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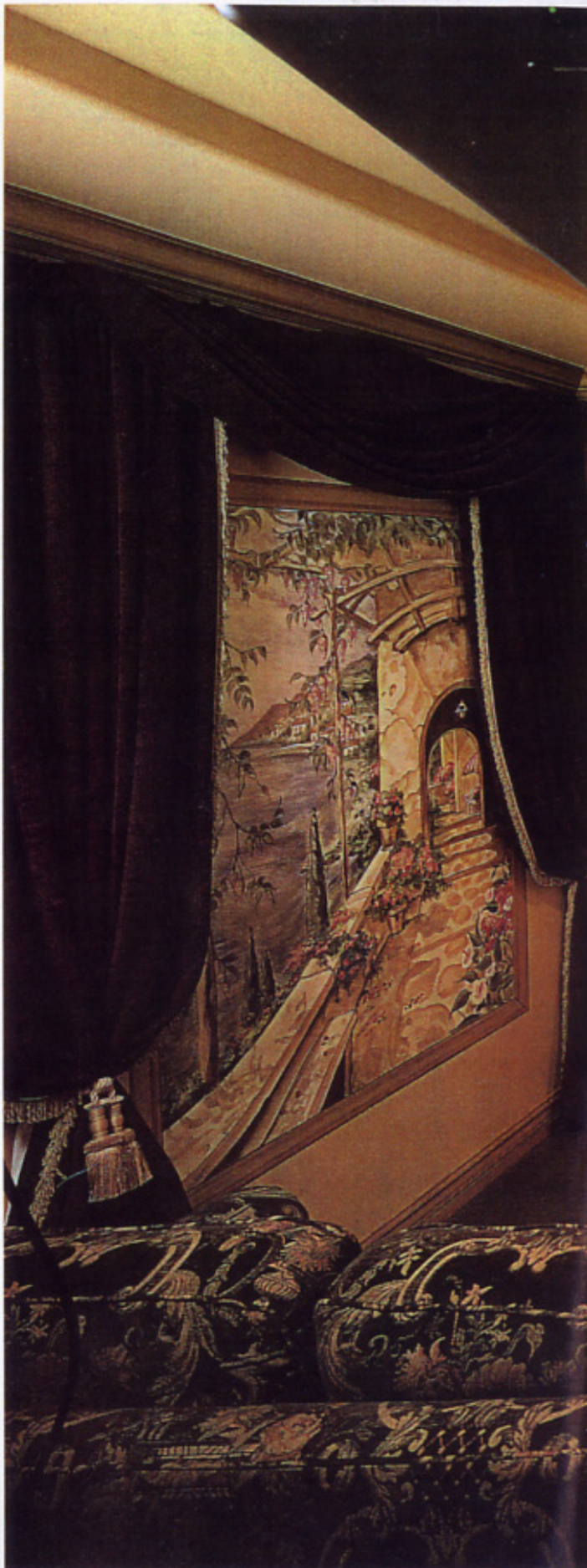
A distinctive movie experience in
a professional family home.

by Hans Christopher Starbuck

Southern California is a haven for movie lovers. Not only do there seem to be more, bigger, and newer theaters across the cities and suburbs, but keep your eyes open and you'll eventually spot a favorite star or the location from some legendary motion picture. As the working capital of the movie business, Los Angeles is home to a wide variety of talented craftsmen who toil behind the scenes among folks who enjoy entertainment as much as the general public for whom they create it. Mark and Leticia Bianchi, owners of the Keep Me Posted post-production facility in Toluca Lake, are two such professionals. Shortly after moving into their Tarzana home, they wanted to create a comfortable yet distinctive atmosphere in which to watch a film with a client; share a weekly "movie night" with children Nico, Marino, and Cristian; or simply enjoy a romantic flick with each other.

