

Two Technologies Making Flat TVs All the Rage

By Ken Rosato

(Fort Lee-WABC, March 26, 2004) — Fifty years ago, RCA began manufacturing a revolution in the way we see the world- color TV sets. The 12-inch screens sold for \$1,000 a piece -- a hefty price tag in those days.

TV technology has come along way since then - now flat screen TV's are all the rage. Ken Rosato tells us if now is the right time to buy one. They're perhaps the coolest of high-tech on the market today -- flat panel TVs with incredible picture quality. But is now the time to buy? Gabriel Karlis, JD Audio & Video Design: "The technology is here and we should be using it. It's a great product."

Flat panel TVs come in two technologies: LCD, or liquid crystal diode, and plasma. Each offers certain pluses and minuses for the consumer. Let's take a look side-by-side at a 42-inch plasma, and a 32-inch LCD. Aside from the obvious size difference, the picture quality looks pretty much the same to me. However, not all flat panel TVs are created equal.

Gabriel Karlis : "Size does matter... When it comes to flat panel TVs." What he means is the main difference between LCD and plasma monitors is the size they come in. LCD units generally range from 2 to 30 inches, while plasmas range from 32 to 61 inches with larger screens on the way. And beware of low-price come-ons -- many of them come without a tuner or speakers. And if you want to take advantage of HDTV, you'll need to get the necessary equipment from your cable or satellite provider, and you'll likely have to pay a higher monthly fee. HDTV programming right now is limited, but growing. Gabriel Karlis: "There are some areas that we know of that have four channels of HDTV and there are some that have twelve channels of HDTV."

Longevity? Flat panel TVs are expected to last seven to nine years with average use. Price range? Sree Sreenivasan, WABC's Tech Guru: "The bigger the screen, the more you'll pay. If you're looking at a 42-inch model, you might be paying something like \$3,000 to \$5,000. If you look at a high-end 60-inch model, we're looking at over \$10,000." And prices will keep dropping. But if you want one now and you have the money to spare, a flat panel TV is out there, waiting to call your living room home.