

# ProjectorCentral 2020 Best of the Year Awards

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Our post-year, aerial view of the 2020 projector industry is well-encapsulated in the 20 products selected below for our annual Best of the Year Awards, as culled from the nearly 40 projectors reviewed last year. In most ways, what you'll see on the list is a clear extension of our 2019 award winners, with ever-brighter laser projectors at ever-lower cost trickling further down into the commercial market and even into the consumer home theater space; more UST projectors designed to replace those "puny" 75-inch flat-panel TVs with a 100-inch or larger screen; and some "lifestyle" projectors designed to appeal to first-time projector buyers—many of whom came out of the woodwork last year to bolster their family-room entertainment and backyard movie nights following the emergence of the Covid bug.



And we expect to see more of the same in 2021, with some key differences: even lower prices and smaller footprints in the commercial projectors at nearly every lumen size, hotter competition and more consumer awareness for the UST TV category, and a bigger push on lifestyle models that sacrifice a bit of that videophile color accuracy and uber-deep black level that hobbyists crave in return for something you can watch in a lit room and directly stream Netflix on. But I think we'll be reviewing some great new theater-room projectors too, hopefully with laser and LED light engines that meet or approach the performance level we've come to expect from our favorite lamp models. Whatever comes our way, you'll read about it right here in ProjectorCentral. And if you're brand new to the joys of front projection, well, we'll keep the lights on for ya. —*Rob Sabin, editor-in-chief.*

Panasonic PT-VMZ50U

WUXGA Conference Room Projector





**BenQ GS2 Smart Wireless LED Portable Projector**

**Intended Use:** Portable Indoor/Outdoor Home Theater

**Price:** \$599

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

The clever BenQ GS2 is representative of a new kind of affordable, friendly lifestyle projector that came just in time for cooped up families facing Covid lockdowns. A cuddly and durable cube-like form factor, with its rubberized splash-proof and drop-proof case, combined here with thoughtful features like built-in wireless connectivity, an integrated camera, and a magnetically-attached charging port that detaches to keep the projector from going airborne when someone inevitably walks through the power cord. The 720p image quality from the LED light engine was respectable as well. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## BenQ TK850 4K Projector

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater

**Price:** \$1,499

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

After the successful introduction of its HT3550 budget dark-room theater projector in 2019, BenQ followed up with a brighter, family-room friendly edition that trades a bit of color accuracy and contrast for brightness that stands up to moderate light. A more recent "smart" version, the TK850i, adds wireless capabilities and the excellent Android TV streaming platform that uses apps from the Google Play store. ([Read the full review](#)).



## BenQ LH710 Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Business/Conference Room, Education

**Price:** \$1,499

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

There's been a huge rollout of affordable 4,000-5,000 lumen laser projectors in the last couple of years that boast long 20,000-hour life and low maintenance, but relatively few can actually claim a truly maintenance-free design with no required filter replacements or periodic cleaning. With its fully-sealed, dustproof light engine with IPX5 rating, the 4,000-lumen, 1080p-resolution LH710 is among the first we've tested that can be mounted in a hard-to-reach location and never require another dangerous ladder climb or trip on a tall personnel lift. That can also save significant cost over the life of the projector. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Christie DHD1075-GS Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Large Venue

**Price:** n/a

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Christie's 1080p, 10,000-lumen DHD1075-GS is a general workhorse, large-venue projector that comes with all the Christie bells-and-whistles, including outstanding color right out of the box thanks to the company's dual-laser BoldColor technology. You'll probably pay a little more for the company's proven track record for build-quality and service, but you won't come away disappointed. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Epson BrightLink 1485Fi Interactive UST Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Education/Classroom, Business/Conference Room

**Price:** \$3,390

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Epson's flagship interactive classroom projector is a fully-loaded, well-executed design with a number of thoughtful and/or innovative features, including a super-bright 5,000 lumen laser engine and 1080p resolution, dual-pen or finger annotation, the ability to function as a whiteboard without an attached computer, wireless sharing, and a 120-inch 16:6 aspect mode that allows simultaneous viewing of two 16:9 images or one alongside a 16:9 whiteboard. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Epson EpiqVision Ultra LS500 UST Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater

**Price:** \$4,999

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Epson broke some new ground with its entry in the emerging category of laser-driven 4K UST projectors intended to replace the family-room TV. The LS500's 4,000-lumen rating leads this product class and drove the brightest and best 3D we've seen in any home theater projector. But the projector's high brightness and excellent out-of-box color accuracy from the 3LCD light engine, combined with the bundled 100- or 120-inch ALR screen, should put a smile on the face of a lot of consumers who opted to pass on the flatpanel and go big. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Fujifilm FP-Z5000 Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Retail, Museum, Specialty Applications

**Price:** \$12,000 MSRP

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

One look at the 5,000-lumen Fujifilm FP-Z5000 will tell you there's nothing else quite like it. The motorized, ultra-short-throw, folded two-axial rotatable periscope lens combines with massive  $\pm 82\%$  vertical and  $\pm 35\%$  horizontal lens shift to put sharp, full-HD resolution images in places no other projector can put them relative to its placement. And it does all this from a relatively compact and portable cabinet for its lumen class. It's a real technological achievement. ([Read the full review](#)).

ViewSonic LS800HD

1080P Conference Room Laser Projector







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## JVC DLA-NX5 D-ILA Projector

**Intended Use:** Home Theater

**Price:** \$5,999.

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

After launching its native 4K NX-series LCoS projectors in late 2018, JVC has continued to improve them with firmware updates that added dynamic tone-mapping for the best HDR we've seen on any projectors, then enhanced it with features that can actually account for environmental factors such as your specific screen size and type, throw distance, and lamp life. The NX5, this family's entry-level model (also sold as the DLA-RS1000 in JVC's pro line-up), makes some modest sacrifices vs. the step-up NX7 we reviewed last year, but still impressed. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## LG ProBeam BU50NST 4K Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Business/Conference Room

**Price:** \$4,499

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Not surprisingly given LG's heritage as a consumer display manufacturer, its first dedicated business projector, with 5,000 lumens of laser-driven brightness, checks off a number of boxes we don't often see in commercial projectors: 4K/UHD resolution, HDR support, built-in WiFi with a sophisticated WebOS streaming platform, HDMI-CEC control, and an HDMI ARC connection. Advanced 12-point warping, an HDBaseT control/signal port, and a 1.6x zoom lens with  $\pm 50\%$  vertical;  $\pm 20\%$  horizontal give it away, though. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Maxell MP-JW4001 LCD Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Education/Classroom, Business/Conference Room

**Price:** \$1,499.

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Maxell's MP-JW4001 LCD laser projector earns its place here by delivering its powerful 4,000-lumen brightness in a remarkably compact chassis. The innovation? A solid-state phosphor chip used in place of the usual spinning phosphor wheel found in most single-laser projectors saves both size and weight. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## NEC PA1004UL Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Large Venue

**Price:** \$17,499

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

The ongoing laser revolution continues to drive down the cost of lumens. NEC's PA1004UL is a perfect example—it's the most cost-effective 3LCD laser projector in its lumen class, and an excellent choice where good color accuracy and immunity to rainbows rank high on the list of requirements. The fully sealed, zero-maintenance optics and five-year warranty just add to the value. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Optoma CinemaX P2 4K Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater

**Price:** \$3,299

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Optoma's follow up to the CinemaX P1 living room projector provides modest performance improvements at a \$500 discount to the original, cementing its place as the best value we've seen in this product class to date. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Optoma GT1090HDR Laser Gaming Projector

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater, Gaming

**Price:** \$1,399

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

The migration of long-life laser light engines into the more performance-critical home theater environment has been slow, especially in the budget segment. Optoma's GT1090HDR, a short-throw, 4,200-lumen, 1080p gaming projector that displays 4K content with HDR at its native resolution, proves it can be done. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Optoma ProScene ZU720T Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Large Venue

**Price:** \$4,999

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Optoma broke new ground here—while breaking through a new low-price barrier—by introducing the first 7,500 lumen large-venue laser projector with a permanently-attached zoom lens. Throw in the integrated Android-based computer with productivity apps and sharp WUXGA resolution, and you have a real bargain for lecture halls, houses of worship, or large conference rooms. ([Read the full review](#)).

