

Cinematic Home A/V Review by David Das

I had the pleasure of attending the Cinematic Home A/V Event hosted by John Akers and his family on January 16, 2025.

This showroom is located at 10658 N 32nd St, Phoenix, AZ 85028



Almost half of our lucky club members got the unique opportunity to experience a truly state of the art dedicated Home Theater as well as a high-end 2-channel Audio system using reference grade components.

The event started at 5pm and lasted through 8pm.

As we walked in we saw this welcome banner displayed on an 85" Sony Bravia 4K TV.



John's wife had arranged a delicious spread of refreshments for the evening.



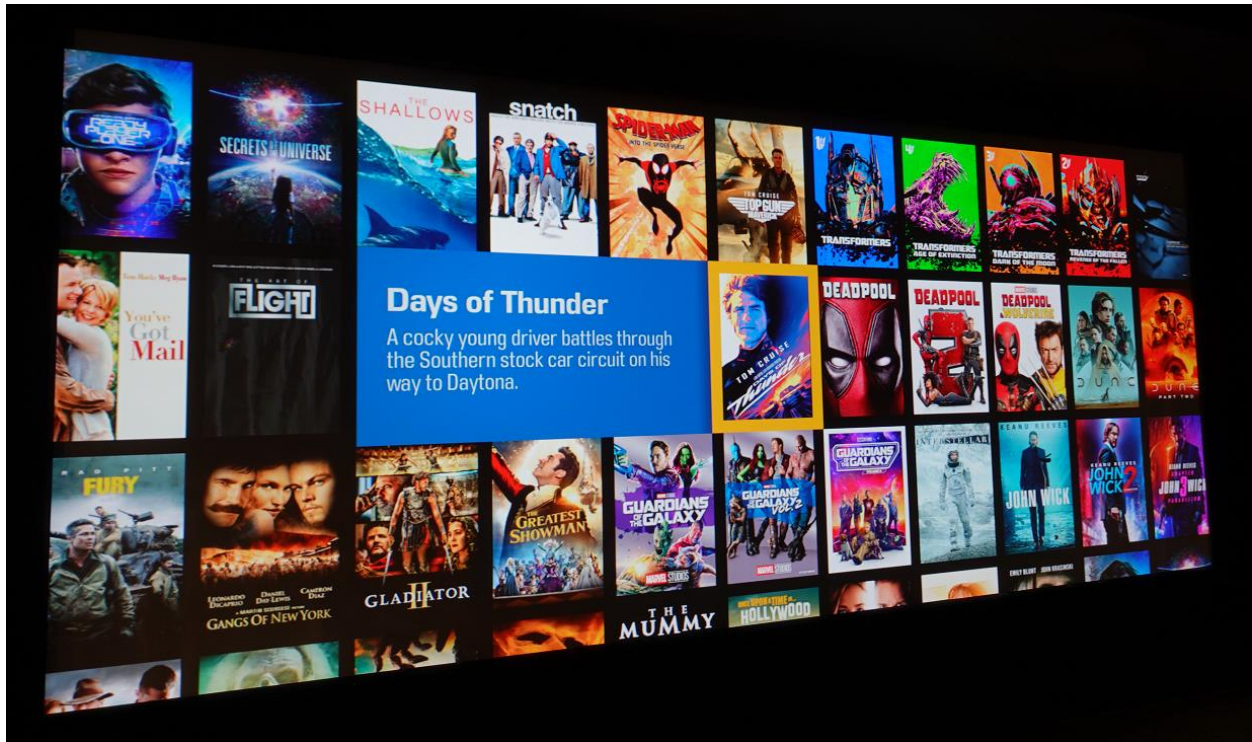
John split the 3-hour demo into two parts. The first part was a demo of his Reference Home Theater setup with an explanation of each component followed by an extended audition of several of his 2-channel audiophile systems.

11.6.6. Reference Home Theater Demo

As I entered this 16' wide by 20' long dedicated Home Theater I was impressed with the clean décor. There were no exposed speakers visible on any walls. My eyes were immediately drawn to the super bright 14' wide x 7' tall display stretched all across the front wall.



The text was razor sharp all across the screen and the picture filled your peripheral vision as you sat on the couch 14 feet away.



Even as you walked up close at arm's length to the screen you could not see any visible pixels. The fine black dots that you see are the perforations on the acoustically transparent screen.



John began his demo with a clip from the movie '**FORD v FERRARI.**'

I was completely transported into the scene of the visceral action with the 360 degree surround sound enveloping my senses. For a moment I completely forgot about the \$500,000 worth of electronics powering this audio visual magic. I felt I was in the movie as a spectator watching this heart pounding car ride unfold before my eyes. I did not want this clip to end.

I guess this is the true test of a Reference Home Theater system. It fools you into believing you are actually in the movie as it draws you into the story line with its stunning picture clarity and surround sound.

The second clip John played was from the movie '**A QUIET PLACE.**' This revealed the magic of surround sound with pinpoint accuracy. You felt you were standing right besides Emily Blunt in the basement scene

The third clip was from the movie '**PASSENGERS.**' It gave you a sense of moving around in a vast empty space. The black level and shadow details were impressive.

The fourth clip was the scene from the song Never Enough from the movie '**THE GREATEST SHOWMAN.**' This was the most revealing clip that showcased how well this system excelled at multi-channel audio with musical content.



I felt I was part of the audience in the arena experiencing the full range of emotions from this singer.

The last clip was from the movie 'FURY.' This was the perfect clip to showcase the sheer dynamic range of the 23 speakers in the room. You could hear as well as feel the impact of tank shells exploding as they hit their targets.

John had carefully selected these 6 movie clips to showcase the extreme levels of performance his Reference Home Theater is capable of.

I have seen all 6 movies in the theaters. This was a totally different experience. The picture was sharper and a lot brighter. The immersive surround sound was more precise in its positioning, clarity and exhibited an effortless dynamic range.

How was John able to exceed a typical Dolby Atmos Theater experience that you get at your local multiplex within a residential setting?

