

HOME
Theater

Premiere Issue!

INTERIORS

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The Pinnacle of Home Theater: 6 Magnificent Installs

Feature Showcase:
A Mission-Style Model Home
for the 21st Century

Test Report:
Proton's New 27-Inch PC-TV Hybrid



The . Egyptian West

A Southern California couple enjoys movies from within the pyramid.

In the world of home

theater design, there are really

only three types of clients. The do-it-

yourselfer is the enthusiast who reads maga-

zines, visits showrooms, attends events, and dreams of

the fantasy system. Then, there's the affluent client whose

buddy has a theater he's envious of and wants to know how quickly one

can be designed and installed in his home. The last type is the ultimate client: a

combination of the previous two. Rodney Lanthier is an example of the ultimate client.

Rodney had been dreaming about his home theater from the day he and his wife Malorie and daughter Aubrey purchased their custom ranch house nestled in the hills of Camarillo, California.

After completing their custom kitchen project, the Lanthiers decided it was time to concentrate on a theater.

After two-and-a-half years of research and self-education, Rodney realized that the fantasy of his ultimate dedicated theater would require professional consultation, so he began the interviewing process. Narrowing their choices down to three



Everything in this 6,036-cubic-foot theater takes on an Egyptian motif—from the furniture to the ceiling.

custom installation companies. Rodney and Malorie were off and running, meeting with the installers and auditioning rooms.

Meeting of the Minds

That's when they met Robert and George Bliss of Bliss Enterprises. "We had our first meeting at a just-completed state-of-the-art reference theater. The room was absolutely spectacular. I immediately challenged Bliss Enterprises with the task of building me a better room. I wanted to be a part of raising the bar on home theater design," Rodney states. The Blisses sat down with the Lanthiers and listened to their requests and questions. They educated them on the room and everything that was involved in building a dedicated theater such as acoustics, electrical requirements, and wiring.

Since Rodney designs network systems, he appreciated the attention to detail and custom cabling service Bliss Enterprises provides. It was now time for a demo. "They played a scene from *The Fifth Element* to demonstrate the quality of the video system and Fleetwood Mac's 'Silver Springs' music video to show off the acoustics. I still remember the chills I got listening to Stevie Nicks hit the high notes. I knew then and there that Bliss Enterprises had what it took to build my dream cinema," says Rodney.

"During the first design meeting, we met at the Lanthiers' residence. A two-foot stack of magazines, blueprints, and a sheet of questions greeted us. This is our favorite kind of client," stated George Bliss. "This is something they'd wanted for a long time and they understood what it would take to deliver a 'reference theater.' We had a blank piece of paper to start with. The only available place in the house that could be designed into a theater without compromise was the attic. With nearly 8,000 cubic feet of open space resting on top of the ranch home, it was a great start-



ing place. A few hurdles would have to be conquered: Major load bearing supports would have to be relocated, a 150-amp electrical sub-panel would have to be installed, additional air conditioning would have to be added, and a stairway would have to be built from the second floor."

Getting Started

The construction of the third floor was a unique challenge. All four walls angled up toward the center of the room like the inside of a pyramid. Good news, since non-parallel walls are the best for acoustics. The Blisses designed the room to take advantage of as much space and have the best acoustical performance possible. After the calculations for primary reflection vectors for the seating were completed, the final room shape was determined. The ceiling would be 10 feet high and the walls would be vertical to 42 inches before the walls would begin their slope. This is the same height that the Lanthiers' cars would be while seated watching a movie. The screen wall was brought in enough to place a 100- by 54-inch screen in the exact location for maximum light output from the projector and viewing from the two rows of seats. The cavity behind the screen was acoustically designed to house the speakers and the LFE subwoofer and to double as a bass trap. To the right of the screen would be the equipment rack with complete access and more-than-adequate ventilation for the large amps. The final interior room volume would be 6,036 cubic feet.

