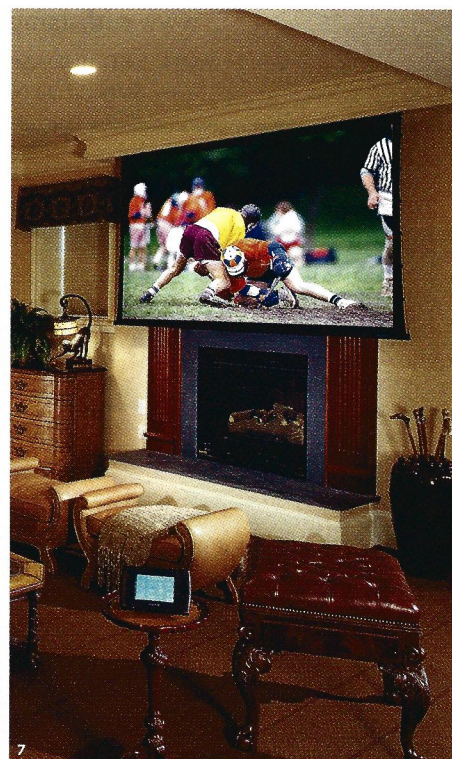


HIGH-TECH LIVING

Media Rooms Bring Out the Best in Technology



In contrast to home theaters, which are primarily designed for watching movies, media rooms are "smart" centers for watching television, listening to music, surfing the internet, playing video games, burning CDs, and – best of all – relaxing in a comfortable environment with the world at your fingertips. "Our main concern in designing a media room is ease of use," says John Simone, President of Home Tech. "Each media room we design is unique because each space is different and each client has a different purpose for the room."

Creating a media room isn't as simple as plugging in a large-screen television, adding a speaker system and hooking up a DVD player. To create a successful media room, designers measure the room's dimensions

and determine which equipment will deliver the best experience. They often hire architects to upgrade the existing electrical, heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) units, reconfigure walls and doors and add insulation to both protect the equipment from extreme temperatures and sound proof the room. Instead of being a showroom for expensive gadgetry, your media room should deliver a pleasurable audio-visual experience. If it doesn't leave you breathless with your heart pounding as your body pulses from the bass, then the room is not achieving its maximum performance.

"The total environment is what determines the success of a design," explains Rob Dzedzy, President of Media Rooms, Inc. "Media rooms

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depend on the relationship of all components." Everything - even the lighting systems - should reflect the owner's lifestyle and activities, such as one person reading while another one is watching television.

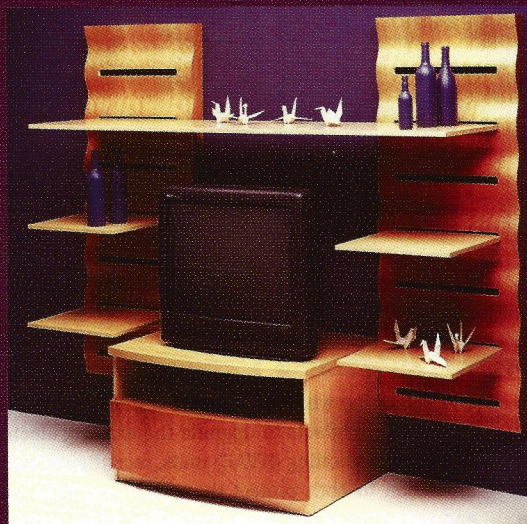
A well-calibrated home media experience is not achieved by magic, but by science. Every component in the room has its own installation concern. (For a 50-inch TV screen, seats should be 100 inches away, etc.) From the arrangement of the satellite speakers to the DVD and CD players to carpeting on the floors, fabrics on the walls, foam boards on the ceilings and bookshelves in the rear, everything needs to be in its correct place to achieve the best sound and visual quality. A design professional can help achieve a layout that will deliver perfect performance.

Today's most sophisticated media room is often programmed to operate from a single keypad, which powers everything from the CD player to the lights, shades, heating/air conditioning and security system. The system allows you to play a different CD at different volume levels in each room of the house, as well as perform many other functions. Designers are now adding other special amenities like Jacuzzis (to provide a relaxing experience while watching a DVD). A custom-built cabinet unit featuring three television screens gives the option of viewing three programs at once or one program on three screens. As Simone notes, many of his clients are intimidated by high-tech gadgetry. They want the performance without the complexity. To resolve this, both he and Dzedzy will program - in addition to the centralized keypad - a single remote control that will enable their client to operate their DVD and CD players, television, speakers, lighting and blinds with relative ease.

How much does this cost, you ask? For a modest media room, expect to pay around \$15,000. For a full-scale, high-tech media room, be prepared to pay up to \$250,000 - and sometimes well beyond. But remember, even though final cost depends on the equipment and furniture, electrical and HVAC upgrades, structural alterations, interior design, lighting requirements and acoustical concerns, the most important factors in creating a media room are your preferred media activities, your room's spatial dimensions and your lifestyle. After these three are incorporated into the design, you then will be able to realize the high-tech playroom of your dreams. - Joseph Dennis Kelly II

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