

Introduction To Home Theatre

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Today, for many people, watching a movie is something that takes place at home, not in a movie theatre. The introduction of DVD's and projectors and sound systems targeted at the Home Cinema enthusiast, allows anyone to create a film experience that often beats what is on offer at the local cinema!

When it comes to budgeting for your home theatre, you have some big choices to make. It's possible to spend anything from \$1000 to \$1,000,000 on a home cinema, although typically a good setup will cost no more than \$3000. The key is to budget wisely, don't spend all your money on a Projector while buying cheap speakers or your experience will suffer!

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Typically, a Home Theatre setup will consist of a DVD (or nowadays a Blu-Ray) player, a Home Theatre Amplifier, a set of surround sound speakers, and a Projector and screen. Some people prefer to use an LCD or Plasma TV, but while these are good enough for TV programs, sports or video gaming, nothing less than a proper projector and screen setup will give you the real "big screen" feel you get at a movie theatre. When budgeting, don't forget to include the cost of extras like cables, and seating, and even dedicated lighting and remote controls if you want them.

With the death of HD-DVD, Blu-Ray is now the only hi-def movie format, so the heart of your system should be a good quality Blu-Ray player. There are now plenty to choose from, with prices starting from around \$300, but surprisingly, one of the best Blu-Ray players is the Sony Playstation 3. Not only is it a very capable video games machine, but its video output is of a very high quality, and it benefits from very speedy menus and loading due to its powerful processors.

Your next purchase should be a Home Theatre Amplifier (Amp). Home Theatre amplifiers are different from Stereo Amplifiers, in that they can decode the sound formats used by DVD's and Blu-Rays, and have

outputs for 6, 7, or 8 channels. A good amplifier is a must, look for one that is powerful enough for your room, and can also decode the latest sound formats. Some amplifiers will also switch your video between multiple inputs and outputs, which can be useful if you want to hook up several sources to your projector and speakers.

Speakers should be chosen to match your amplifier. For home cinema the most popular setup is 5.1, where there are 5 main speakers, and 1 "subwoofer", a speaker dedicated to producing very low "booming" sounds. If you want to feel every explosion or gunshot of a film, buy a speaker package with a high-quality subwoofer! The 5 normal speakers are placed around your seating position; one in front, one each to the front left and front right, and one each to the rear left and rear right. 6.1 and 7.1 systems are available with even more speakers, but 5.1 is good enough for most rooms.

Lastly, you will want a projector and screen. The models that are right for you will depend on your room size and the level of ambient light when you watch your films. In general, look for the brightest, most high-contrast model you can afford, and buy a model that produces at least a 720p image, although preferably 1080p.

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