



Alpine Home Media

Custom Home Systems

Home Theater & Audio • Networks • Automation

66 Autumn Drive
Tappan, New York
10983

845.398.4582
johnv@alpinehomemedia.com
www.alpinehomemedia.com

A word about movie making and home theater.

When it comes to major purchases, its always helpful to understand the process that leads up to the creation of the product that we are considering.

In the case of the home theater, the product is the ‘experience’, And while it may seem cliché, the experience that we are trying to recreate is that of the director’s ‘vision’. The journey from the director’s vision to our experience is long and is comprised of many technical, artistic and monetary considerations.

Sadly, there are many steps to the process that are certainly out of our control and likely out of the director’s control as well. To start, there are technical and financial limitation as to what portions of a vision or dream can actually be recorded on film. For instance, you can only hire so many extras for an epic and remain within budget. Likewise, things that can’t be filmed with live actors must rely on computer generation which while incredible, still lacks a good measure of realism. Finally there are limitations in the resolution of film and sound recording and processing equipment. These limitations are often what cause people to say “The book was better” after seeing a film – the written work makes for an uncluttered imagination and a much tighter link to the author’s vision.

None the less, there is a point in the process where we as system designers and consumers can take a que as the starting point in our quest to realize the director’s vision. That point is the film dubbing studio. This is where the recorded audio and video segments of the film are assembled and tweaked into a final master for subsequent duplicating and distribution to the consumer. Our charge, as home theater enthusiasts is to recreate as nearly as possible the final experience that the director was able to create in that studio given the tools and materials he had to work with. We must also assume that the mass market DVD available to us as consumers is as close a copy as possible of the dubbing room experience.

So, how do we get the director’s view in the dubbing room into our own heads at home?

We work backwards.

To make the movie believable we must be fully engaged so as to forget our current surroundings. That means that the chair must be comfortable, there shouldn’t be any distracting noise, light, drafts (thirst, allergies, kids, dogs etc.....).



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We must begin with the chair and the customer's lifestyle preferences. Upright? Reclining? Cloth? Leather? How many people do we need to seat comfortably at one time. Answering these questions will determine where the viewers heads (literally) will be within the home theater's physical space. From there we can determine the size of the viewing screen needed, the amount of power the audio system will require and the ideal speaker placement. It will also determine if acoustic or lighting treatments will be needed to account for any shortcomings in the available space.

Next comes features and functionality as determined by the customer's desires and budget. Do they just want to watch movies? TV too? How about two channel audiophile quality music? Video games?

In addition to content, what other features need to be controlled. Should the curtains draw and the lights dim automatically when the movie starts. Should the movies or music on the home theater equipment be available throughout other rooms in the house? Should everything be controlled from a single remote control?

Finally, a system of this sophistication is a sizeable investment and should be protected. The power should be filtered to enhance performance and minimize the potential damage from lightning strikes and power surges. Likewise, the configurations and settings must be documented and backed up for future reference.

Understanding the production and playback process and adhering to design methodologies that account for it ensures that the director's vision will become our customer's experience as nearly as possible - consistently, with a minimum of hassles and for years to come.