The Bianchis met George Bliss and father Robert Sr. of Bliss Enterprises on the preview night of their next-door neighbors' dedicated theater. Wowed by the room and an enthusiastic recommendation, Mark scheduled Bliss Enterprises for a walk-through

The Bianchi home theater provides a warm and elegant feeling with style and comfort.

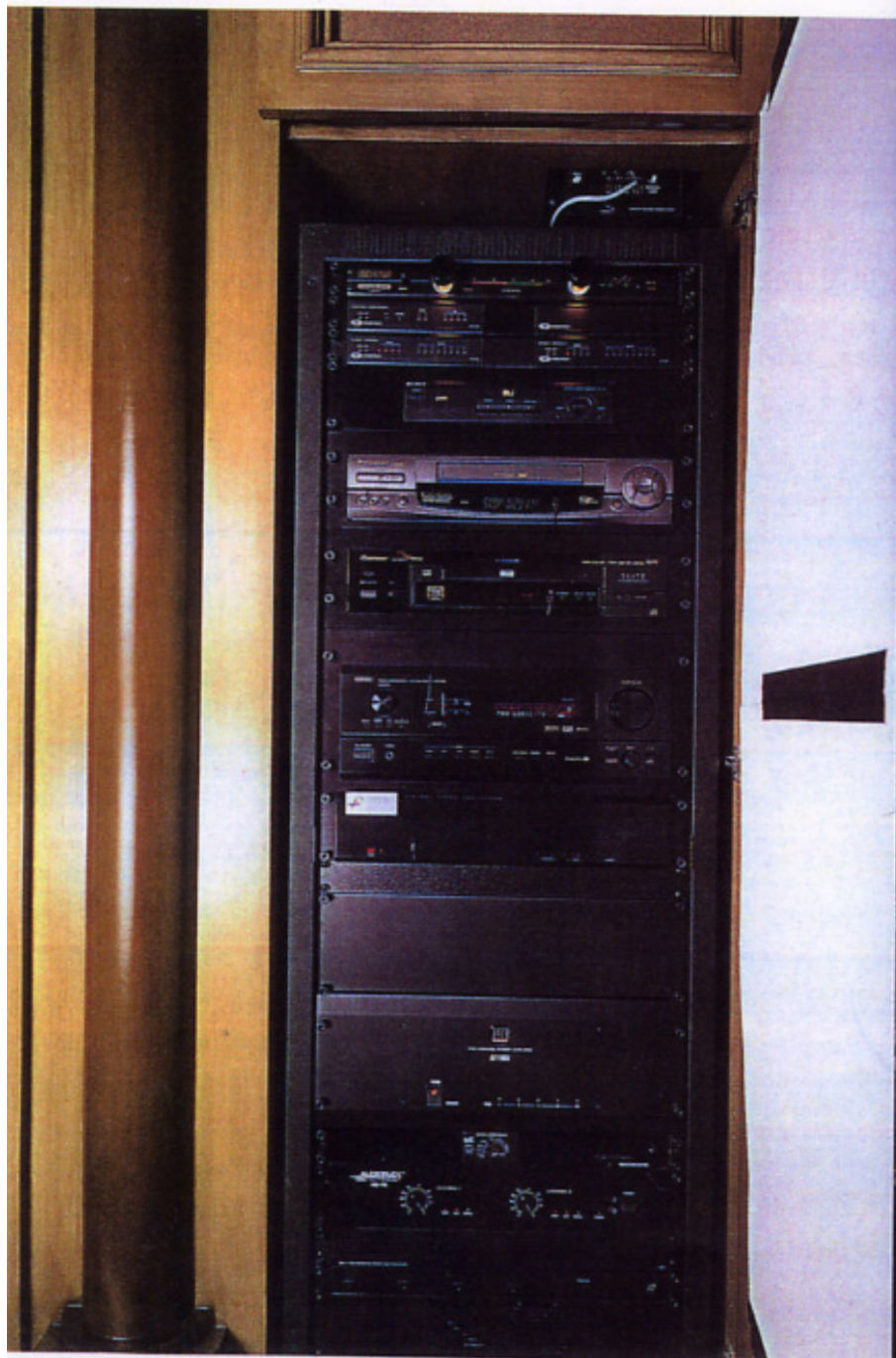


Photography by Adam Crocker



of his home the next day. Being in the business, Mark knew that a home theater of this caliber was something he would love to have, but he had three big questions. First, he didn't have any existing rooms in the house as large as his neighbors', so would they be able to create an ideal room for his theater? Second, could a comparably impressive room be built within his budget? And third, could it all be done in only 17 weeks, in time for the Bianchis' company party? Bliss Enterprises' answer to all three was a resounding "Yes!" The Oak Park, California, company was

Below: Concealed within the custom cabinetry of the theater resides a beautiful array of components. **Right:** When the 60-inch perforated Stewart screen is lifted, a "daily television" direct-view display is revealed.









founded in 1996 by Robert Bliss Jr. The family-owned custom home theater business is a team effort. Robert Bliss Sr. oversees daily operations, acoustical engineering, and custom-made furniture. George Bliss is responsible for all Crestron programming, CAD renderings, system integration, system setup, and provides ongoing customer support. Greg Spetter is the lead technician with Duane Frantz assisting in prewire and trim out. Kimberly Thornton's expertise lies in interior design, Ed Davis builds the custom cabinetry, and associate Alex DeLaguarique is a master of wall upholstery and acoustical treatments, while the talents of William Phelps are applied to the projector setup. Since October of 1998, Robert Bliss Jr. has been relied upon as a consultant for product knowledge. Why? He's the Western Regional Sales Manager for Faroudja Labs.

Although Bliss Enterprises follows the traditional installer's role in building theaters with designers and architects, they have