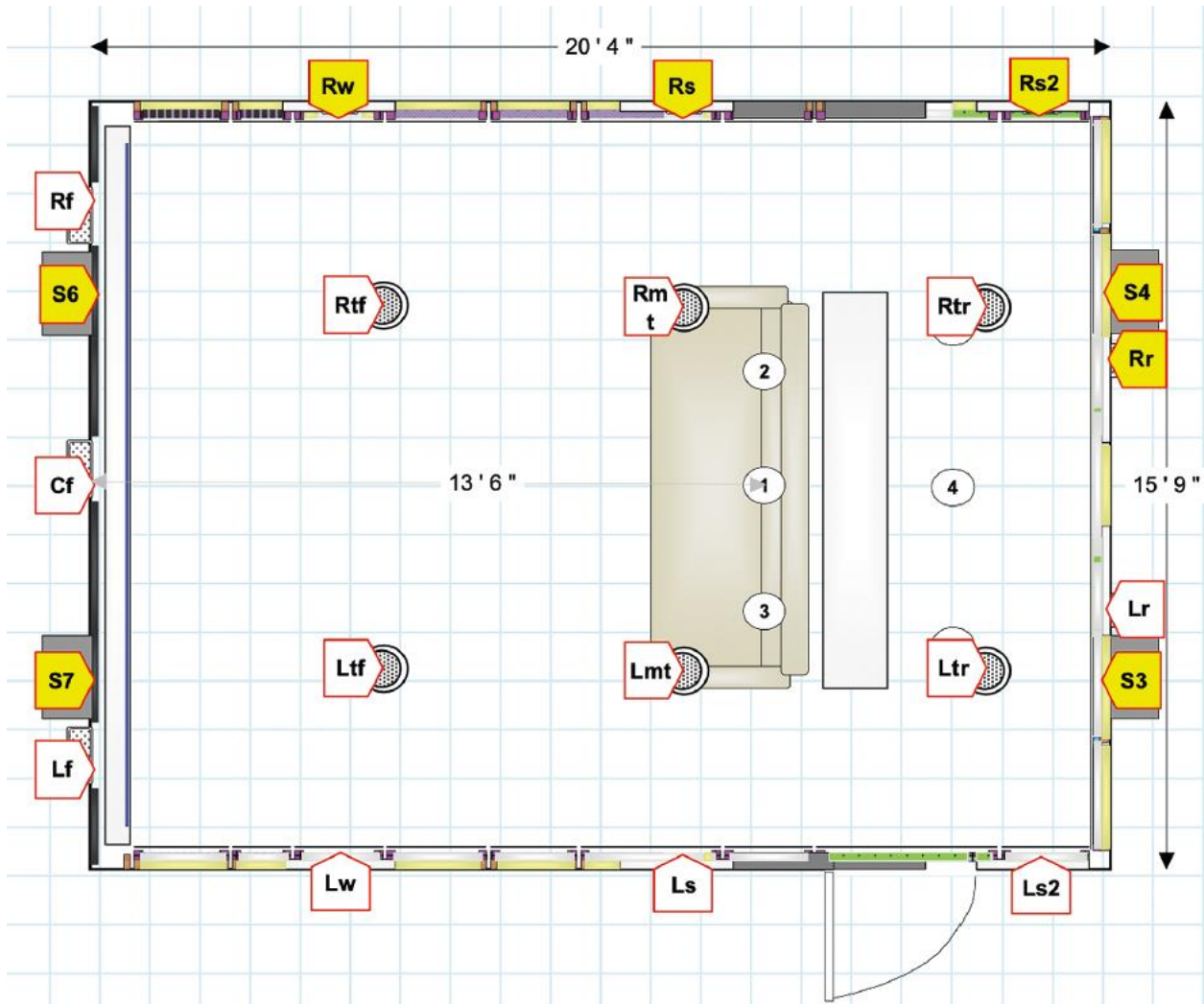
Let's explore!

John was kind enough to furnish the room schematics of his Home Theater.

This is the **Plan View**

You have the 3 Left, Center and Right Main Speakers on the front wall.

You have 3 Surround Speakers on each of the side walls along with 2 additional Surround Speakers on the rear wall making a total of 11 bed channels.



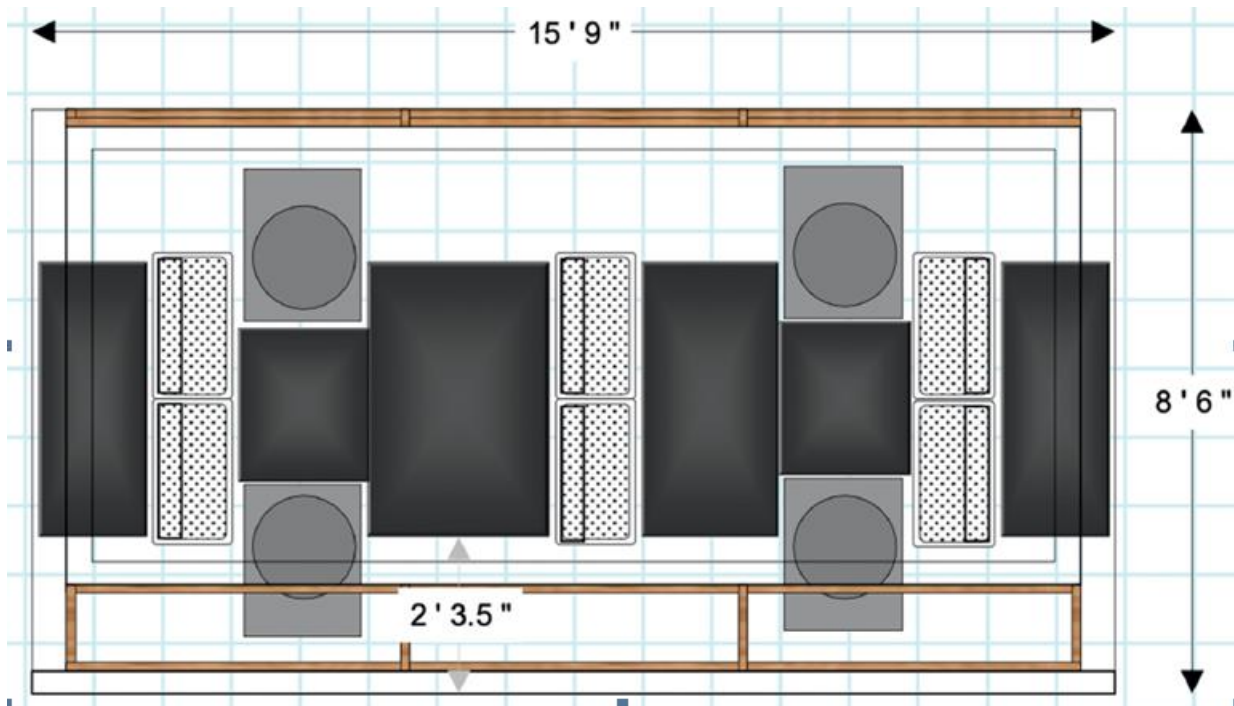
There are 6 Dolby Height speakers mounted on the ceiling.