The MagniFi Mini sounds ridiculously big and full for a system of this size & price."



**Polk Audio MagniFi**  
Mini Home Theater  
Surround Sound Bar

**amazon**





## Panasonic PT-LRZ35U LED Projector

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**Intended Use:** Business/Conference Room, Education/Classroom, Home Theater

**Price:** ~~\$1,687~~

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Panasonic's first discrete RGB LED projector boasts unusually high 3,500-lumen rated output for an LED engine and serves well for the conference room and classroom applications it was designed for. But its out-of-box image quality is good enough that the company even pitched it as a 1080p home theater projector, also making it the first Panasonic projector targeted at that market in years. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Panasonic PT-MZ16KL Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Large Venue

**Price:** \$33,999

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

The PT-MZ16KL has an unusually compact form factor for its 16,000 lumen brightness, and at less than 50 pounds without a lens, is the lightest in our ProjectorCentral database. It also works off a standard 15-amp, 110V power line—ensuring placement flexibility. And it comes with a ton of innovative features including fail-safe architecture that keeps the laser operating at close to full brightness even when a laser diode fails; backup signal switching that auto-switches the input in the event of a source drop-out; NFC (near field communication) for touch-pairing a smartphone that can be used to adjusting settings, and more. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Screen Innovations Slate 1.2 Zero Edge Pro Screen

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater, Business/Conference Room

**Price:** \$2,976.75 MSRP (as tested)

[Read Review](#) | [View Product Details](#)

Screen Innovations' Slate 1.2 ambient-light-rejecting material, the step-down option from the company's much-lauded and highest performing Black Diamond screen, still manages to deliver excellent contrast and black level in lit environments at considerably lower cost. With the narrow-bezel Zero Edge Pro frame first pioneered by SI, it's a compelling combo for those who want to take projection out of the theater and into the family room. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Sony VPL-VW715ES 4K SXRD Projector

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**Intended Use:** Home Theater

**Price:** \$9,999

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

Sony's newest generation SXRD projector delivered an awesome picture and introduced a number of innovative technologies to the company's home theater projector line, including Dynamic HDR Enhancer for better tone-mapping, Digital Focus Optimizer for sharper edge-to-edge detail, and a powerful new "X1 for projector" processor to drive these and other performance improvements. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## Sony VPL-PHZ12 Laser Projector

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**Intended Use:** Business/Conference Room, Retail, Museum

**Price:** \$2,499

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

The VPL-PHZ12, the successor to the popular VPL-PHZ10 business projector, retains its predecessor's WUXGA-resolution, 3LCD architecture and 5,000 lumen laser-driven output, but further improves image quality and adds key features including Sony's Intelligent Setting preset that optimizes color, brightness, fan speed, and other characteristics based on the intended environment. ([Read the full review](#)).

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## ViewSonic M2 LED Projector

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**Intended Use:** Business/Conference Room, Home Theater

**Price:** \$649

[Read Review](#) | [View Projector Details](#)

ViewSonic's M2 portable projector for business road warriors comes with a 30,000-hour RGBB LED light source that proved exceptionally bright for its size and, with its 1080p-resolution DLP chip, provided a good enough image to satisfy casual movie and TV watching on the go. ([Read the full review](#)).

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**Mike** Posted Jan 8, 2021 5:57 AM PST

Is this list only comprised of projectors that you were able to review at Projector Central? It seems like the LG HU85LA and the Samsung LSP9T deserve honorable mention for being high quality Laser driven UST projectors. The LSP9T is also the first projector to implement HDR10+ with BT2020 gamut.

**Rob Sabin, Editor** Posted Jan 8, 2021 8:20 AM PST

Mike, our Best of the Year awards can only be awarded to products we've published reviews for or done our hands-on evaluation for a pending review in the designated calendar year. The HU85LA was reviewed in 2019 and made our list last year, and the I expect and hope that the LSP9T will be on our list at the end of this year after we evaluate it. I am comfortable awarding our Best of Show awards associated with InfoComm or our own Projection Expo



based on specs and manufacturer described innovations, but on the thinking that someone may buy a product based on our Best of the Year recommendation, I think integrity demands that it be a well informed and confirmed decision.

## Post a comment

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