

Home Theater Ideas

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Home Theater Overview By Lisa Montgomery

Certain that you'll watch a slew of movies in your new house? Want to feel the same impact as in a real movie theater? Then design a dedicated home theater into the plans for your new house.

The design of a home theater varies, from a room that doubles as a den to a huge dark space that holds only a video screen and a row of reclining chairs. Likewise, movies can be presented on the 50-inch screen of a rear-projection TV set, or on an eye-popping 100-inch screen that hangs from the ceiling. Speakers that project the dialogue and sound effects can come in the form of huge towers, or sit discreetly within the walls of the room. No matter how you envision your own home theater, you're going to have to get your ideas down on paper before you start building it.

Video

The obvious place to start is with the screen. Screens vary widely in their size, their shape and the technology employed to reproduce a picture. An audio/video specialist (he might be from the same home systems installation firm that's handling the other systems of your house) can recommend the best type of screen based on your viewing tastes. Or, if the architect has already drawn up the room (the best place to locate a dedicated theater is in the basement), the A/V specialist can determine the right screen size. There might be a lot of back and forth happening between the A/V firm and the architect at this point. For example, if you've decided that you'd like to use a video projector in the theater, the architect may have to redesign the ceiling to better accommodate the projector and the accompanying screen. Or, if you've told the architect that you'd like at least one window in the room, the A/V firm might opt for a rear-projection TV rather than a video projector.

Sound

We've all been distracted at the movie theater by a chatty teenager, by ringing cell phones, you name it. While the distractions might come in a different form at home, they exist nonetheless. If you find extraneous noise bothersome, consider having your home theater soundproofed. Soundproofing involves techniques applied by the builder and the home systems installation firm. Studs may be positioned differently and a special type of insulation packed inside. When the walls are finished, the home systems installation firm might hang acoustical wall treatments on the surface. These treatments can be designed in different colors, fabrics and shapes, so you might want to ask your interior designer for his/her advice on the scheme.

Speakers and subwoofers can be hidden behind this fabric, so pin down the furniture layout before the room is finished. The location of each piece of furniture will impact the positioning of the speakers. Speakers can also be concealed behind the decorative grilles of an A/V cabinet, and a subwoofer can be placed underneath the floor if you work it into the house plans.

Lighting

A movie always looks better when the room lights are off. Integrate a lighting control system into the room so that your home theater's lights fade out automatically as the audio/video system gears up. It's not only convenient, but creates a sense of excitement. A lighting control system is also helpful during intermissions, and as a way to accent key architectural features of the room.

- 5 Things to Consider for Your Home Theater Before you buy and install your home theater, here are a few options you may want to think about!
- Big-screen TVs
 - In-wall/ceiling loudspeakers vs. floor standing units
 - Create an in-wall equipment rack

- Where all of the equipment will be plugged in
- Remote controls aplenty!

Home Theater FAQs

- Do I need a big home to have a home theater?

No! Believe it or not, everyone can have a home theater. Many people finish off their basements, attics or small rooms and use them as prime theater space. Even if you can't dedicate a room, you can still create a home theater atmosphere. There are a variety of options for the smaller areas, including the home theater in a box, which packs almost everything you need into one box—just add your TV!

- Is a home theater really as good as going to the movies?

Once you have your own home theater, it's hard to imagine fighting the crowds, sharing armrests and dealing with offenders of the "silence is golden" rule. You can make a home theater as realistic as you'd like. Some people add accessories such as marquis, candy counters and real theater seating (the comfy kind!). However, a home theater can also be located in your family room, and still be better than a night at the local Cineplex.

- What is the difference between front-projection and rear-projection?

Rear-projection TV is sort of like your average TV—if that TV is about 80 inches diagonally. Most of these units are large in size, have a base and a cabinet behind the screen to support the amazing picture that's being produced. Rear-projection TVs come in CRT (cathode ray tube), LCD (liquid crystal display), DLP (digital light processing), and LCoS (liquid crystal on silicon) models. A front-projection system is like a real cinema. This type of system would consist of a projector and a huge screen. Some systems can project images 10 feet wide, regardless of the source (DVD player, VCR, etc.) that it's coming from. These projectors utilize either CRT, LCD, DLIA or DLP processing to produce film-like images.