

BLOG ConsumerReports.org

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2009/01/good-deals-hard-to-find-at-circuit-city-s-liquidation-sale/index.htm>

Good deals hard to find at Circuit City's liquidation sale

Consumer Reports News: January 20, 2009 06:41 PM

Would you knowingly spend \$435 more to buy a big-screen TV at a store that going out of business? How about paying double for a computer printer?

Probably not. But those were some of the "deals" we found during the opening days of Circuit City's liquidation sale.

The nation's second largest consumer electronics retailer [announced Friday](#) that it was holding liquidation sales at its remaining 567 U.S. stores, which it expects to close by the end of March.

To find out whether the liquidation was producing bargains, we compared Circuit City's prices this weekend with those charged by other retailers. We also looked the advertised prices in this week's Circuit City circular, which, though distributed in newspapers, is not being honored by the stores. The advertised sale prices were in some cases hundreds of dollars less than what we saw at the liquidation sale on Sunday at the Circuit City store on E. 14th Street in Manhattan. And in most cases, we found much better savings at Circuit City's competitors.

For example, at the liquidation, a 50-inch Panasonic plasma TV was discounted to \$1,800, a \$200 savings. That might sound like a bargain, but if you check the circular you'll see that Circuit City had planned to cut the price this week by \$500. What's more, we found the same model online for \$1,365, including free shipping.

An HP all-in-one printer, at the liquidation for \$270, was scheduled to be on sale for \$150. And we found it as low as \$135 online. A Garmin GPS system, discounted to \$225, was \$160 in the circular and \$141 online.

Despite the modest discounts, the checkout counter was mobbed. We repeatedly overheard salespeople telling customers that they had run out of merchandise. Shoppers were undeterred by signs proclaiming that all sales are final; that the store no longer was accepting the Circuit City credit cards, personal checks, or coupons; and that it wouldn't match competitors' prices.

We did find a few deals. At \$152, the Nintendo Wii version of the Guitar Hero World Tour Band Bundle video game was nearly \$30 cheaper than the best price we found elsewhere. One of our staffers bought a Toshiba LCD TV for within a

\$1 of the lowest price we found online, albeit at a retailer that's not going through liquidation. But such deals were hard to find and produced relatively little savings.

Our findings underscore the need to carefully compare prices when shopping at [liquidation sales](#), where the excitement of a store's closing can lead shoppers to mistakenly assume that there are big savings. As we've seen many times, prices often are higher than the best deals you'll find elsewhere, at least initially. And by the time the liquidator is offering substantial savings, you may there's find little left worth buying.

As one Circuit City salesman told us: "That's Business 101. That has been going on for years."

—Anthony Giorgianni