The Sony G70 8-inch CRT projector is a non-obtrusive addition to the feel of the room. All seating is plush and inviting.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- RF Systems VS-B video sensors (6)
- Middle Atlantic ERK-3520 35-space rack
- Middle Atlantic CBS-ERK-20 caster base
- Middle Atlantic RSH-4A custom rack shelf (5)
- Middle Atlantic rack spaces (4)
- Lutron GRXMR2AWH three-zone lighting controller
- Niles Audio APC-2 current sensor
- Niles Audio GCBP banana plugs (9)
- Xantech 028300 visible emitter (7)
- Canare custom theater wiring package
- Sony G70 8-inch CRT projector
- Progressive Products PBM 70L G70 projector mount
- Progressive Products PP 6/2 ceiling mount plate (2)
- Faroudja DVP2200 line multiplier for 7- and 8-inch CRTs
- Canare LV5CSB 300 megahertz RGB cable (50 feet)
- Stewart Filmscreen 45- by 80-inch THX micro-perf motorized screen
- Stewart Filmscreen 12V Interface
- Denon AVR-3300 Dolby Digital/DTS audio preamplifier
- ATI 1505 150Wx5 amplifier
- Pioneer Elite DV-05 DVD player
- Panasonic PVS9670 S-VHS VCR
- M&K S150 THX LCR speakers (3)
- M&K SS150 THX surrounds (2)
- M&K MX350 THX subwoofer (2)
- Clark Synthesis TST 229F tactile sound transducer (4)
- Audioplex HD-75 two-channel amplifier
- Niles Audio HDL-4 speaker selector
- Niles Audio H4-RMP rack mount kit
- Cinepro Powerlight 1800 power conditioner with rack mount
- Crestron STS touchpanel & CPU
- Crestron STS-C Color touchpanel & CPU
- Crestron ST-10 Digital Input/output device with 8 relays (2)
- Crestron RMK rack mount kit (2)



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positioned themselves in a niche market of the home theater world by specializing in turnkey, THX-certified dedicated theaters. Give them a room and a budget and they deliver a complete theater down to the last detail. Many installation companies strictly handle the electronics, while an interior decorator or architect will design the room. The problem with that is the integration of the system with the design: Decorators do not like to put speakers, screens, or seating in ideal locations for proper placement and ultimate performance. Since Bliss puts a whole team in-house, they work with the client in designing their dream room and also maintaining THX-and-above criteria.

