

## Family Rooms Turn into Media Meccas as Technology Takes Over

### Movie Time

By Jeffrey Lee

Source: BUILDING PRODUCTS Magazine

Publication date: 2008-11-12

When builder Paul Lichter invites potential clients to visit projects, showing off home theater features has become as important to the tour as kitchens and master baths.

"Since we do high-end work, we always have to show [the client] the fancy stuff," says the owner of Baltimore-area J. Paul Builders. "A/V equipment is an important element in high-end projects."

For Lichter and other builders, however, the home theater is increasingly not even a theater at all—it's a media room, a multipurpose room, or even a family room. "At the end of the day, I don't think people want to go sit in a theater," Lichter says. "People are more apt to do very comfortable room settings."

As the price of audiovisual equipment plummets, and as technology plays more of a role in Americans' everyday lives, homeowners are clamoring for the latest home theater equipment. They are incorporating flat-screen TVs, projectors, surround sound, and movie or gaming units into central living areas instead of dedicated media rooms, turning their den or great room into an entertainment hub.

"It's definitely become more popular than the dedicated theater room," says Sean Weiner, president of Baltimore-based electronic systems contractor Starr Systems Design. Many clients have a combined gaming/TV/movie and socializing room, he says. "You get the most bang for your buck if it's in the area where you spend most of your time."

### Visual Value

Prices for home theater equipment have fallen as competition among manufacturers has increased and newer technologies have popped up to fill the premium price point. "The fortunate thing is that prices have never been more reasonable," says Josh Christian, marketing vice president for Los Angeles-based electronic systems contractor DSI Entertainment. "It's opened up this opportunity to a wider selection of incomes."

For example, the price of LCD or plasma flat-screen televisions—usually the bare minimum requirement for a home entertainment system—have dropped dramatically, he says. Five years ago many of his clients were squeaking by to afford a 50-inch television, but the same dollar value now buys the TV and "a big part of a sound system as well." Clients also can enjoy a full-featured surround-sound receiver for \$600, he adds, whereas a comparable receiver would have been \$1,000 in the past.

### Web Extra



**Tributaries Cable.** The HDA140 one-in/four-out HDMI distribution amplifier allows a single source to simultaneously supply video and digital audio to as many as four rooms, zones, systems, or screens, each as far away as 100 feet. The product supports the full range of associated features over all of its connections to accommodate the latest, highest-performance television and projector designs. 800-521-1596.

[www.tributariescable.com](http://www.tributariescable.com).