



The Hardware of Life

Audio Visual Product Choices

In previous articles, we discussed the type of products you can add for each facet of Automation, that will give you the benefit of a Smart Home. This article, focuses on Audio Visual Products for all areas within and outside the home.

Dedicated Home Theatres \$\$\$\$\$

For those who dare to enjoy movies in the privacy of their own home when only a dedicated room will do, here are some choices when selecting Theatre Hardware.



Screen Size and Type - These can be drop down, fixed or perforated if you have speakers in behind them. The size of the screen will depend on the size of the room, the location and placement of the projector. You can purchase front or rear projection materials. Only the best material will give you the best backdrop. Accept nothing less than Stewart Filmscreen.



Projection Methods - No matter the choice from a high end Runco or the value of Dreamvision projection units, you definitely need to add an external line scaler or video processor (do not let anyone tell you otherwise). Mounting methods are important either fixed or on a motorized system, Bulbs always burn out, ensure you have a least one in your par stock. Rear projection units are slowly disappearing, LCD and CRT projectors should be used for Movies and LP projectors/systems should be used for presentations.



Audio Speaker Selections - 7.1 is now the standard for today, most newer A/V receivers can handle this format. When picking these type of speakers, you now will get an extra pair of left and right speakers that are dedicated to audio effects. So add that to strategically placed left and right front speakers, the centre channel, the subwoofer and rear channel left and right speakers. Speakers recessed in the wall or placed on the wall can provide quality sound without blowing your budget.

Peripherals - Seating, popcorn makers, video games, PC connections and themed designs this is where we get creative.

Family Room Surround Sound \$\$

For those who have a more casual movie or TV viewing experience, surround sound is still possible, you should be selecting a standard 5.1 channel aspect (l-r front, center, and rear l-r channels) You want to select a system that is compatible to your Stereo receiver and can handle all the wattage required. Theatre-in-a-box options are conveniently priced, just ensure you are getting mounting brackets or placement stands as part of the package, as these can sometimes cost half the price of the speakers they are attached too.

Television Monitors \$\$\$\$

It seems every time we turn on the TV we see Plasma TV's dawning the likes of news casts. The cost of Plasmas can still be intimidating for most of us. However believe it or not the prices have dropped substantially over that last year and will keep on pace with that trend this year. What type of Plasma should I purchase and what are the specifications I should be aware of? Some good questions that require more detailed answers than we will publish this month. In future posts we will discuss all the pros and cons. For the time being here are some simple tips when purchasing a Plasma:

Thickness and weight (thinner and lighter are plusses)

Aspect Ratios (4:3 square TV or 16:9 Movie and HDTV size is the future)

Data displaying from a PC, remember the higher the resolution the better SVGA is 800 x 600, the UXGA is the highest at 1600 x 1200

The average life of Plasma's are around 12 years, not 3 as some may say.

Check the compatibility with standards for DTV and HDTV

DTV Format Comparison					
Transmission Type	Analog	Digital	Digital	Digital	Digital
	NTSC	Standard Definition	Standard Definition	High Definition	High Definition
Maximum Resolution	480i	480i	480p	720p	1080i
Aspect Ratio	4:3	4:3	4:3 or 16:9	16:9	16:9
Channel Capacity	1	5-6	5-6	1-2	1
Description	Standard TV as we know it today	Good Picture and Sound —DVD or DBS Quality	Better, depending on source; can be outstanding	Best Possible	Best Possible

Remember Plasmas are Monitors and do not have built in TV Tuners.

Never leave static images on the unit. Do not pause a picture on the plasma for more than a minute. This will cause phosphor burn in. Watch the unit in full widescreen format as much as possible to avoid differentiation between the side bands of the unit. While this does not actually decrease the longevity of the phosphors it does cause an annoyance to have to play a gray static image to "erase" the burn in.

Distributed Audio Systems

These days music is a constant companion to our lives allowing us to relax or providing us with that magic moment and instant romance. Sometimes it can be the silent companion in a background setting. What type of Audio Distribution is right for me and what are my choices are easily explained below:

Single Source Audio Distribution \$\$

Allows you to listen to music in different locations throughout the house. There is commonly only one source being played, but you can control the On/Off capability and the volume within the room. Elegant Keypads can contain an infra-red controller allowing you to change the source.



Multi-Source Audio Distribution \$\$\$

As the name implies, allows you to listen to different sources (CD, AM/FM Tuner, Digital Satellite or DVD) throughout the house. You need not be constrained to the listening tastes of others. Complete control and channel selection are available.



Single Zone Audio Areas \$

This allows you directly connect additional outputs to your stereo B Speakers to a specific room with a volume control. No source selection or I/R control, only volume up/down. A value alternative.

Outdoor Sounds \$\$

Have a property that can accommodate music in an outdoor setting? There are various products that can be chosen for an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Speakers that look like they belong in the garden.

Outdoor durable weatherproof speakers can be mounted under the eaves trough to allow permanent speakers to be placed all year round.



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