

# ELECTRONIC HOUSE

## Columns Add Space for the Electronics Equipment

With nowhere else to put their basement



FINALIST: Best Home Theater \$50,000-  
\$100,000

**theater components, homeowners tuck it inside custom-built columns.**

Jun. 30, 2009 — by [Lisa Montgomery](#)

Not everyone likes to see their audio and video equipment blinking and buzzing away in the corner. Nor do some people admire speakers set out on the floor. The owners of this renovated basement wanted absolutely nothing but the screen to be seen in their theater, posing an interesting challenge to the home theater designers at [Media Rooms Inc.](#) in West Chester, Penn.

"One wall was the foundation with very little space between it and the new drywall, while the other three walls abutted living spaces, like an exercise room and a game room," explains Media Rooms Inc. president and owner Rob Dzedzy. This design afforded no space to put in a built-in equipment rack. Dzedzy could have tucked the equipment into a bar at the back of the room, but that idea was nixed do to wiring issues. There were also no available closets. The solution: Design a few decorative columns for the theater and put the components and speakers there.

Fortunately for the homeowners, Media Design Inc. operates its own custom cabinet shop, so the columns could be designed and sized precisely for the equipment that would go inside.

A total of eight columns were constructed. Two were placed on either side of the 119-inch diagonal Draper screen; three went on each side wall. The two front columns function as storage for the A/V components, DVDs, and other media. A hinged door opens to reveal the contents inside, but usually stays closed to preserve the room aesthetic. The remaining six columns were designed to provide just enough space for built-in speakers. "We didn't want to take up any more floor space than was necessary," Dzedzy explains.



Two of the 4-inch deep structures conceal a Triad surround-sound speaker. The speakers fire through red acoustical fabric. The audio setup is complemented by a decorative sconce light at the positioned at the top of each column. The front three Triad speakers and subwoofer were stashed inside a proscenium below the screen that was also built by Media Rooms Inc.

#### **Do You Want to Splurge or Save?**

The owners of this Pennsylvania house splurged on an \$84,000 home theater, complete with customized decor and fine finishings. If you don't have that kind of budget, though, we have some tips from Dzedzy on what some of the cost breakdown was, and how you can save.

#### **SPLURGE/BREAKDOWN**

**Building It Out.** Electronics design and installation firm Media Rooms constructed the room and installed the audio/video systems. The first phase was to "build out" the space, which included framing the walls, building the riser for the second row of chairs, installing the pocket entrance door, insulating the walls and ceiling, wiring for electricity and audio/video, installing the drywall, painting the room and installing the acoustical drop ceiling. The build-out portion of the project was \$12,000.

**Intricate Designs.** Media Rooms designed the interior and built all of the elements in its in-house cabinet shop. The company fabricated and installed the decorative columns, acoustical wall panels and molding, proscenium, decorative curtains near the screen, and installed the nine reclining chairs, wall sconces and carpet. This phase of the project cost \$45,500.

**Big-time Projection and Surround.** The installation and calibration of the audio/video components included a concealed Triad 7.1 surround-sound speaker system, a Sim2 D80E 1080p video projector, a Denon AVR-4308 audio/video receiver, Blu-ray disc player, surge protection and a universal remote control. The audio/video equipment and installation came to \$27,000.

#### **SAVE**

**Are You a Videophile?** The Sim2 projector in this theater is a high-quality 1080p DLP projector, costing \$9,500. Great home theater projectors are in the \$9,000 to \$20,000-plus range, though you shouldn't have to spend that much unless you are a serious videophile. There are many very good video projectors in the \$5,000 price range.

**Save on Seating.** The nine Pullman Redondo recliners cost \$14,000. Entry level chairs could save \$3,000 to \$5,000, though there be a sacrifice in comfort and in matching the color to the decor.

**Different Acoustic Treatment.** Eliminating the acoustical panels would save about \$3,000, though the result could be an unpleasant sound from harsher audio reflections. Adding heavy drapes, thick carpets and padded furniture are lower-cost ways to the soften sound in a room.

**Rethinking Speakers/Columns.** Eliminating the decorative columns would result in an \$8,000 to \$12,000 savings. In-wall or on-wall speakers could be used instead of mounting the speakers inside the columns.

**Take It Down a Notch.** To reduce the overall cost of the system, consider using a less powerful, less feature-laden surround receiver or downgrading the speaker system from a high-quality audiophile manufacturer.

[Click here to view additional photos of the basement theater remodel.](#)

#### **System Design and Installation**

Media Rooms, Inc.

West Chester, PA

<http://www.mediaroomsinc.com/>

**Equipment**

Sim2 D80E 1080p high-def DLP projector  
Peerless projector mount  
Draper Onyx HDTV 119-inch diagonal screen  
Panamax PowerMax in-wall protection kit  
Denon AVR-4308CI A/V receiver  
Samsung BD-P1500 1080p Blu-ray player  
Triad In-Room Bronze left, center and right speakers  
Triad InRoom Silver PowerSub subwoofer  
Triad OnWall Bronze surround-sound speakers (2)  
Triad InWallBronze 4 surround-sound rear speakers (2)  
TrippLite HT7300PC surge protection system  
Universal Remote Control MX-900 remote  
Lutron Grafik Eye 3-zone lighting system  
Pullman Redondo recliners (9)

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