

HIGH TECH

Home Entertainment

Written by Shetye Cypher

Katy Families Enjoy the Latest Technology in Media Rooms and Home Theater Systems

Movies provide an entertaining escape from reality, and families often flock to theaters to catch the latest flick. But a popular trend in Katy households is transforming the way local families enjoy the movie experience. Rather than leaving their house, Katyites are turning their living rooms or spare rooms into home theaters or media rooms to bring that same enjoyment home. "It's a new house and we designed the media room into the house. We primarily watch movies and some special TV shows in there," says Katy resident Chris Hester.

Designed to Fit Your Needs

Continuing advances in technology have created more choices for set-ups and allow for a more simple system or an elaborate one. "They (consumers) have to know about their own interests regarding the content they like to watch or listen to for entertainment. A real media room is designed for the movie watching experience. However, large screen sizes are also appreciated when watching sports and TV shows. Finally, a media room or home theater room



can also be utilized as a music room if you are a music enthusiast," says Prashant Mody, President of Modia, a premium audio/visual dealer with several locations in the Houston area.

Chris and Audrey Hester's Media Room

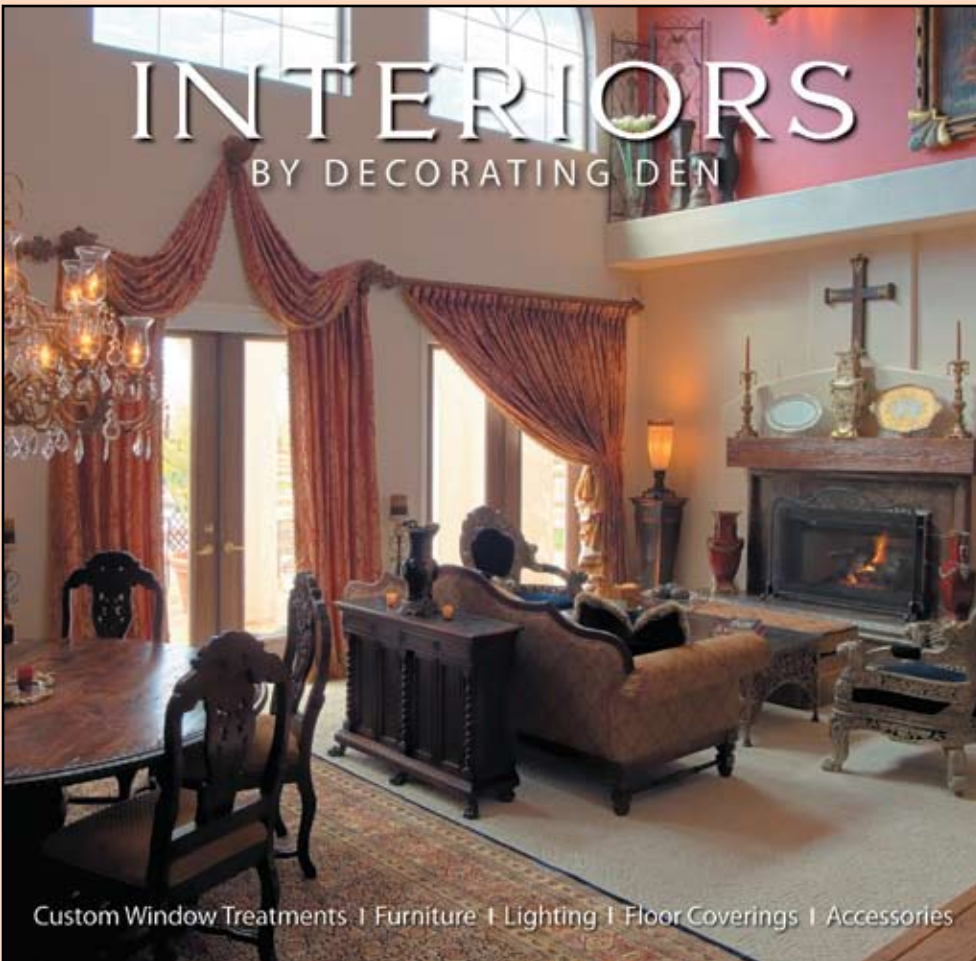


Update Your Television

The first step to creating your media room is upgrading to a High Definition (HD) television if you haven't already. Both cable and satellite offer an increasing number of HD channels. And while you're at it, take a look at HDTVs with liquid crystal display (LCD) monitors. LCDs have sharp, bright pictures and allow for a flat screen.

Must Haves for Your Media Room

Next, you need to keep in mind the room dimensions when choosing screen size and seating. "The typical setup we install today consists of a 100-to-110-inch screen size, a front projector and two rows of seating. One row or both rows consist of recliner seats with cup holders for drinks," says Mody. Angel Herrera, owner of Residential A/V in Katy, suggests getting a customized remote control for your set up. He also advises to sound proof your room, although that will increase



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the total cost. If you don't want to spend the bucks for soundproofing, he says to invest in insulated speaker boxes, which will push all the sound directly out, rather than in all directions.

Home Movie Theaters

With new and cutting edge equipment always arriving, you may have to make some real choices on what experience you expect out of your media room. "New and cutting edge in the world of home theater and media rooms is the screen ratio, which resembles real movie screen ratio," says Mody. Movies shown in the theater have a 2:35 aspect ratio. This means for every one inch in height, there are 2.35 inches of width. Viewing the movie this way is exactly the way the director intended it to be seen. The typical HDTV resolution is 16:9, which means wide-angle views are lost. "Today, there are front view projectors available to display 2:35 aspect ratio so you can see the details of the movie as intended by



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The Hester's home theatre boasts state-of-the-art equipment

The High Cost of High Tech

Herrera says media rooms can run from \$20,000 to \$30,000 for basic installations, to upwards of \$100,000 for all the gadgets. Some of the optional features available, according to Herrera, are:

- Custom remotes
- Fiber optic lighting
- Soundproofing
- Custom cabinetry to hide your components

How to Choose a Professional

Finally, when looking for a retailer or installer, according to Mody, always look for these qualifications: CEDIA level 1 and CEDIA level 2 certification, CEDIA Home Theater Designer certification, Imagine Science Foundation certification, and Home Audio Acoustics certification. Herrera also recommends asking what brands they use. His professional preferences include JVC projectors, Yamaha receivers, Stewart Filmscreens, Phillips remotes, and Denon DVD and Blu-ray players. Doing your own research will ensure that your media room is just right for your family's entertainment needs. **KM**

the director. Most of the movies we rent or buy today come with an optional 2:35 version as well as standard 16:9 version. Watching a movie in 2:35 resolution in your own home is a whole other experience," states Mody.

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