

home boxoffice

Turn on, sit back and stay in with the latest in-house cinema technology.

Words **Cindy Lord** Photography **Mark Calleja**

The relatively new technology of the modern film projector is making it possible for anyone to recreate the cinema experience at home. Thanks to more affordable hardware, the installation of dedicated home theatres and media rooms is on the way to being standard practice in new homes as more people see it as a way of bringing the family together, entertaining or just chilling out.

"When people spend time at home they want it to be the best possible experience," says Kelly Weijers of 5thcorner Technology Lounge at Woolloongabba in inner Brisbane. "They don't want to watch a movie on a 32-inch [81cm] TV anymore, they want to see it like they do at the movies and they're prepared to pay for it."

Here are some aspects to keep in mind when setting up a home theatre:

- **Dedicated home theatre or lounge/media room?** Weijers says dedicated home theatres are designed for maximum performance with fixed projector, screen and large speakers. With a lounge/media room, the emphasis is on keeping the technology discreet. "Unfortunately, performance doesn't always mean discreet, so there's a trade-off," she says. "In a lounge setting you would go for smaller speakers and you may spend more on a motorised screen that comes down only when you're using it, and have your projector disappear into your ceiling space. In both scenarios you have to think about where to store your equipment."
- **Cabling** Even with the shift to wi-fi, you need to think about cabling, preferably before you build. "If you don't get the cabling into the walls when you're building, it can get messy and you may need to punch holes in the walls later to hide ugly cables," Weijers says. Plan ahead, and think about where your power points are placed.
- **Projector** A projector and screen combination will give you a bigger image for your dollar than a plasma or LCD TV, but you'll need a totally dark



Screen dream: Epson TW1000 new generation projector with 1080p resolution, \$4999



Master control: The Sonos digital music distribution system mixes and matches home sound from room to room, \$899



Hey, home DJ: The Bush MTT2 turntable with variable speed control and 0.7 sec quick start, \$199

room to get a suitably bright image. In a lighter room, you are better off with a large television. With projectors, the quality of the image is influenced by the source. "We started with videotapes, then DVD, now we're going into Blu-ray and high-definition DVDs and television," Weijers says. "With Blu-ray or HD DVD, you get a near perfect image." For this reason Weijers suggests buying a true high-definition projector (1080p) with widescreen capabilities (16:9 or scope), which suits the formats of today's movies and HD TV. These start at around \$5000.

● **Screen** Size should depend on how far away from it you sit, but the most common (measured diagonally) is 100 to 120 inches [254-305cm]. The screen needs to be very white and smooth. "A lot of people think they can use a painted white plasterboard wall," says Weijers. "But the finish has a slight texture and the image will lose resolution." A black-backed screen with a black velvet frame will stop stray light. Weijers says the room can be any colour as long as it's dark – chocolate browns, ruby reds, inky blues are all suitable.

● **Surround sound** is a must, with more powerful speakers at the front. Soundproofing is optional, but minimising hard surfaces with plush pile carpet and soft furnishings improves the acoustics. Boral's CinemaZone is a high-density plasterboard that is combined with soundproofing batts to keep sound contained.

● **Control** Losing the remote is the bane of many people's lives and it doesn't help when you have six or seven. All-in-one remotes make life so much simpler, particularly in a darkened room. The latest models are touch-screen and can control everything from home security to music to lights.

● **Seating** for four to eight people is the typical home cinema configuration, ranging from child-friendly beanbags to long, ottoman-style couches. For the real deal, opt for cinema-style seats, complete with cup-holders, that allow you to recline while you watch. Specialists such as Fagaleo (at Slacks Creek in Brisbane's south) can customise seating to suit your room layout. ■