The acoustically transparent screen stretches 14 feet across the front wall.
It is 7 feet tall giving it an aspect ratio of 2:1

The seating distance is 13' 6" from the screen

This is the **Front Elevation**.

You can see the 3 Main Left, Center and Right speakers shown by the shaded tall rectangles.



There are 4 18" subwoofers mounted on the front wall between the main speakers.



You can see the in-wall surround speakers from this photo taken during construction.



There are two additional 18" subwoofers mounted on the rear wall.

This constitutes the full 11.6.6 Dolby Atmos Speaker Setup.

John went to CEDIA and several high-end Audio Shows over the past few years to select the best equipment for each component in his Home Theater.

Following is the breakdown of his equipment list.

PROJECTOR

The most important component of any home theater is the projector. Nothing beats the experience of a wall to wall vivid, sharp and bright picture.

John chose the [Barco Residential Njord Cinemascope Projector](#).

This 3-chip DLP Projector has a 5K Ultra HD resolution of 5,120 x 2,160 pixels. It is a super bright projector capable of 9,000 lumens which far exceeds the 2,000 lumens of brightness you get in a typical movie theater. This is what makes the picture pop. John was running his Barco projector at 60% peak brightness.

This is one of the finest projectors available within a residential setting. It is not cheap. It retails for [\\$104,999](#).

No flat screen TV can match the panoramic experience of watching a picture that extends wall to wall and fills your peripheral vision.

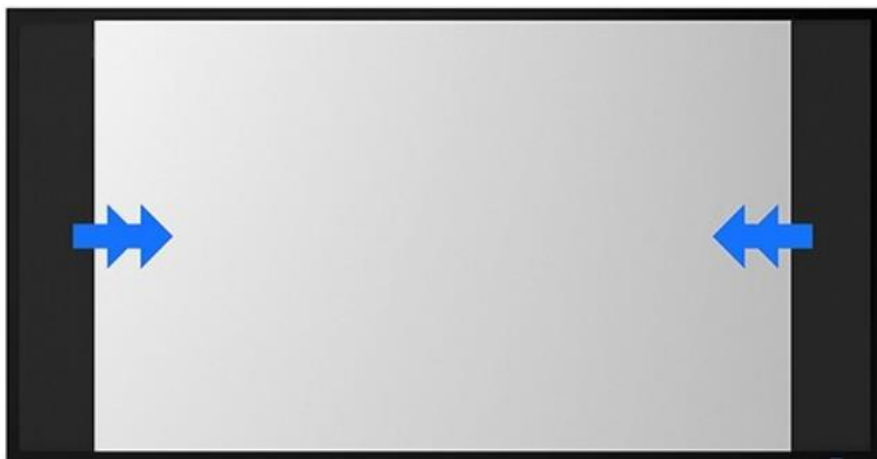
The Barco Njord Cinemascope projector was the star of the show.

SCREEN

When it comes to purchasing a screen for your Home Theater, the premium brand is Stewart Filmscreen.

John is using the [Stewart VistaScope EVO screen](#).

This comes with a Continuously Variable Masking control system that allows you to select an aspect ratio from 2.40: 1 to 1.33:1 while maintaining constant image height.



The VistaScope EVO retails for \$32,000.

MAIN SPEAKERS

Left, Center, Right

Wisdom Audio [Sage Cinema Line 2](#)



These In-Wall Line Source speakers featuring 24" Planar Magnetic drivers and 6 high output woofers retail for \$6,000 each.

My first exposure to Wisdom Audio speakers was at CES several years ago. They had set up a demo room at the Venetian Towers. The entire front wall was covered with a black curtain so no one could see the actual speakers. They ran several audio demos that sounded stunning. Our jaws dropped when they told us that we were listening to in-wall speakers. I thought they rivaled regular audiophile speakers.

That was a memorable experience that left me feeling that Wisdom Audio would conquer the Home Theater space. There was nothing comparable that delivered this level of performance.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that John selected this brand for all his 11 bed channels.

SURROUND SPEAKERS

There are 8 Wisdom Audio, [Insight L8i](#) Surround Speakers.

Left Wide, Right Wide

Left Surround, Right Surround

Left Surround 2, Right Surround 2

Left Rear, Right Rear



Each In-Wall Line Source speaker comes with 2-24" Planer Magnetic Drivers with 8 high-output woofers.

They retail for \$6,800 each

John has them angled exactly to face the listener's position.



These line source speakers are designed to minimize the effect of floor and ceiling reflections.

DOLBY HEIGHT SPEAKERS

There are 6 Wisdom Audio, [Sage iCS7a](#) In-Ceiling speakers.

Left Top Front, Right Top Front
Left Top Middle, Right Top Middle
Left Top Rear, Right Top Rear



Each of these In-Ceiling speakers houses a 6-Bar Planar Magnetic driver and a High Output woofer.

