

home theatres

Hollywood has been bemoaning its dramatic drop in box office receipts this year, blaming everyone but itself for a nearly 10 percent drop in revenue and 12 percent drop in attendance.

It doesn't take a self-important movie mogul to understand that if you spend gazillions marketing a dreadfully idiotic movie that no one comes to see (just scan the movie ads to see the depths to which Hollywood has sunk), you will lose your shirt and, in the executive's case, your job.

So, why don't people like going to the cinema anymore? For starters, it's \$10 to \$12 a ticket, the 30-screen cineplex doesn't ooze friendliness, and frankly, a Coke of any size ain't worth \$3.50.

There are other reasons, too — shorter time to move a feature film to DVD, booms in the DVD sales and the rental business, the stellar rise of NetFlix, more movies on demand, the proliferation of TiVo and really bad Hollywood movies. However, people haven't stopped liking movies, they just prefer to watch them in the comfort of their own homes. And increasingly those serious about film have used dropping prices in high-end plasma screens to convert the family room into a theatre with sound and visuals every bit as good

WHO NEEDS THE CINEMA WHEN TOM CRUISE CAN FLY AN F-14
STRAIGHT THROUGH YOUR LIVING ROOM? **BY MARK LUCE**

as those in the conventional theatre.

Now, before you drop a fortune on these toys, take a few minutes to determine exactly what you want, why you want it, how/if you will use it, and what you really can afford. The keys to a successful home theatre are simple.



First, you want a progressive scan DVD player (\$100 to \$300); an a/v receiver with enough wattage to fill up the room and enough jacks in back for all of your toys (\$300 to \$1,500-plus); a solid, reliable, non-hissing set of six surround-sound speakers (five around the room, and one sub-woofer; (\$200 to \$2,000-plus); a television (\$500 to \$5,000-plus); and a bunch of speaker cable (varies radically in price and quality). Increasingly, too, complete systems (speakers, receivers and cables) are available from many companies, which takes away a bunch of guesswork.

Installation can be tricky, as you

often must mount the speakers (and run the wires) around whatever room you are using. Of course, you have to actually hook everything up properly, too, including your cable, TiVo and/or video game systems. That's not to mention ensuring that you have electric juice to power the whole set-up, as you don't want your first flick to go blank. It will take plenty of experimentation to get the sound just how and where you want it. I would urge you to test out your system with an action film with crazed audio, such as "Top Gun."

Whether you want to soup up your movie experience for a few hundred or go hog-wild for several thousand, make sure that you do your research, both online and in person. While audio stores will usually carry a higher price tag, they are vastly superior to a big box store in nearly every other category.

And remember, as you carefully assemble your own movie room, your \$3.50 will buy you 12 Cokes at home.

Mark Luce lives in Kansas City, Mo., where he is addicted to NetFlix.



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