

SOUND & VISION



HOME MOVIE THEATERS

High-End All the Way

Marius Farkas | Oct 29, 2009



I've been a subscriber to Home Theater since 1996, as well as, Stereophile Guide to HT, long before it became UltimateAV (which is now exclusively on the web). All these years of reading these specialty magazines has finally paid off with the design and construction of my dream home theater and home automation system.

I was the general contractor for the entire project, however, I need to give credit to two people who helped making this project such a success. Dean Gainer of Sound Progression LLC, and Daniel Klepp of Klepps Inc. Dean did the initial design based on my requirements. He and I worked directly with the architect plus he advised me throughout the project on how to build the room, choose the equipment, and calibrate the system after installation. Daniel provided most of the equipment and his team did the actual installation from wire pulling to installing the home automation equipment and setting up the systems rack, in addition to the screen and projector.

Utilizing the "room within a room" concept, I isolated the theater from the rest of the house. I used staggered studs and double sheetrock glued with Green Glue (soundproofing material) on all walls, ceiling and floor. The attic space was closed in and a separate air conditioner was installed to serve just the media room and the adjacent play room. The result is astonishing because. I can watch an action movie in the theater with the volume raised to reference level, and no one notices in the rest of the house.



The theater room is 17 by 27 feet. I wanted a really big screen and that posed some challenges on the design of the room and choosing the projector. Eventually things got even more complex when I decided to go with a 2.35:1 (Cinemascope) native aspect ratio screen. A Stewart StudioTek 130 G3 CineV curved dual format screen was installed; the image size is 151" diagonal in 2.35:1 aspect ratio and 120" diagonal in 1.78:1 aspect ratio. That reduced the number of compatible projectors that would be sufficiently bright enough to cover such a large screen. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that InFocus builds an incredible bright projector (1600 ANSI lumens) with outstanding picture quality and black level, at a fraction of the price other manufacturers charge for comparable projectors. I got the IN83 along with the anamorphic lens and shift mechanism provided to InFocus by Panamorp. The anamorphic lens is required in order to un-squeeze the picture to fill in the entire 2.35:1 screen.

Most of the other equipment in the theater I've had for quite some time, which includes twelve Marantz MA500 monoblock amps, a Linn speaker system (tri-amped AV5140's and bi-amped AV5120). Dual AV5150 powered subs are placed in front with Tukans on the sides and rear. My older Proceed AVP2 processor was replaced by an Integra DHC 9.9 surround preamp processor offering more state-of-the art features and surround sound formats. I've added the Oppo BDP-83 Blu-ray player and I'm planning to add a media center PC soon. Other sources include a cable TV box, a satellite TV box, Sirius and FM radio, iPod, and a Pioneer Elite PDF19 300 CD changer. All of these are running through two Panamax M5 power conditioners. The equipment rack is from Middle Atlantic. Cables are from Transparent Audio, Tributaries, and Monster. It's worth mentioning that there is a 10 meter (33 feet) long HDMI cable connecting the video sources to the projector. Initially a generic HDMI cable was installed that proved to be unwise. The picture would drop out every once in a while, which was very annoying and proofed to be difficult to troubleshoot. Dean Gainer finally solved it and the solution was a new cable with locking tab connectors. The picture has been rock solid ever since. The lighting is by HAI and the remote control is the TSU9800 from Phillips. Besides controlling the audio/video gear the remote interacts directly with the security (alarms and CCTV), HVAC, and lighting systems throughout the whole house.



The home automation system is by NetStreams, which takes four HD video and/or audio sources and distributes them throughout the house to 6 independent HD video zones and 6 more independent audio zones (1080i component video sent over CAT6 cable.) There are currently three plasma displays installed with three more to follow, one for each bedroom, as well as the playroom, patio, and office. Each zone is controlled through its own keypad though the zones can be linked together in the party mode for whole-house audio. The system is controlled from both the Philips TSU9800 and my PC.

The family room is an independent zone with a 60" Pioneer Elite Kuro monitor display, a Pioneer Elite VSX-01TXH receiver driving a 5.1 B&W speaker system in addition to a Pioneer Elite BDP-05 Blu-ray player, and cable TV box.