The room that made the most sense as a starting point in the Bianchi home was 15- by 16-feet with a 5- by 4-foot niche. Expanding the room into the adjacent garage would require major remodeling at a cost of \$30,000. (The second option was

removal of a just-completed bathroom and hallway, which did not make much economic sense.) Bliss' recommendation was to leave the room intact and

add the remodeling budget to the theater. Once the homeowners reviewed the proposed room layout, the installers received the green light to design the room, a task which had to be completed quickly in order to meet the impending deadline.

Working with the homeowners, Robert Bliss and Kimberly Thornton designed a unique room that retained the home's Mediterranean theme, yet had its own distinct personality. The theater was going to be the kids' bonus room, so it still had to maintain a very comfortable and practical side. And since the room is relatively small for a projection system, the size of the screen, the positioning of furniture, and the seating location were critical. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, each of the sofas was designed for maximum available



ABOUT THE INSTALLER

Bliss Enterprises has built rooms in various parts of the country and is in the planning stage on home theaters in Cancun, Mexico, and Molokai, Hawaii. Bliss Enterprises is a small company "with no intention of getting bigger," priding themselves on service and close customer relationships. Their jobs typically start at \$20,000 (for HDTV rear-screen scenarios with THX-approved electronics), on up into six figures for state-of-the-art, turnkey, THX-certified, dedicated rooms.

Every room of the Bianchi home is unique and inviting. A strong Italian décor seems to be the perfect match for digital living.

width and depth. A 7-inch riser was used for the rear section of the room for proper viewing angle of the 45- by 80-inch Stewart screen. The monitor cabinet is the highlight of the room, disguising the equipment in a very efficient form, yet maintaining a "theatrical" look. To open up the room visually and enhance the acoustics, the main wall was hand-painted by Laurie Seinfeld. The Italian landscape scenery adorned with burgundy chenille drapes added the desired effect and performance. To the rear of the room, the existing niche was turned into a storage/loft area, becoming one of the best seats in the room. With a cushion that's close to the size of a small bed, embraced by upholstered walls and extra pillows, this makes for a very cozy spot indeed. The lower cabinet serves double-duty, conveniently housing blankets and video software.

With the room's remodel well underway, it was time for the electronics to be installed. The choice of equipment represented a definite "bang for the buck" solution. The installers were able to deliver an amazing picture at a realistic cost by using a Sony G70 8-inch CRT projector and running a Faroudja DVP2200 line multiplier at 800-by-600. Since the room calculated out to 2,300 square feet, it did not require a tremendous amount of equipment to achieve the THX crite-

ria. The room measured out at 107 decibels—2dB above the prescribed 105dB spec. Bliss Enterprises again focused on value, using a Denon AVR-3300 preamp, with its stylish and easy-to-use front end. That in turn was fed into an ATI 1505 amplifier and finally to the M&K THX S150 LCR speakers with a pair of M&K MX350 subs accompanied by four Clark Synthesis transducers located in the sofas. All of the gear is housed in a Middle Atlantic rack system and wired entirely with Canare LV61 custom cables. The entire system and the Lutron lighting is easily controlled by a Crestron STS color touchpanel.

The job was delivered on time, meeting or exceeding all expectations along the way. And the Bianchis love their home theater, having embraced it both as "a great place to gather as a family and spend quality time together," and as an impressive milieu for their clientele. Up next is an entertainment center for the master bedroom, a project for which they promptly reunited with Bliss Enterprises. "Working with Robert Bliss has made our job so much easier," Leticia says. And working with the right installers has made it possible to bring a little more Hollywood to the outskirts of Los Angeles, and into their home. ■