With the remodeling plans done and construction about to start, it was time to decide on the equipment lineup. Rodney's reference was the theater he'd auditioned earlier. He wanted to have the same performance and quality but with the challenge of a room 2.5 times larger. To meet the criteria of having the room THX-certified and maintain uncompromised, multichannel audio in a 6,000-plus-cubic-foot room was going to be a challenge—a challenge Bliss Enterprises was eager to face.



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Triad speakers produce the ideal audio sound pressure for this room size, while a Stewart Filmscreen Ultramatte microperf screen and Faroudja DVP3000 set the benchmark for video performance.

Facing the Challenges

A room this size exceeds the capacity of almost all speakers capable of reproducing the sound pressure needed to maintain the 105-decibel standard set by THX. So Bliss asked his speaker manufacturers for their help. There are a couple of commercial-style horn-loaded systems available that'll meet the sound pressure requirement but at the cost of ear fatigue and a grainy sound. It turns out that Triad was in the final stages of developing their Platinum LCR series speaker. The speaker was specifically designed for this type of use. Through detailed conversation

with the friendly people at Triad, the Lanthiers decided that this would be the ideal speaker, and the first set off the production line could be delivered by the theater's estimated completion date. Bliss Enterprises has installed Triad speakers in several of their rooms and their performance and reputation was all that they needed to order the speakers.

The rest of the surround speakers would include Triad Silvers for side and EX channel and Golds for the rear surrounds. To meet the performance goal, the efficient platinum speakers (91 decibels) needed over 350 watts per speaker. The



Far left: This custom ranch home is nestled in the hills of Camarillo, California.

Below: Even the concession stand was painted with an Egyptian theme.

Cinepro 3K6 MKII at 500 watts per channel would be the perfect solution. These amps have a tremendous amount of headroom and the capacity to deliver the subtlest notes. A Cinepro 2K5 would power the sides and EX channels. As far as the bass and subwoofer were concerned, Bliss decided to go the professional route. It would have taken four conventional home theater-style subs to reproduce the bass of the Cerwin Vega T-36 and the 3,000-watt QSC amp. Since the sub cabinet was going to be behind the scrim wall and space wasn't an issue, it was the perfect choice.

With the speakers decided on, it was time to deal with the video. The new king of 9-inch reference projectors is the Sony G90 mated with the incredible performance of the Faroudja DVP3000 video processor. As soon as it is available, the

EQUIPMENT LIST

- Sony G90 reference CRT projector
- Sony SAT-A50 DSS receiver
- Faroudja DVP3000 line multiplier
- Stewart Filmscreen Ultramatte 150 THX microperf screen
- Lexicon MC-1 audio processor
- Cinepro 3K6 MKII 500-watts by six-channel amplifier
- Cinepro 2K5 350-watts by five-channel amplifier
- Cinepro PowerLight 1800 power conditioner
- Rane DE228 digital equalizer
- Pioneer Elite DV-09 DVD player
- Pioneer CLD-D406 laserdisc player
- Triad Platinum THX LCR speakers
- Triad Inwall Silver THX side channels and EX channel speakers
- Triad Inwall Gold THX rear surrounds
- M&K MX-350 THX subwoofer
- Cerwin Vega T-36/750 subwoofer
- QSC PLX 3002 3,000-watt subwoofer amplifier
- Crestron STS1550C color touchpanel
- Middle Atlantic rack system
- Lutron GRXMR4ABK four-zone lighting controller
- Canare Custom Theater wiring package
- StraightWire custom balanced cables
- Panasonic PV-HD5000 S-VHS HDTV deck



Faroudja DVP3000 will be upgraded to the DVP5000 with the capacity to line double (1080i to 1080p) HDTV. Images are projected onto a Stewart Filmscreen Ultramatte 150 THX microperf screen. Again, this room sets the benchmark for video performance. The Pioneer Elite DV-09 reference DVD player will do most of the work until more HDTV content is available. A Sony TiVo recorder is fed from a Sony SATA55 DSS receiver to view program material.

