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# seeing and hearing



is believing

## high-tech electronics move to the next level

by Matthew T. Patton



Custom-designed, free-standing media cabinet of birds-eye maple with mahogany accents. Includes a 52-inch wide-screen high-definition television with surround sound, designed and fabricated by Media Rooms.

Gone are the days when families gathered around a tiny tube flickering with a distorted image of Ed Sullivan introducing the latest musical craze, followed by a hollow or "tinny" band cranking out its verse. Of course, no one knew back then—only a few decades ago—that electronics would evolve into a full-fledged multimedia experience. >>>



And the changes have been radical. The latest buzzwords of "clarity," "high definition" and "high performance" are fitting terms associated with high-tech entertainment systems—both in video and audio.

#### OPTIONS AROUND

With all of the high-tech entertainment systems now available, it's easy to become overwhelmed with the options. If you're looking to upgrade your television experience, Rob Dzedzy, president and owner of Media Rooms, Inc., explains that the "main new technology, which is becoming more popular by the day, is flat panel TV." Flat panel displays are not new, however, he says. "As an example, Fujitsu has been working on plasma TV for nearly 40 years and it started to produce plasmas in 1993," Dzedzy says, adding that within the last year or two, prices of plasma televisions have decreased while their popularity has increased.

Why? A driving force for new TV technology is the increasing availability of high definition programming. "At one time hi-def was available only via satellite, which limited its audience. Now, hi-def is available from cable and everyone can enjoy its amazingly sharp picture," Dzedzy says.

One such technology offering an amazing viewing experience is a flat panel display, currently available in two technologies, both which boast outstanding picture quality. "LCD flat panel displays are available in sizes ranging from 13 inches diagonal to 37 inches diagonal," Dzedzy says. LCD technology has been around for a long time, for example, in calculators and watches, but has only come to the TV arena in the last few years.

"The second technology, plasma televisions, are available in 42 inch, 50 inch, 55 inch and 63 inch. LCD

displays are starting to be available in larger sizes, such as 42 inch, but, for at least the near future, they are twice (or more) the cost of a comparable size plasma," Dzedzy adds. His company specializes in home theater, lighting control, home systems integration and automation, whole house audio systems, telephone systems, custom entertainment cabinetry and home theater interiors.

#### WIRING MADE ... EASY?

When asked how to simplify wiring, Dzedzy replied, "That's a difficult one. If anything, pre-wire has become more complex."

Years ago, he explains, a standard television needed a power connection (plugged into an outlet) and a cable connection.

"Now a high-definition signal is routed to the TV via a component connection. A component connection consists of three individual shielded coax wires. To make the situation even more complex, as an example, most flat panel displays are strictly 'monitors' only. This means they have no built-in tuner (to receive the channels) or no built-in audio system. A hi-definition system requires many more wires than a traditional TV."

#### WILY WIRES

To streamline the necessity for a multitude of wires, many wire manufacturers have developed what they call "bundled cable" or "structured wire." These products have several different types of wire (for different uses) bundled together within one cover.

But where are we headed? At some point in the future, Dzedzy predicts wireless technology will become more prevalent. "There are many manufacturers working on improvements to wireless technology, but as for now it has several limitations, namely a lack of standardization and the fact that it

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only works well in very short distances."

In a truly integrated home automation system, all electronic systems are interconnected. "The Jetson's home of the future is a reality," Dzedzy says. "Most automated houses have several touch screens located throughout the home. From a single touch screen the homeowner can set lighting scenes, turn on the whole house music system, start their favorite

music playing, open or close motorized shades, arm the security system and turn on the waterfall at the pool.

"Integrated touch panels can also display the image of the camera located at the front door and show you if the garage doors are open or closed. There is truly no limit to what can be automated. As homes become larger and our lives become more hectic, home automation adds convenience and helps us simplify

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