They retail for [\\$3,600](#) each.

SUBWOOFERS

To round up the 11 bed channels and 6 height speakers, John has installed 6 Procella Audio [P18Si](#) High output subwoofers.



These 18" subwoofers can reach down to 18Hz while delivering an impressive 127dB of sound pressure level.

They retail for \$4,000 each.

Total cost of all 23 speakers = (\$6,000 x 3) + (\$8,160 x 8) + (\$3,600 x 6) + (\$4,000 x 6)

= \$18,000 + \$65,280 + \$21,600 + \$24,000

= **\$128,880**

AUDIO PROCESSOR

If you want to experience the pinnacle of multi-channel audio processing there is only one brand that leaves the competition in the dust.

It is no surprise that John picked the Trinnov AL32-1632 [Altitude32](#) Reference Immersive Audio Processor.



It boasts impressive [specs](#) and handles up to 34 discrete channels of object based decoding. This device handles all variants of the Dolby, DTS and PCM codecs and works with Roon.

The AL32-1632 configuration retails for [\\$42,000](#).

John spent many hours tweaking every speaker until he achieved perfection. When he sent his room response measurements to the folks at Trinnov they were surprised at the level of accuracy. They themselves could not believe the results.

I listened at different spots in the room. I was surprised how there were no standing waves at the very edge of the back wall. How was that even possible?

John explained this audio magic was the result of the [Wave Forming](#) Technology from Trinnov.

One can spend hours going through the Digital Room Correction algorithms from Trinnov.

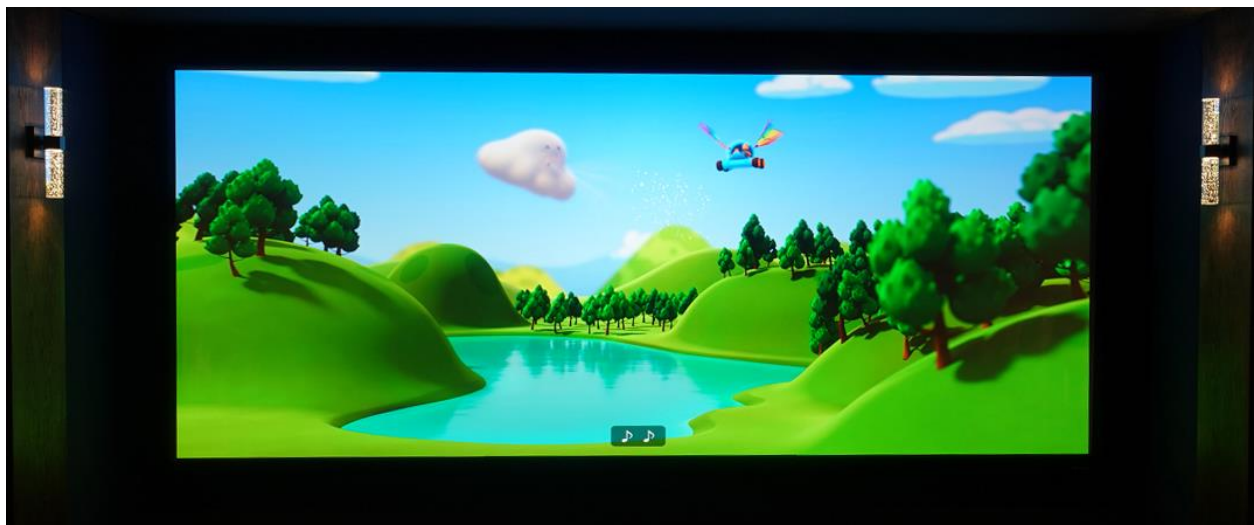
VIDEO PROCESSOR

All video processing is handled by a [madVR Envy Extreme MK2](#).



This video processor offers best-in-class 4K HDR dynamic tone mapping, 4K upscaling along with instant aspect ratio management. Even though the Stewart VistaScope can handle motorized masking for changing aspect ratios, John is using the madVR for this task which utilizes the full screen.

I captured an example of how the madVR was using non-linear stretching to expand a 16:9 source to completely fill the 14' x 7' screen with a 2:1 aspect ratio.



This industry reference video processor retails for [\\$15,999](#) and earned rave [reviews](#).

MOVIE PLAYER

A Kaleidescape [Stato V Movie Player](#) provides 4K Dolby Vision, HDR10 and SDR playback with lossless audio decoding of Dolby Atmos, DTS:X, Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio.

The internal storage can fit about 10 reference quality 4K movies in standalone mode.



This is the only digital movie player that offers lossless audio with full reference video quality. It retails for [\\$3995](#).

One can rent movies for \$7.95 and watch them unlimited number of times within a 48 hour window. It takes about 10 minutes to download a full-length movie with a high-speed internet connection.

This makes 4K Blu-ray players obsolete and has earned glowing [reviews](#).

MOVIE SERVER

A Kaleidescape [Terra Prime 8TB Movie Server](#) is used for additional storage.



This retails for [\\$4,995](#).

Up to 4 Terra Prime Movie Servers can be connected to a Strato V Movie Player.
It should be noted that Kaleidescape movies are typically 10 times larger than streamer movies.

AMPLIFICATION

The 3 Front Main Speakers are powered by two [Wisdom Audio SA-3](#) amps. Each amp provides 3 channels of amplification at 500 Watt per channel.

