

Buying a Home Theater



Three downtown stores have answers to your questions

BY E.J. CARLOCK

IS A NEW HOME THEATER system on your holiday wish list? There are plenty of places to shop in Eugene . . . quite apart from the big-box stores in the malls.

There may be no better place to look for the components you need than at an independently owned home-theater store. And there are three such outstanding stores in downtown Eugene.

In fact, Ronny's 5th St. Audio Vision, Bradford's Home Entertainment and England Audio are all located within seven blocks of one another. They may not offer the price breaks you'll find in Valley River Center or Gateway Mall, but they do offer quality products and full five-year warranties.

"As retailers, we have to overcome the perception that downtown is not the place you go to buy things these days," says Ronny Goldfarb, owner of Ronny's.

Chris Covey



Courtesy of DC Fine Homes & Interior Design

Shopping for a system

What are you looking for when you go shopping for a home theater?

The minimum requirement is a Dolby Digital 5.1 system. The numeral refers to speakers: center, right and left front, two in the rear and a subwoofer (that's the ".1") across the room to add bass notes. A receiver creates sound through all five speakers; the amount of wattage determines amplification.

Most home-theater buyers opt for a flat-panel television, either LCD or plasma. Recent technological advances have rendered both types similar in both picture quality and price. To go along with that, you'll want a contemporary DVD player and either cable or satellite broadcast reception . . . perhaps high-definition.

At a specialized store, good quality, high-current receivers start at around \$299. The cost of a speaker package will run anywhere from \$900 up. A 32-inch flat-screen TV will be in the

range of \$600. "I can offer a system between \$1,500 and \$2,000 that includes everything and will last," Goldfarb promises.

But there are more questions. Will you put your home-theater system in a den or living room . . . or dedicate a full room for entertainment? You needn't build a new home to incorporate a home theater; an existing room can be rewired and retrofitted. Better companies use a custom installer who can place wires in walls without disturbing the room.

And then there's the speaker system. Do you want speakers that stand on your floor, or will you have them unobtrusively built into your walls or ceiling? Do you want sound panels installed to help deaden the echo in a dry-walled room? Acoustics play a big part in how a system will sound.

Beyond your budget, what about your space? Some luxury homes boast multi-tiered theater seating, a roll-down screen, a dimmer on the lights, even a wet bar and a popcorn stand.

Listen before you buy

Listen, but more importantly, ask questions to help narrow down your needs and wants and expectations. Let the experts at any of Eugene's independently owned home-theater stores ask you questions, demonstrate and compare products before you throw down your hard-earned cash. And when you do decide to buy, you have every reason to keep it local.

You can go to a box store and buy a home theater in a box for \$199, if that satisfies your short-term needs and minimal expectations. But there are subtleties in home theater. Sure, we live in a world of good deals . . . but don't you want to hear the system first and know if it's right for you? ■■



Courtesy of DC Fine Homes & Interior Design


RESOURCES

Bradford's Home Entertainment
942 Olive St., Eugene
541/344-8287
bradfordshifi.com

England Audio
760 Charnelton St.
541/687-2927
englandaudio.com

Ronny's 5th St. Audio Vision
180 E. Fifth St.
541/762-1700
ronnysaudiovision.com

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