The Theater's Interior

The main criterion for the room was performance. Everything was built and designed around the best location for each piece of gear. Now that the electronics were decided on and the physical location of everything determined, it was time to design the interior of the theater. Many different concepts were considered, from having a Hollywood theme including a mural of King Kong punching a hole through the ceiling to a neoclassical look. Bliss Enterprises wanted to create a very unique room; at the same time, they didn't want it to appear dated or uncomfortable. They opted to take advantage of the room's sloping walls and decided on an Egyptian flair. Rodney loved the mural on the ceiling in the room he visited and was bound to have one in his own theater.

Bliss Enterprises designs and builds all of its seating. Their signature look is the very comfortable couch/chaise. Formal theater seating becomes very uncomfortable and the look tends to lose its luster in the real world. Sinking into a comfortable couch with your significant other and a blanket is much more like home, states Bliss. With the design, color, and materials decided on and the construction just about finished, it was time to bring in the finish carpenters. Carpenter Terry Turgeon of Windsor Woodworks performed all of the cabinetry work based on pencil sketches done by one of Rodney's artist friends in Hollywood. The screen frame, which also has an Egyptian motif, includes several drawers that store software. A custom cabinet, made to resemble the entrance to an Egyptian temple, was built around the Middle Atlantic equipment rack that includes a door providing easy access to the rear of the equipment rack. A console/coffee table was designed to double as a docking bay for laptop presentations and video game hookup as well as a data input to upload to the Crestron STS system. A 13-foot-wide drink console separates the front and rear seats and a concession stand completes the rear of the room.

Final Touches

With the core of the room in place, it was time to prewire. Bliss Enterprises lead technicians Greg Spetter and Duane Frantz pulled all the cables for the speakers, projector, lighting control, window covers, and control console. Electrician Isaac Ashkanazi finished bringing in the dedicated 150-amp service and installing the can lights and power for the motorized window covers. It was now time for the carpet to be installed. Master wall upholsterer Alex De Laguarigue commenced his work. The left and right walls and door were treated with Dacron

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.



A custom cabinet was built around a Middle Atlantic equipment rack.

for absorptive qualities while the rear wall fabric was applied directly to a soundboard for a diffusive effect. With the room taking on its personality, it was time for artist Laurie Steinfeld to work her magic. Rodney once again sought the assistance of his artist friend Gus Torres from Disney Studios to come up with a few sketches for Laurie to work from. Hieroglyphics were applied to the face of most pieces of furniture while a stone finish was applied to the furniture around the equipment rack and the drink console. The coffee table, drink console, and concession stand were all painted with an Egyptian theme.

Next, it was time for the electronics. Because of the spiraling staircase and the limited access, the equipment rack was built on site. While the projector, screen, and balance of equipment were being installed, George Bliss worked closely with Rodney on the design of the Crestron system. With the furniture delivered and the bugs being taken out of the system, it was decided that the Sony G90 projector case would be faux-painted to match the ceiling before the actual projector was converged.

With the final touches ready to be applied, William Phelps calibrated the projector to perfection. With a powerful software program and spectrum analyzer, Bliss found out that the room was so well designed and acoustically flat that it didn't need one of the two Rane DE228 digital equalizers. One Rane was used for the bass splice

between the Triad platinum speakers. A bass dip in the back left corner was the only weak spot and that was adjusted by adding an M&K MX-350 subwoofer to the rear of the room.

When it was all finished, it was time to audition the room. Amazing! "The Triad Platinum LCR is the best speaker we've ever used. The synergy between the Triad speakers, the Lexicon MC-1, and the Cinepro amps is second to none," said Bliss.

Rodney concluded, "For the home theater enthusiast, there's no better satisfaction than having your dream room completed without any nightmares. I strongly encourage the use of top installers like Bliss Enterprises. The depth of knowledge, professionalism, and sheer joy to work with them made the experience of building my dream theater a very sweet one." ■