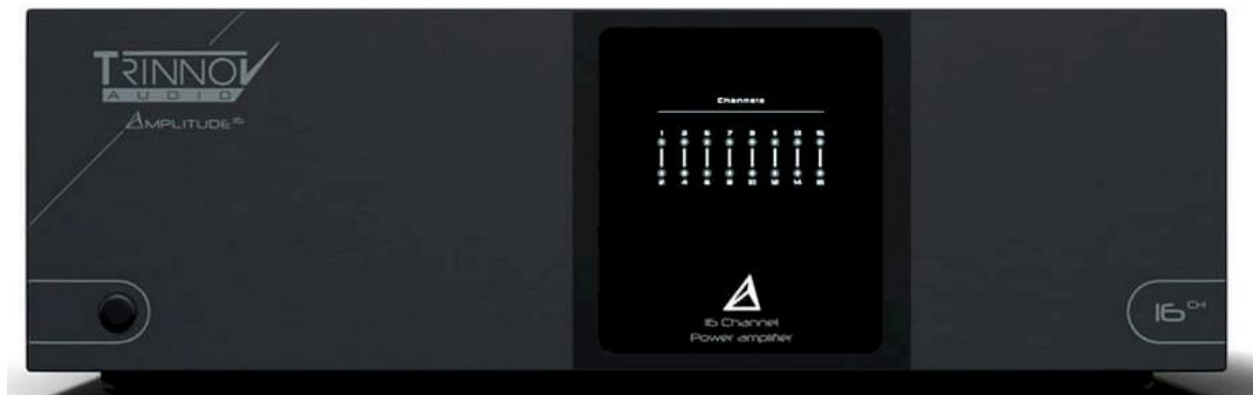


Each Main Speaker needs 2 channels of amplification for the Active Crossovers. This is the reason for using two of these SA-3 Amps which retails for [\\$7,560](#) each.

The 8 Surround Speakers and 6 Height Speakers are powered by a Trinnov Audio [Amplitude 16](#) amplifier.

This beefy 16-channel power amp can provide 2,800 Watts of continuous power with all 16 channels driven at less than 0.1% THD.

Maximum peak power is 6080 Watts with all 16 channels driven with 1% THD+N.



You can read the reviews at [Sound&Vision](#) and [Home Cinema Choice](#)

This Class D multi-channel amp costs \$12,500.

The 6 Subwoofers are powered by 2 [Procella Audio DA08-DSP](#) amps.



This single rack unit delivers 4 channels of Class D amplification of 800 Watts per channel into 8 ohms. It comes with 40 presets and is designed to mate with the massive Procella subs.

They cost \$5,300 each.

The total cost of amplification to drive the 23 speakers = $(\$7,560 \times 2) + \$12,500 + (\$5,300 \times 2)$
= \$38,220

This brings the hardware cost of the Projector, Screen Speakers and Electronics to **\$370,208**.

John spent an additional \$20,000 on room treatment. He used 12-AWG oxygen free copper wires for hooking up all the speakers.

All the Automation and Lighting is by [Crestron Control](#) and [DMF Lighting](#).



John can replicate this home theater setup as a turnkey project for **\$525,000** which includes the cost of construction and installation fees.

There are no exposed electronics in the room. The back wall has a small rectangular cut out covered by extra clear museum glass to accommodate the projector lens.



All the equipment is neatly stacked in the narrow room behind the back wall.

John built a sturdy scaffolding to hold up the 105lb Barco Projector.



The top shelf of the equipment rack houses the fan directly above the Kaleidescape Strato V Movie Player and Terra Prime Movie Server.



The madVR Envy Extreme MK2 and Trinnov AL32-1632 Altitude 32 preamp/processor are mounted below.



Below the Trinnov Altitude 32 processor is the Trinnov Amplitude 16 power amp.



At the very bottom you see the two Procella Audio DA08-DSP power amps and the three Wisdom Audio SA-3 power amps.



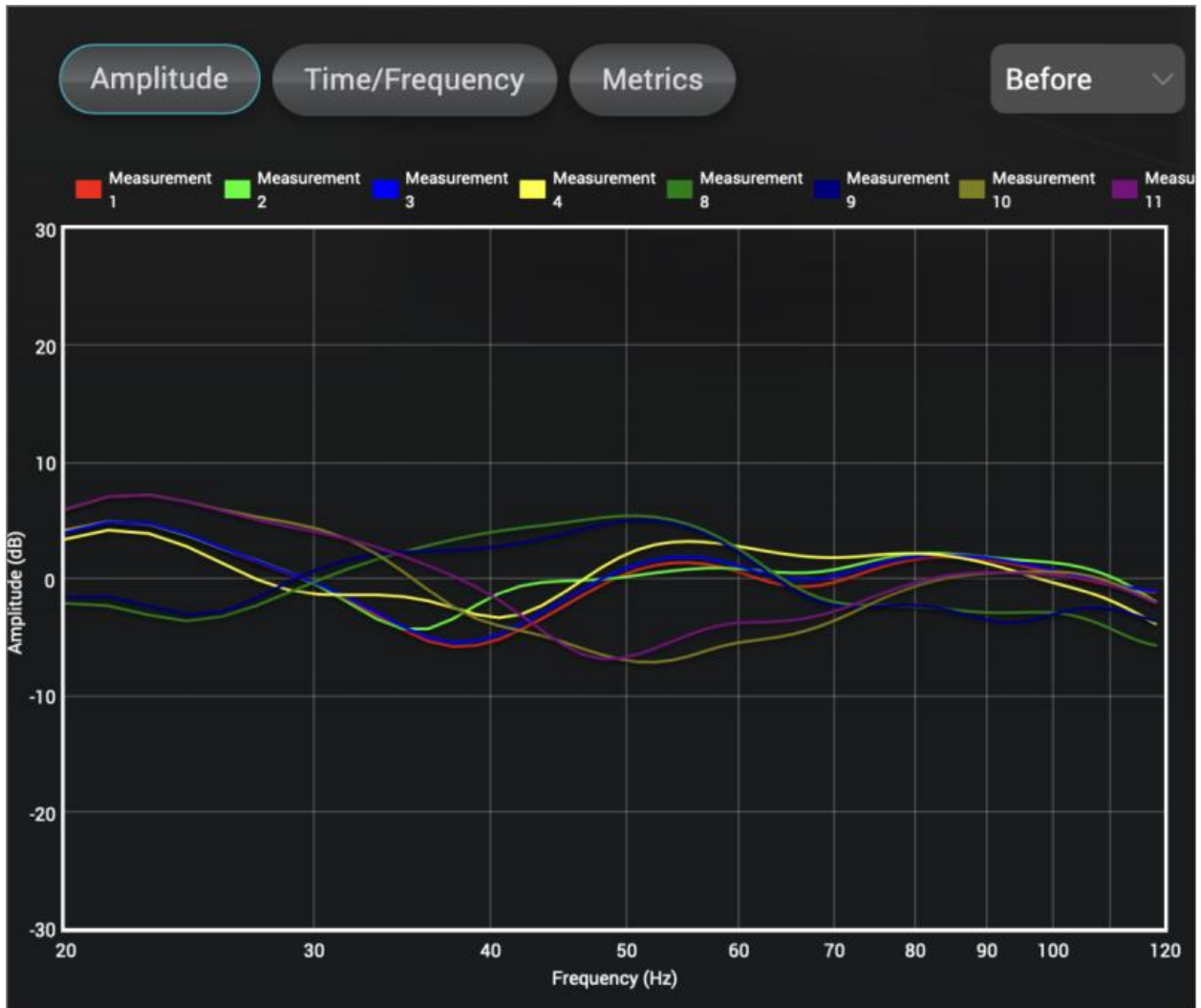
This is an impressive stack of state of the art electronics.

