



Reality TV

Richard Alan Stokes guides us through perils and pitfalls in the quest for the real home theatre experience.

As with any household project, buying and setting up your own home theatre can be a road fraught with daunting pit stops or memorable moments.

With buying options that range from the home theatre experience packaged in a single box from your local retailer, to multiple boxes delivered by a custom home theatre integration company, it's important to decide on a budget prior to going shopping.

No, it's not all about the equipment, but a large part of a quality movie experience is about using quality equipment. A good guideline is to split the budget 50-50 between picture and sound, and allow a little extra for the humble, but very important, simplified remote control system; a must-have if "F" is for fun and not frustration, when operating your new system.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions.

WHAT SIZE SCREEN SHOULD I BUY?

Bigger is not always better for general viewing, such as movie and television programming, because today's television programming will contain both high definition and non-high definition pictures.

If the screen you select is too big, based on your proposed screen-to-seating distance, then some of the pictures will look out of focus to you. This is especially true if you

are watching a fast action sequence, as in some sports programming or high-speed car chases.

It is a good idea to measure your existing seating distance before you go into the store and if possible, view the various sizes available from that distance while in the store. Keep in mind though that most stores will be displaying high definition pictures on their TVs, so you may want to select a TV size lower than the optimum for your seating distance to get a more pleasing viewing result from non-high definition pictures.

SHOULD I BUY LCD OR PLASMA?

Many non-high definition pictures will be disappointing to view on either TV option, depending on the quality of the picture processing technology within the TV.

LCD is the only way to go if you would like to run either a computer or gaming console as well as watch movies and TV programming. Static images left on plasma displays for a long period will burn into the display.

Plasma has the upper hand on uniform picture quality from all seating positions. This means that there is no detectable difference in quality between viewing the picture from front-on and from the side. The more off-centre you sit from an LCD TV, the greater the picture colour and brightness is compromised.

The picture quality of both technologies is adversely affected by room lighting. →

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●●● SHOULD I INSTALL A SURROUND SOUND SYSTEM?

Some say the soundtrack of a movie is 90 per cent of the experience. Just try switching off the sound during the movie to realize the truth of this statement. A poorly engineered surround sound system will not convey the intended emotion and in some cases will completely destroy it. Whenever possible audition your surround sound equipment options in an environment that is similar to your home environment.



Know when to involve a professional. None of the audio video equipment used in a home theatre comes from the factory set up precisely for your personal space. Experienced setup with precision instrumentation can go a long way to maximizing your home theatre investment and enjoyment.

Richard Alan Stokes runs Finely Tuned, a North Shore-based home theatre setup business. Contact him at finelytuned@telus.net or at 604-619-3323.

MAKE THE COMPARISON
LCDs

SONY KDL40XBR4
NATIVE RESOLUTION : 1080P
CONTRAST RATIO : 2200:1
(ON-SCREEN), 18000:1 (DYNAMIC)
DISPLAY RESOLUTION : 1920 X 1080P
(NATIVE)TUNER : ATSC, CLEAR QAM6
VIDEO PROCESSING : YES (BRAVIA ENGINE™
PRO) MOTIONFLOW™ 120HZ
10-BIT DISPLAY PANEL
PRICE \$2,999.99

SONY KDL40S3000
CONTRAST RATIO : 1600:1
DISPLAY RESOLUTION : 1366 X 768
NATIVE RESOLUTION : 720P
VIDEO PROCESSING : YES (BRAVIA ENGINE™
SYSTEM)
PRICE \$1,799.99

PLASMAs

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