

Exploring the Home Theater Explosion

Recreating the cinema experience at home

By [Dan Canale](#)

2005 was a disappointing year for the movie studios. While the blockbusters did well, overall attendance was down for the second-year running. One reason for the slump seems to be comfort: more and more people prefer watching films on DVD in their homes rather than schlepping out to the theater (73% according to a recent AP-AOL poll).



To most, staying home to watch a movie means avoiding lines, pricey tickets and snacks, and not having to worry about parking, babysitters or getting stuck behind someone with Lyle Lovett hair. For hardcore home theater enthusiasts however, it often also means getting a better picture and audio experience than at the local megaplex.

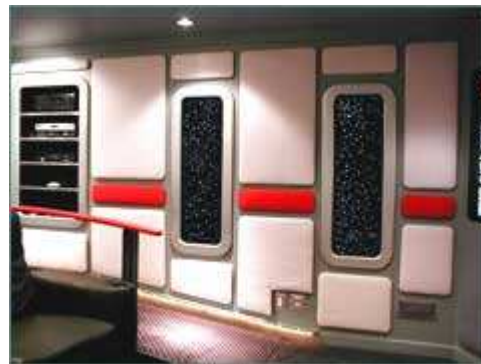
Although B&H carries a full line of home theater projectors, screens, and home theater audio equipment we don't often get the chance to see how that equipment gets used once it's shipped out. For this article we got in touch with a cross-section of home theater owners to get a close-up look at these highly personalized and increasingly common home entertainment spaces.

Home Theater #1 - "The Bridge"

Owner: Gary Reign

Projector: Sony VPL-HS20

(Replaced by the [Sony VPL-HS51](#) and the [Sony VPL-HS51a](#))





Gary Reign's home theater truly goes where no home theater has gone before. Inspired by the bridge of the Starship Enterprise, the theater itself, and not just the movies screened, makes visitors feel like they've truly left their daily lives behind. As Gary puts it, the starship theme makes watching a movie "that much more of an escape from reality."

Built in an empty corner of his basement, the theater's design didn't win immediate approval from Gary's wife; "my wife had doubts about the 'design' I had chosen." She was eventually won over when the theater was finished and even helped pick out the carpet.

The reaction among Gary's friends has been almost exclusively positive; "A few look at me kind of strange, not just because it's a home theater but the whole Star Trek theme thing." Gary says that choice of the theme was not because he's a Star Trek fanatic; "People assume because you've chosen a theme for your theater that you are somehow a zealot! If I had built an art deco themed theater, that wouldn't mean that I am an art deco nut!"

The audio in Gary's theater is powered by a 7.1 channel Yamaha home theater receiver -- visitors get an extra jolt in the pants from Tactile Transducers that Gary has installed under the seats (these are small powered units that turn the low frequency sounds in movies into a seat shaking thrill).

Gary is very happy with his projector; "I love the Sony VPL-HS20. For the money, it throws a fantastic picture". For people considering building their own home theater Gary recommends going with a projector; "a projector is the best way to enjoy movies in my opinion. Nothing provides the real cinema experience like it." In fact, Gary and his family watch most movies at home now, only going out to the movies to see big blockbusters when they're first released.

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