This project is truly a work of passion. It represents the pinnacle of technological advancement in Home Theater. If this is presented at CEDIA it would qualify for the best of show award.

MEASUREMENTS

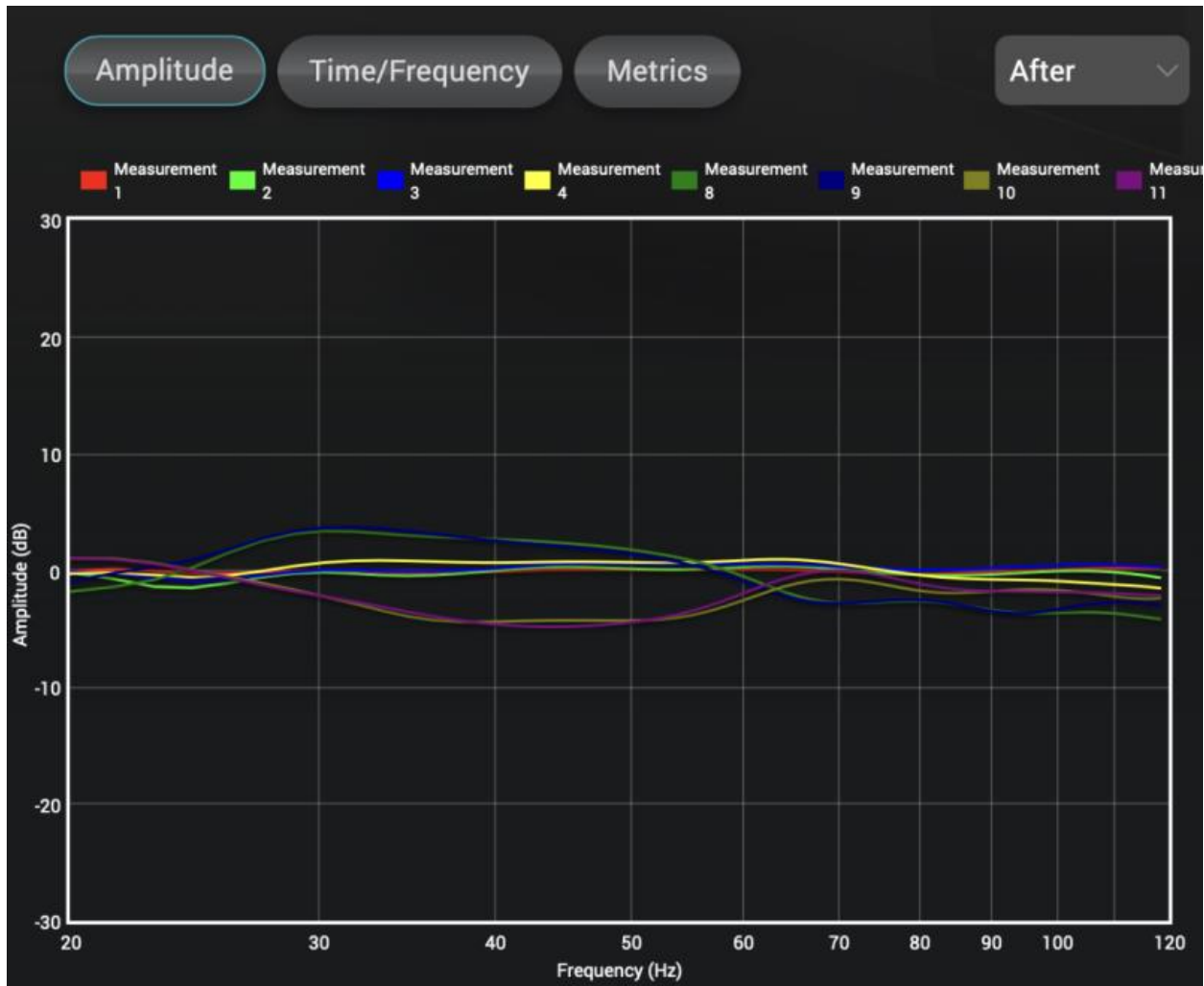
What was remarkable about this room was the uniform bass response no matter where you were seated. This was the result of implementing the patented WaveForming technology by Trinnov Audio.

Here is the Bass Frequency Response Curve from 20Hz to 120Hz *before* Room Correction.



Each colored line represents the bass response measured at the 8 different listening positions. You can see they vary a lot.

Compare this to the Bass Response curves taken *after* Room Correction. Notice, how they converge and flatten out.



If you wish to learn about the science behind this WaveForming Technology, watch the first 40 minutes of this webinar [Redefining Low Frequency Reproduction](#) by Trinnov Audio.



All measurements were taken with this highly sensitive \$800 microphone provided by Trinnov.



