



Modern Day

MEDIA ROOMS

Sugar Land Families Create Custom Theater Rooms

Written by Julia Temlyn Prindle
Photography by Suzi Issa

Back in 1930, William Randolph Hearst built a home theater in his California home. Back then, movies were an after-dinner treat for celebrities who visited Hearst. A movie would start the moment Hearst sank into his chair; a private phone sat next to him, in case there were any problems with the sound.

Now, seventy years later, the concept of a home theater is accessible for lots of average folks. In fact, many Sugar Land builders are even showcasing media rooms as the next big thing in their model homes.

How Do People Use A Media Room?

“Many people use their media rooms as a place to have friends over, especially for watching their favorite sports. It is definitely a movie room as well and many families enjoy spending time

together here. Kids also love media rooms for playing their video games,” says local builder Kurt Freeman. He describes a media room as an overall great spot for entertaining friends and family, without having to go to crowded movie theaters.

“My clients are most interested in an isolated area where they can get away from all noise and sit back and relax,” says Freeman. Living rooms are typically loud because the open spaces allow sound to be distributed, whereas media rooms trap all of the sound, only allowing it to bounce off four walls. Noise from the nearby kitchen and light streaming in the living room windows can add up to a less-than-perfect picture. Media rooms are totally dark, resulting in no glare on the screen. “Media rooms are designed to be isolated in a place where the least amount of traffic is, so that homeowners can have a retreat to watch movies and television apart from all distractions.”



Flat screen TVs can be mounted on just about any surface.

Where to Begin?

First, Felix Martinez of Residential Audio/Video warns against allowing electricians or alarm people to set up the audio for your entire house. "There's a lot of different technology out there, and they only pre-wire for standard equipment. Make sure they know what they're talking about before they go touching anything related to the media room."

Some important components include a projector, a high-quality screen, a receiver, a touch-screen remote control, and reclining chairs; wall panels are also necessary to bounce and reflect the sound. One of the latest technologies is chairs that move with the movie. A special communication system allows the chair to move according to the movie that's playing. The chair will vibrate, swerve slightly, and make you feel like part of the movie.

Both Martinez and Freeman agree that the size of the media room should be in proportion to the size of your television/projector. A large screen in a small room will cause you to be too close to the picture, similar to sitting in the front row at the theater. They also recommend carpeting, which absorbs the sound, instead of hardwood floors or tile, which can cause echoing.

"If you have a really large media room, several 12-inch platforms are really nice. You can put in stadium seating or rows of couches so that you don't have to battle to look around someone's head," says Freeman. "You typically want a ceiling taller than 8-feet so you can mount your television on the wall, or have plenty of room for projection. Usually 10-12 feet is good, but this depends on size of the TV and how many platforms you have."

In Martinez's experience customers prefer tower speakers, preferably mountable, rather than recessed in the ceiling. He also discourages all-front speakers, which can take away from the appearance of the room, but instead suggests hiding equipment in a different room, closet, or even the back of the room.

Choosing the Gadgets

The hottest brands right now include Sony, Yamaha, and Denon. Employees at Tweeter recommend that people stick with name brands for better quality, and steer clear of brand name appliance makers. Such names may make great appliances, but media components are not necessarily their specialty, just a current money maker.

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So how much can you expect to pay for a media room? Martinez estimates about \$35-\$40,000 for standard equipment, but says that the cost can go as high as \$250,000.

However, like other technology over the years, the components that make up a media room are becoming more attainable for the average homeowner as the prices continue to drop.

If you are looking for the quality sound that your surround sound is designed to bring, and the quality of picture you want from your television, a media room is a must. What's the use in spending thousands of dollars on entertainment equipment, only to use it in an inefficient space? Think about it. **SLM**

JULIA TEMLYN PRINDLE is a Sugar Land writer, editor, and proofreader. She is the owner of Temlyn Writing Services.



Big screen TVs with surround systems are a must in media rooms



The Jensen family's Star Wars themed Room

Top Must-Have Items For Your Media Rooms

- Projector
- Wall panels
- Surround sound
- Carpeting
- High-quality screen
- Platforms for "stadium seating"
- Receiver
- Touch-screen remote control
- High ceiling
- Reclining chairs
- Tower speakers

More Media Room Options

- Wet bar
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