

BLUEPRINTS

DESIGNING THE ULTIMATE



BOULDER COUNTY
**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Make some popcorn, pour a cool beverage, dim the lights and watch a movie in the comfort of your home. Transforming a room into a home theater provides entertainment for family and friends. See page 4B.

Home Theater

Transforming an empty unused room such as the basement (see basement below) into a home theater can provide countless hours of entertainment for family and friends.



COURTESY CUSTOM QUALITY THEATERS

Home movies

Right mix of lights, sound, television, furniture creates ultimate theater experience

BY SUZAN K. HEGLIN

Business Report Correspondent

When Rob Dreher was courting his future wife, a typical date was curling up under a blanket and watching a movie.

They got married, she went into education, and he started Boulder-based Custom Quality Construction LLC. Their pleasure became the focus of their business.

“When we’d do a basement finish, people were asking us about home theaters. I’ve always been a huge fan of home theaters,” Dreher said.

The company decided to create its Custom Quality Theaters business segment.

And there is a growing number of companies that can turn that seldom-used room into a place where family and friends can hang out for hours at a time.

It takes some special talents and nuances to turn a basement into a home theater and

losing that “basementy” feel. One is creating the proper lighting.

“The lighting has a huge effect on the overall feel,” he said. It’s also an opportunity to add theme and style.

Another trick to lose the basement blues is to change the color scheme. Carpeting and warm colors can change the overall ambience. Carpeting also can help with the acoustics.

It took years for Dreher to finish his own home theater, but now it is his showroom. “We have people come over, and they say, ‘I thought I knew what a home theater was, but this is really something.’”

Dreher sometimes works with Howard Fischer, owner of Boulder-based Absolute Audio Video.

Fisher does the electronics side. The options range from rear screen with DLP, LCD or CRT, or a flat screen that can be either a plasma or LCD. The screen may be motorized — where it comes down from the ceiling — or it may be fixed. Either option can have motorized curtains, which open via remote control.

The remote control can be programmed to make the lights go down, the curtains open and the movie start.

“Companies like us, we program the remote controls for one-button operation,” Fischer said.

Fischer said an important aspect of creating a home theater is wiring.

“Put in as much (wire) as possible so when you get the home theater you don’t say, ‘Oh, I forgot this,’ and break into the wall.”

He said it adds value to the home to be able to say the home is pre-wired for audio, video and

networks. He added that home theaters are perhaps in their heyday right now.

The next step will be even more high tech. “They’re called ... media rooms. You can integrate computers and games. It’s a little move away from theater.”

Terry Olkin is a homeowner with a home theater built by Dreher.

“It’s something I’ve been wanting for a very, very long time,” Olkin said.

Dreher started with some demolition in Olkin’s finished basement. The company then had to wall off the windows and place speakers into the walls.

“My biggest limitation was space. That was my first concern,” Olkin said.

He wanted to seat at least eight and get as big a screen as possible. He put in theater chairs plus a couch facing a 110-inch screen, but the room was a little narrow.

To mitigate the narrowness Dreher made the walls flush.

“It makes it look really very smart,” Olkin said.

Careful attention was paid to make sure the walls were acoustic. “Sound is pretty important to me. I like to feel it,” Olkin said.

The controls also had to be easy to operate. “That was important. My in-laws had to be able to operate it, so it couldn’t be too complicated,” Olkin said.

He made few compromises, and said the process was “surprisingly painless.”

He feels comfortable with the investment. He and his children use the theater several times a week. They also have Super Bowl parties and other events.

“It’s almost like a new way of entertaining,” Dreher said. “You have that fun time at the dinner table then you go to watch a movie, and you talk about it.”



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