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Choice of options to consider when selecting your audio and video equipment

By **Maria Deschamps**

Several considerations must be taken into account when designing a home theatre. This is an investment that will not only increase the value of your home but also improve your quality of lifestyle. For ideal results, it is important to optimize the sound and visual quality as well as the comfort and aesthetics of your new escape space.

There is a wide choice of options to consider when choosing your audio and video equipment: should you favour a TV screen or a projector? In-wall or freestanding speakers? Where exactly should they be located? How large should the screen be, considering the size of the room? Much attention should be paid to planning the space in and around your home theatre. How can seating be maximized? Should we use a platform at the rear, as in commercial movie theatres? Where can we hide the equipment? Should we build a multi-function room or one dedicated only to video? How do we soundproof the room? Which materials are best to use in a home theatre for optimal sound? All these issues must be addressed before the project starts.

For ideal results, it is important to optimize the sound and visual quality as well as the comfort and aesthetics of your new escape space.

To begin, carefully select the professionals with whom you will work: an audio-video specialist that offers a selection of various equipment and an interior designer with a home theatre experience that will work closely with the audio-video specialist you choose. Meet with these professionals at the beginning of the project and ensure that they communicate with each other throughout the entire project.

As for me, when I design a home theatre, the process always takes place in the same sequence of events. At our first meeting, we discuss the choice of equipment available, the use of available space and the various design options. During this stage, it is very important for me to listen to the customer's requests and intentions. I will also present my portfolio and explain the whole sequence of the project. The audio-video specialist will discuss the different equipment options and describe the advantages of each one. Usually, by the end of the first meeting, the choice of equipment is completed.

'Carefully select the professionals with whom you will work: an audio-video specialist and an interior designer with a home theatre experience.'

The next step is to precisely measure the existing space and discuss the challenges (there are always some, especially in a basement). Then I prepare a preliminary floor plan that shows the placement of the equipment and furniture, as well as the screen location, with all the exact dimensions. I then review the preliminary floor plan with the audio-video specialist and we give free rein to ideas. The specialist then approves the speakers, subwoofers and projector or TV screen placement in the room.

Following this step, I prepare a more detailed design concept including colour and finish proposals. Simultaneously, the audio-video specialist prepares a list of equipment to be purchased, based on the client's needs and budget. We then present the overall concept to the client together for approval.



Once approved, I finalize the construction drawings and custom furniture details and specifications, always working with the audio-video specialist to ensure the right choice of material and accurate specifications. When the drawings are completed, the project is priced, the budget is approved and construction begins. During the building stage, I often visit the worksite to solve any specific problem that may arise and to ensure that the work proceeds according to plans. At the end of the project, I prepare a deficiency list and follow through with the suppliers and contractors to ensure the full completion of the project.



Often my clients ask me, as part of my project manager mandate, to propose contractors and suppliers for their projects. In some cases, they have their own contractors to perform the work but would however like to receive a second or even a third opinion and pricing. Having designed and implemented home theatres for over 15 years now, I have many resources and know a lot of contractors and suppliers.

'Very early in my career, I learned the "6 Ps" and I always apply them to each project: Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.'

I always coordinate the project from start to finish, providing a turnkey service to my clients. Often, a home theatre requires specialized millwork services as there are many intricate details in the design of such a room, and it is important to choose suppliers offering good quality workmanship, high ethics and good service.

Remember that it is very important to plan your project from the beginning to ensure a well-designed concept without any unexpected delays. Very early in my career, I learned the "6 Ps" and I always apply them to each project: "Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance". Everyone has different needs and varying budgets, but if your audio-video and interior design professionals are well experienced, they will be better able to fulfill your wishes. It is therefore important to hire professionals that will not only sell you the hardware you require but also advise you on how to design a space that will satisfy all your needs.

Finally, one last tip: build your space with the intention to escape the everyday stresses of life. We only live once and should live each day to the fullest.

This is the third article on planning and designing a home theatre.

Part 1: [Planning your home theatre](#)

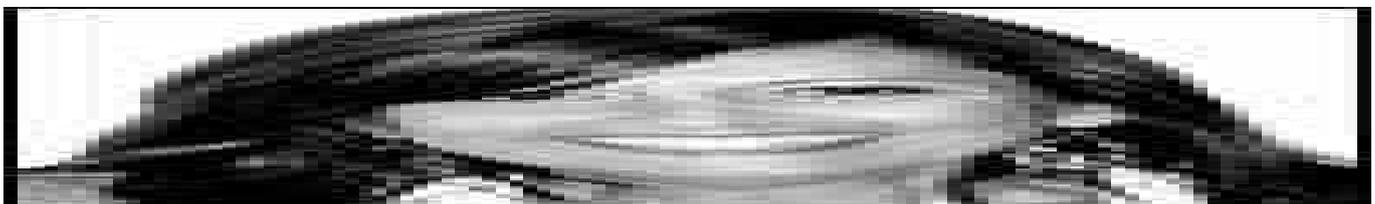
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Images courtesy of Maria Deschamps

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Maria Deschamps is an interior designer who specializes in custom home theatres. She started her career as a retail designer over 30 years ago and has been designing home theatres for over 15 years. She works with audio-video specialists, suppliers and contractors that have the expertise to complete a turn-key project. She can be reached at 514-791-0550 or m@mariadeschamps.com • mariadeschamps.com



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