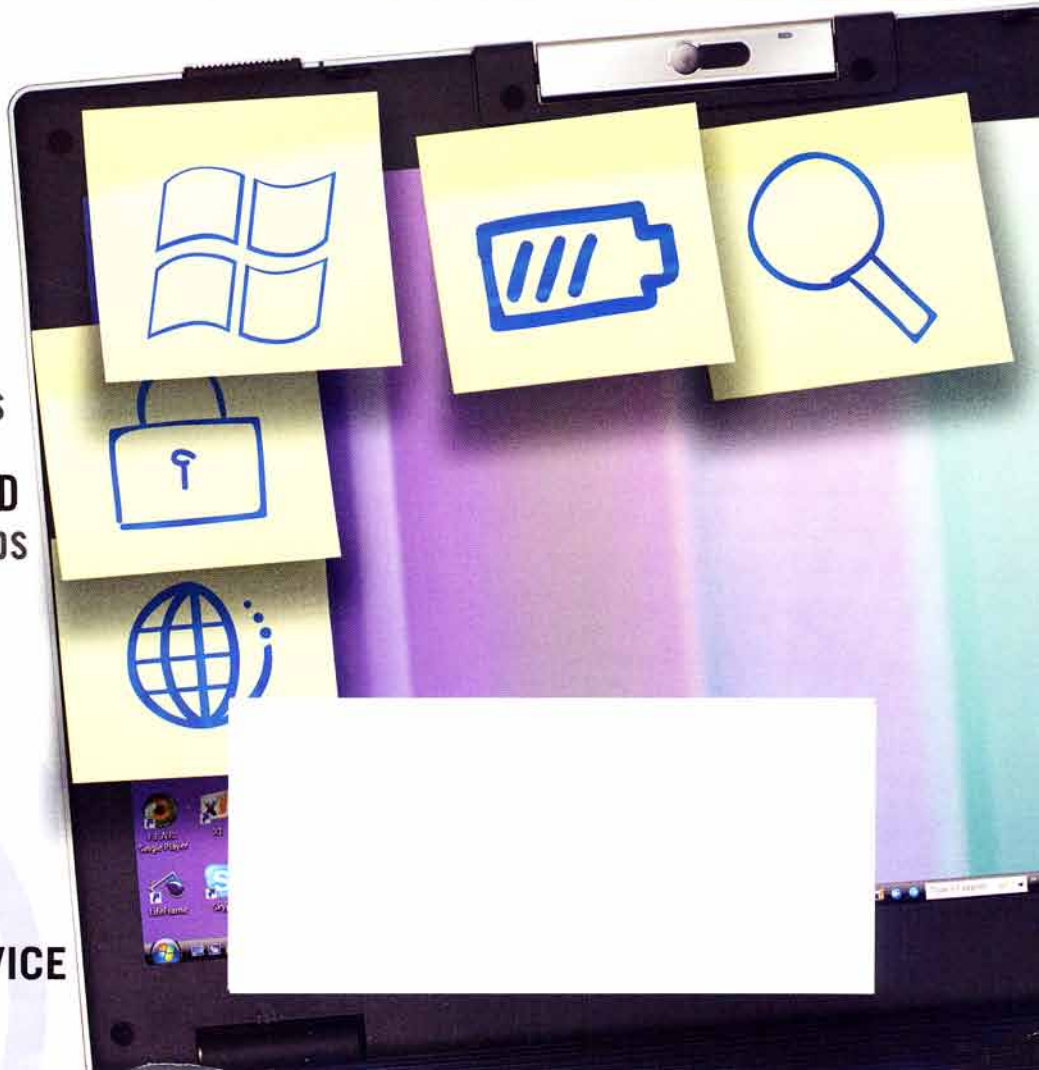
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PROJECTOR TEST DRIVE

Which model delivers the best real-world performance?

By Mike Spitalieri

We test dozens of projectors each year in our labs, measuring things like lumens and contrast ratios. But we don't have the luxury of taking them on the road or giving presentations with them on a daily basis. That's where Camillo Amato comes in. He's a business-training specialist for a company that sells financial-trading software; Amato crisscrosses the continental United States training employees with PowerPoint presentations and demonstrations before and after upgrades. We hooked him up with three projectors at three different price points to use for a couple of weeks and asked him to tell us which model hit the sweet spot.





Epson 1715c

\$1,849; www.epson.com

THE SKINNY

The Epson 1715c is the highest-end model of the three in this roundup. This 3.7-pound projector is quite bright (2700 ANSI lumens), but it has a relatively low contrast ratio (400:1). The built-in Wi-Fi connection is designed to let users present wirelessly from a laptop.

WHAT I LIKED

The Epson 1715c produced the brightest picture. Even in a brightly lit conference room, the 1715c shone out like a beacon. Wi-Fi was helpful when I gave presentations in my home office. I could easily connect it to my desktop PC via wireless.

WHAT I DIDN'T

The picture on this model was bright enough, but quality suffered a bit. Some smaller fonts were blurry and difficult to make out. On the road, Wi-Fi wasn't all that useful since I usually carry around a VGA cable to hook up to my laptop. Using wireless on a laptop that's three feet away seemed excessive.

VERDICT



For the hefty price tag, it's tough to see what all the fuss is about. Wi-Fi might be useful for office installations but not necessarily for road warriors. The picture was worse than the other two models, despite their lower price points.



Optoma EP7150

\$1,299; www.optoma.com

THE SKINNY

The Optoma EP7150 is an ultraportable XGA projector with 2000 ANSI lumens, a 2500:1 contrast ratio, a built-in speaker, as well as VGA and composite connections. This model also comes with a remote control with a laser pointer. At 2.7 pounds, the Optoma is the lightest of the three projectors.

WHAT I LIKED

The Optoma projected a very nice image, not quite as good as the Dell's, but bright and sharp overall. The small size was definitely a plus, as was the laser pointer.

WHAT I DIDN'T

The remote control had some issues. For example, using the remote to advance slides didn't work properly.

VERDICT



Overall, the Optoma was easy to set up and use, and I liked the picture quality, but the controls on the remote lowered its score a few points.

Dell 1201MP

\$599; www.dell.com

READER'S
CHOICE

THE SKINNY

The Dell 1201MP racks up impressive specs for just \$599. This projector sports a high brightness rating of 2000 ANSI lumens and an impressive 2100:1 contrast ratio all in a relatively lightweight package (4.9 pounds). You'll also get plenty of life on the lamp (more than 2500 hours).

WHAT I LIKED

The Dell projector worked great; it was easy to set up and painted a bright, clear picture on the conference-room canvas, and the colors never washed out. Overall, this model gave me the best picture out of all three projectors.

WHAT I DIDN'T

The Dell's only downside was its bulk. It's the biggest of the three (10 x 8 inches) and fits inside a suitcase, but you may need to make a little room. Still, I liked it better than my normal InFocus LP120, which fits neatly inside a travel bag.

VERDICT



The Dell 1201MP was easily my favorite projector. It provided the best picture and wasn't too big to take on the road. The price doesn't hurt, either.

