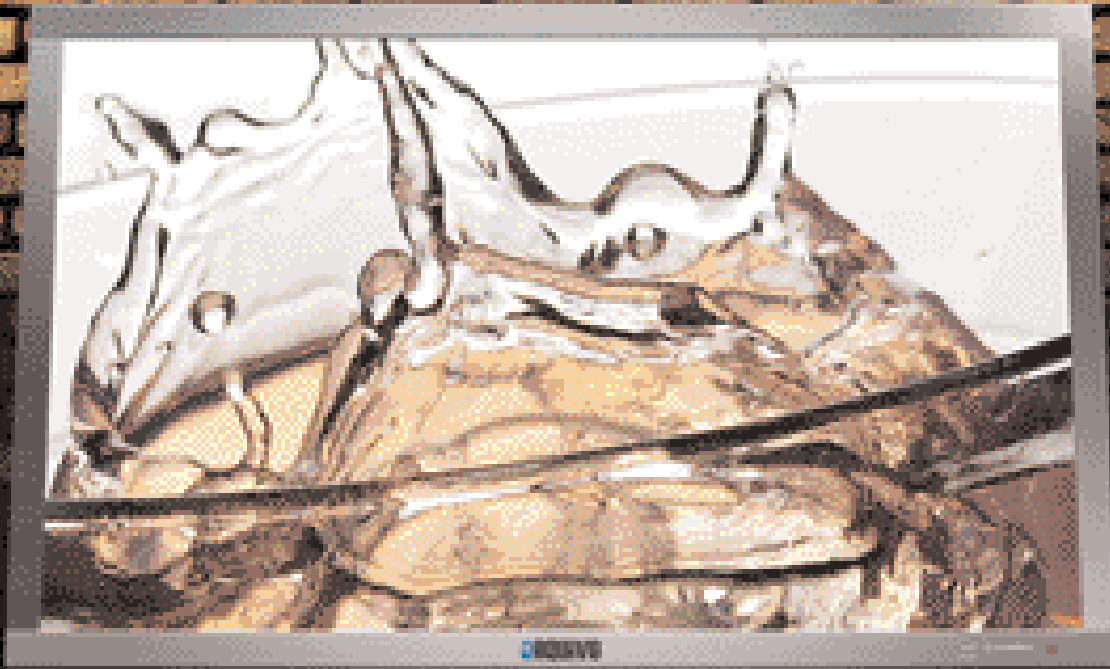


# COCKTAILS



## Big Screens... Big Profits

by James Farr

What plasmas and LCD units have to offer to bar operators

If a bar owner or operator has not already decided to bring in large format television screens to their establishment, they are likely thinking about making the change says John Pappas, president of Dynamic Digital, a national distributor of large format displays. With more and more bars making the switch from the traditional CRT set-up, those who do not make the move could find themselves bleeding customers to the bar down the street that does boast the snazzy, big screen units.

Once a bar operator does decide it is time to switch over to new screens, the first question they are faced with is whether to go for plasma or LCD units. While there are positives and negatives associated with both technologies, there is also no shortage of opinions on which is better. Entering "plasma versus LCD" into Google garners just under three million results, proving the popular debate is far from over.

When discussing the topic there does seem to be some consensus that plasmas are better at displaying blacks, which results in improved contrast. Some also argue that plasma is superior when it comes to viewing angles. In the LCD camp, higher native resolution is a big selling point. That basically means there are more pixels on the screen, which is a big plus for HD aficionados. For the environmentally conscious, LCDs typically consume less power and are said to last longer, although plasmas have apparently caught up in this regard recently.

For bar owners and operators, the decision on which technology to purchase is less important than the quality of the units. Pappas strongly suggests bar owners and operators invest in name brand professional grade units. While they cost 20 per cent to 30 per cent more than models intended for home use, they are also much more durable and able to withstand the high-use demand of the bar environment.

He says home units are intended to be on for between four and six hours a

day, while the premium units are ready to go all day and night. The professional units also come with superior warranties which will come in handy should maintenance or repair become an issue. As Pappas says, "Downtime leads to frustration and lost money."

Prices on these sets are continuing to drop. Pappas estimates they are dropping by 10 per cent every six months. However, bar owners who continue to wait for the prices to go down even further may already have lost their patrons by the time they finally pull the trigger on a deal.

Sean Russo, the assistant general manager at Toronto's Loose Moose Tap



Pre and post game crowds will love the clarity of the game on the Infinite Plasma walls.

& Grill, is extremely happy with his bar's new set-up. Recently renovated, the bar boasts two floors each showcas-

ing nine flat screen 42 inch seamless plasma sets. He says the clarity of the picture is amazing, particularly for

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All weather units are perfect for outside patios handling temperatures between 40 degrees Celsius and -40 degrees Celsius.

hockey. He notes, "The ice just pops off the screen."

Located near both the Rogers Centre and the Air Canada Centre in downtown Toronto, the Loose Moose is a favorite watering hole for the pre- and post-game crowd. Russo says that the new TVs have been so popular that they are also retaining a large portion of the crowd during games.

The sweet set-up has also been help-

ful at bringing in customers for other events, some during offtimes. For instance, the Rugby World Cup this fall was a big afternoon draw, as was last summer's World Cup of soccer.

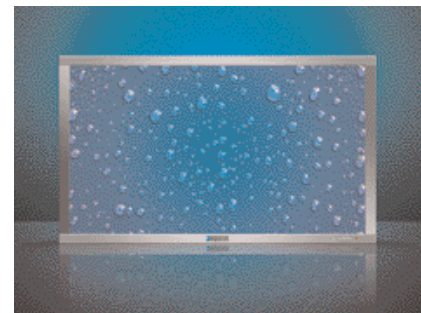
While sports is obviously one of the best ways to get a big bang for your buck with these screens, it is not the only way. Russo says his in-bar DJs can mix music videos on the screens as they spin tunes, something they like to do when a key sporting event is not the focal point on the televisions.

Paul Petcoff, a manager at Richmond Hill's Jack Astor's Bar & Grill, is a big fan of broadcasting "eye candy" on the many screens at his location. If there are no big games on a particular day or night, Petcoff says they like to project psychedelic images onto the brick walls or onto a glass partition that separates the bar from the restaurant. "People like to be entertained when they're out. They seem to enjoy the cool videos we show."

While large format displays inside bars are nothing new, what about a unit that works just as well outside? A new product that addresses this untapped market is the AQUiVO weather resistant LCD unit. Andrew Salamon, general manager for Advanced Products Group, is really excited about the revolutionary television. "Owners and operators are now able to entertain their patrons on the patio without the fear of compromising the technology due to the weather. Our displays can be left outside in cold or hot temperatures."

The all-weather unit can operate in temperatures ranging from -40 degrees Celsius to 40 degrees Celsius. It is 1080p, meaning the high definition picture is crisp and vibrant, while a tempered anti-glare filament is able to absorb bright sun rays.


Salamon says, "The return on the investment will be noted immediately. Having a sporting event playing in an outdoor atmosphere, close to the food and drink, is a winning situation." He adds that, "Almost all bar and restaurant owners that have a patio and make use of the AQUiVO displays, will



AQUiVO taps into the weather resistant market, which allows displays to be left outside.

find their patrons will stay longer, spend more, and continue to come back time and time again." Depending on the size, the units range in price from \$2,000 to \$12,000.

Offering new screens, whether inside or outside, is something bar patrons are coming to expect. For owners and operators who are still on the fence, this is an investment they probably can't afford not to make. ♣



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