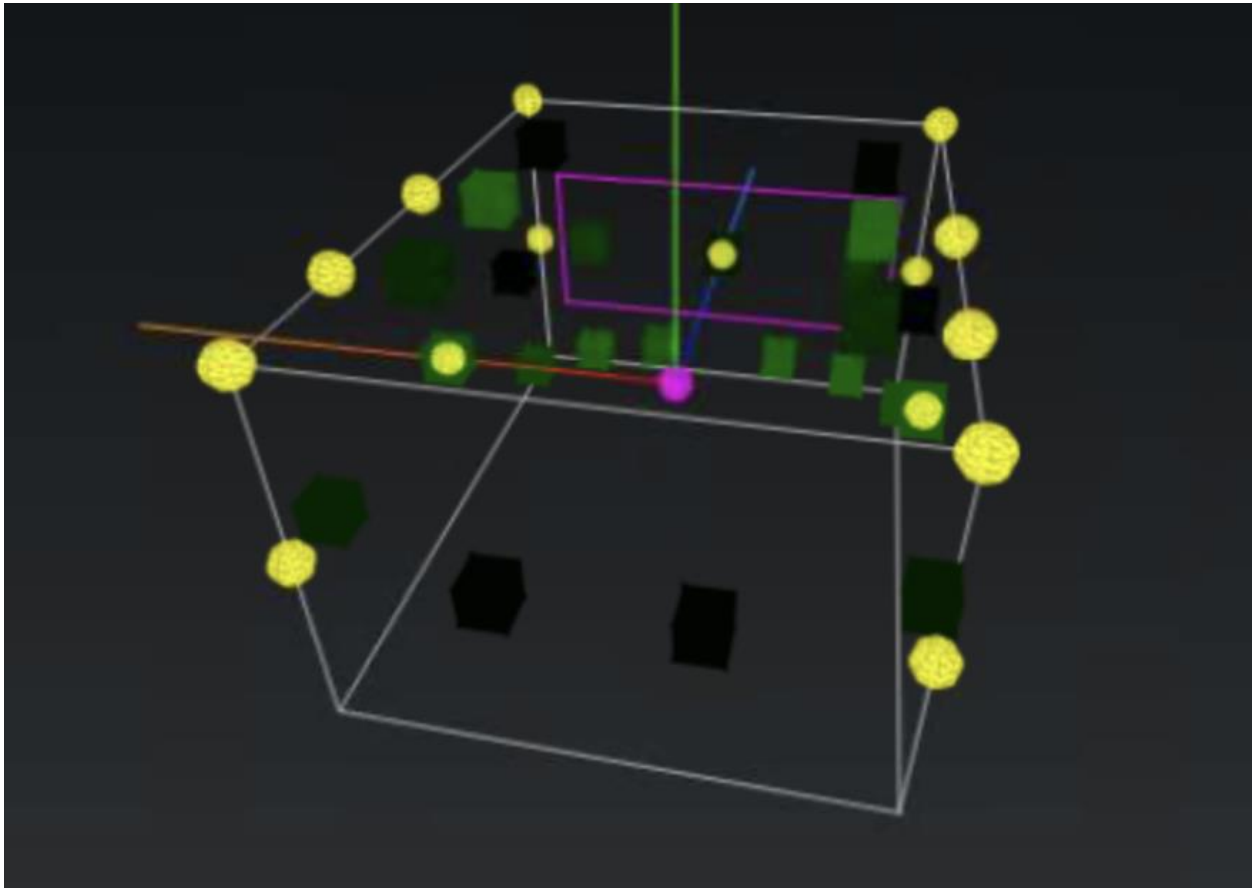
Trinnov provides the software to visually track how the sound effects move across the room as you play any multi-channel audio source.

Here is a screenshot.



The purple rectangle is the screen on the front wall.
The speaker locations around the room are shown in black.

The speakers that are active at any moment in time are shown in green.



Here is short 30 second [MP4 video](#) clip showing you how the individual speakers turn on as the sound source traverses across the 3D space.

A SCALED DOWN BUILD

It is easy to scale down John's Reference Home Theater Build while still maintaining a high level of performance. John shared a specific example.

Projector

[Sony VPL-XW6000ES](#) Native 4K HDR 2,500 Lumens 3-panel Laser Projector
\$12,000

Screen

Stewart Fixed Frame 2.35:1 Studio Tech 100 10' wide screen.
\$6,500

Main Speakers (L, C, R)

[Wisdom Audio Insight L8i](#), Line Source 48" Planer Magnetic Hybrid Speakers
\$6,800 each

Surround Speakers (4)

[Wisdom Audio Insight P2i](#) Planer Magnetic Hybrid Speakers
\$1,800 each

Height Speakers (4)

[Wisdom Audio Insight ICI6](#) In-Ceiling Speakers
\$1,250 each

Subwoofers (2)

[JL Audio E-Sub e112-ASH](#) 12" powered Sub
\$2,500 each

Video Processor

[MadVR Labs Envy Core](#)
\$5,995

Audio Processor

[Marantz AV10](#) 15.4 Channel 8K Dolby Atmos AV Processor
\$7,000

Power Amp

[Marantz AMP10](#) 16 Channel Power Amp with 200 W/Ch
\$7,000

This 7.4.2 Home Theater can be built for a modest **\$76,095**.

For someone who wants to start with a basic home theater there are plenty of options.

One could buy this [85" Samsung 4K UN85CU800](#) TV for \$1,398 and then add the [Nakamichi Shockwafe Ultra 9.2.4](#) channel Soundbar with dual 10" subs and 4 surround speakers for \$1400. Both are affordable, popular products with high customer ratings.

If there is not enough room to place 4 surround speakers, one can buy the [SENNHEISER AMBEO Soundbar](#) for \$2,499. I watched a demo of this when it was first unveiled at CES. They had this prototype Soundbar on a table below the TV as well as a discrete 5.1 surround sound setup with Neumann KH series speakers. They alternated between the two systems to show how close the Ambeo Soundbar came to mimicking the immersive sound from the 5 speakers.

From a basic \$2,798 setup to a full blown \$500,000 reference system, there is plenty of room to experiment and mix and match components to satisfy the needs within any given budget.

This is where the expertise of John becomes invaluable. John can recommend the components that will squeeze out the best performance at any given budget.

You can reach John at (602) 796-4127 or via email john@cinematichomeav.com

2 Channel HiFi Demo

In the latter half of the event John demoed several of his 2-channel audiophile setups.

This was a 2-channel setup with an 85" Sony Bravia 4K TV flanked by Wisdom Audio Speakers. On the floor you see a pair of [Fyne Audio Vintage Ten](#) speakers.



On the top of the rack you see a [PrimaLuna EVO 300](#) Hybrid Integrated Amp on the far left followed by an [Estoteric N-01XD](#) SE DAC, a [PrimaLuna EVO 400 Tube Preamp](#) and a second PrimaLuna EVO 300 Hybrid Integrated Amp.

This was another HiFi setup featuring a pair of [Fyne Audio F502ST](#) speakers in gloss black.



On the top of the equipment rack rests an [Advanced Paris A12 Classic](#) Integrated amp next to the [Vertere DG-1S](#) Turntable.

On the middle rack you see a [HiFi Rose RS520](#) Wireless Network Streamer & Integrated Amp. On the bottom rack you see an [Advance Paris X-CD9](#) CD Player next to a PrimaLuna EVO 300 Tube Integrated Amp.



This was yet another 2-channel audio setup featuring a pair of [Fyne Audio F1-8S](#) floor standing speakers.



On the top of the rack you see a [HiFi Rose RS150B](#) High Performance Network Streamer placed in the middle between the [Advanced Paris X-A600](#) Stereo Amp to the left and the [Advance Paris X-P1200](#) Preamp to the right.



This was John's Reference 2-Channel Audio Room featuring the [Estelon X Diamond MK11](#) speakers in Blue Cobalt and the taller [Estelon Forza](#) in Violet Night.



They were powered by this massive [Vitus MP-S201](#) mk1 stereo Power Amp delivering 500 Watts per channel of pure Class A amplification.



All associated electronics were neatly stacked in the adjacent equipment rack.



Resting on the top of the rack was the [Vertere RG-1 Reference Groove](#) turntable.



Sitting next to this you see an [Acoustic Signature Tornado NEO](#) Turntable.



So how does John's Reference 2-Channel Audio System with the Estelon Forza speakers and VitusMP-S201 mk1 power amp sound?

John had 6 demo tracks cued up to showcase the transparency, resolution, smoothness, extreme dynamics and bass control of his system.

The first demo track was "**Man in the Long Back Coat**" by Bob Dylan. This is a classic audiophile favorite that everybody is familiar with. Dylan's deep raspy voice was reproduced with striking clarity and presence that seemed to float in the center of the room while the background instruments filled up the surrounding 3D space.

The 2nd demo track was "**Bones Shake**" by Hazlett. This was an excellent example of reproducing a Male Voice with layers of harmonizing vocals.

The 3rd demo track was "**Our Roots Run Deep**" by Dominique Fils-Aime. I could clearly follow the bass line. The bass was tuned just right.

The 4th demo track was "**The Curse**" by Agnes Obel. This was a good example of reproducing all the nuances of a Female Voice.

The 5th demo track was "**Keith Don't Go**" by Nils Logfren. This is another audiophile favorite. The guitar transients and harmonics were handled with definition and authority. The live presentation was so real you could almost reach out and touch the guitarist.

The 6th demo track was "**Make Us Stronger**" by Ghost Rider. This is a torture test for most speakers. Audiophiles hesitate to play this track at high SPL levels lest it damages their speaker. The Forzas not only aced the test in flying colors, it actually sprang to life justifying its \$190,950 price tag.

The Forzas effortlessly reproduced every synth note while the Vitus MP-S201 Power Amp (\$125,000) never ran out of juice keeping up with the endless pumping of the deep Synth Bass track. The bass notes from the Forzas were tight and controlled. It put me in a trance.

This track delighted the audience. It showed what this system is capable of. The music was loud, yet I felt no ear fatigue because of the lack of any distortion. This is a true test of any Hi-Fi system.

John's Reference 2-Channel system with all the associated electronics costs **\$524,042**.

How does this compare to the 2-Channel audio demo we heard last August during the Dan D'Agostino Master Audio Systems Tour?

Bill McKeigan was using pair of [Wilson Audio Alexx V](#) speakers powered by D'Agostino [Momentum M400 MxV](#) monoblock power amps with a [Momentum C2 Preamplifier](#) fitted with the Digital Streaming Module.

Although different demo tracks were played, I felt Bill's setup had the edge when it came to extreme dynamics, bass impact and ultimate transparency.

However, the sleek and statuesque Forza Towers beat the Wilson's by a mile when it came to aesthetics.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

All of us had an unforgettable experience watching the movie clips at John's Reference Home Theater. It gave us a glimpse of what is possible to build on a \$500,000 budget. The synergy between the components that John was able to achieve pushes the envelope of current Home Theater Technology.

The BARCO projector was the star of the show. The all immersive surround sound from the full array of Wisdom Speakers was breathtaking.

We feel fortunate to have such a unique showroom in Arizona.

All of this is the result of John's life-long passion. He along with his brother-in-law Joel manages Cinematic Home A/V. John's sister was the hostess for the evening. This is a family business.

John was kind enough to raffle a few of his unused equipment. We had a few lucky winners!



We each got to take home a 9-page color brochure that John made for us describing every system and the individual components at his showroom.

If you missed this event or just want to have John's expert advice on setting up your home theater or 2-channel audio system please feel free to drop by or call. He is a powerhouse of knowledge and super friendly.

On behalf of the Arizona Audio Video Club members, I would like to thank John and his family for hosting this special event.

This may well turn out to become the Event of the Year for 2025!