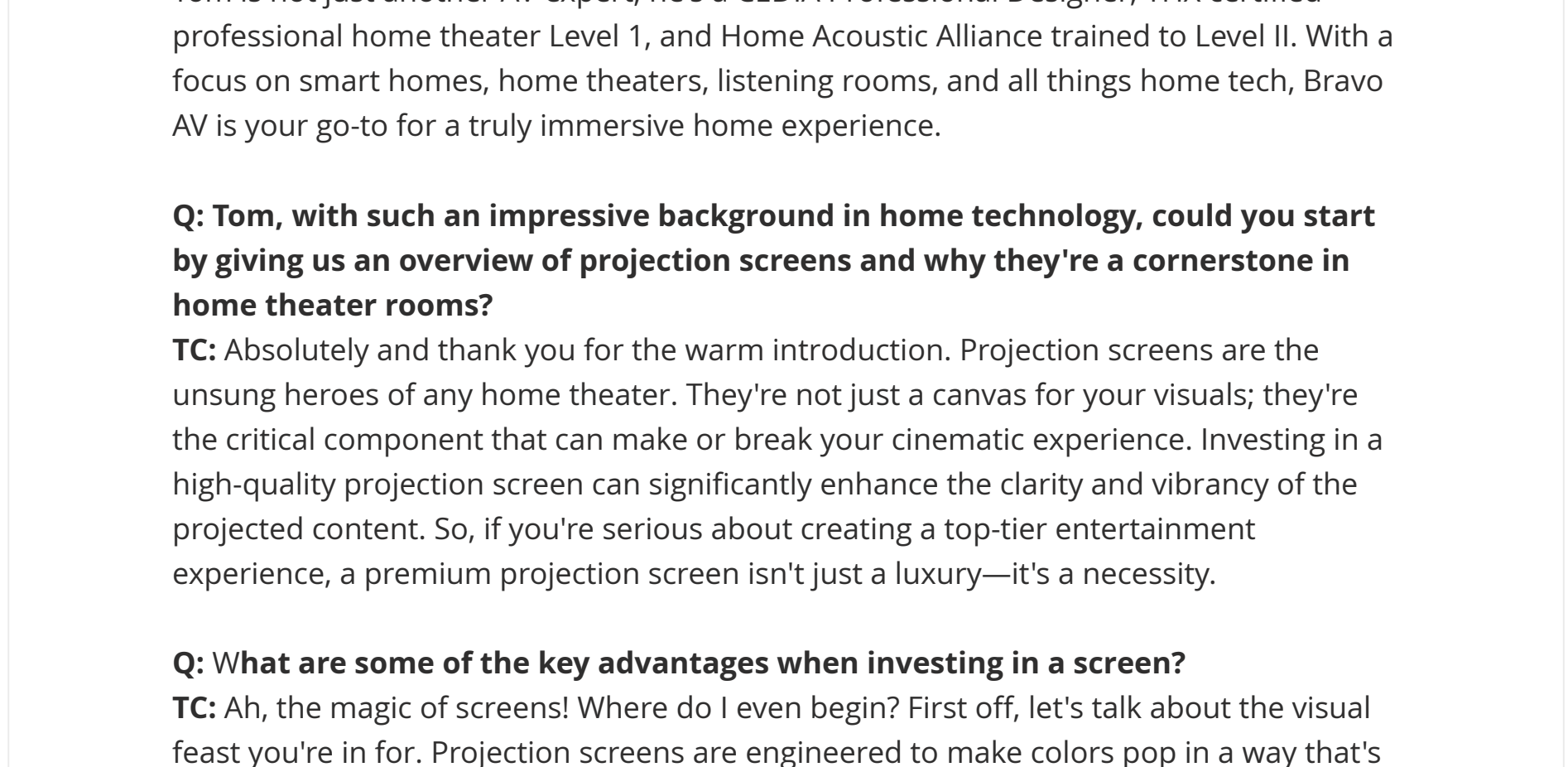


Tom Curmin · 4 hours ago · 10 min read

All About Home Theater Screens: Your Questions Answered!

Welcome to an exclusive interview with Tom Curmin, the owner of Bravo AV in Bernardsville, New Jersey.



Tom is not just another AV expert; he's a CEDIA Professional Designer, THX certified professional home theater Level 1, and Home Acoustic Alliance trained to Level II. With a focus on smart homes, home theaters, listening rooms, and all things home tech, Bravo AV is your go-to for a truly immersive home experience.

Q: Tom, with such an impressive background in home technology, could you start by giving us an overview of projection screens and why they're a cornerstone in home theater rooms?

TC: Absolutely and thank you for the warm introduction. Projection screens are the unsung heroes of any home theater. They're not just a canvas for your visuals; they're the critical component that can make or break your cinematic experience. Investing in a high-quality projection screen can significantly enhance the clarity and vibrancy of the projected content. So, if you're serious about creating a top-tier entertainment experience, a premium projection screen isn't just a luxury—it's a necessity.

Q: What are some of the key advantages when investing in a screen?

TC: Ah, the magic of screens! Where do I even begin? First off, let's talk about the visual feast you're in for. Projection screens are engineered to make colors pop in a way that's nothing short of cinematic. Imagine watching a sunset on screen and feeling like you're there, basking in its golden glow—that's the level of color fidelity we're looking for. But here's the kicker: size and cost. You might think that a larger screen would cost you an arm and a leg, but that's where you'd be surprised. For instance, a top-of-the-line 100-inch TV could cost you as much as \$30,000. But get this—a 130-inch projection screen paired with a good projector is under \$10,000. So, you're not just saving money; you're upgrading your entire viewing experience.

Q: Could you share some insights on the various factors when considering a theater screen?

TC: Happy to. Selecting the right screen is a detailed process which hinges on several key factors.

Image quality: You need a manufacturer that has a strong engineering team and a flawless production process.

Room Characteristics:

Ambient Light: The amount of light in the room will dictate the type of screen you need. If you have a lot of natural or artificial light, consider an Ambient Light Rejecting (ALR) screen.

Room Size: The dimensions of your room will also influence the size of the screen you can accommodate. Make sure you measure your space accurately before making a decision.

Wall Space: Don't forget to consider the wall where the screen will be mounted. Make sure it's free of obstructions like windows, doors, or artwork.

Seating Position:

Viewing Distance: The distance between the screen and your seating area will help determine the optimal screen size. A common guideline is that the viewing distance should be approximately 1.5 times the diagonal size of the screen.

Viewing Angle: Make sure that the screen is visible and comfortable to watch from all seating positions. This may require a screen with a wider viewing angle.

Projector Specifications:

Light Output: Your projector's brightness (measured in lumens) should be appropriate for the screen size and gain.

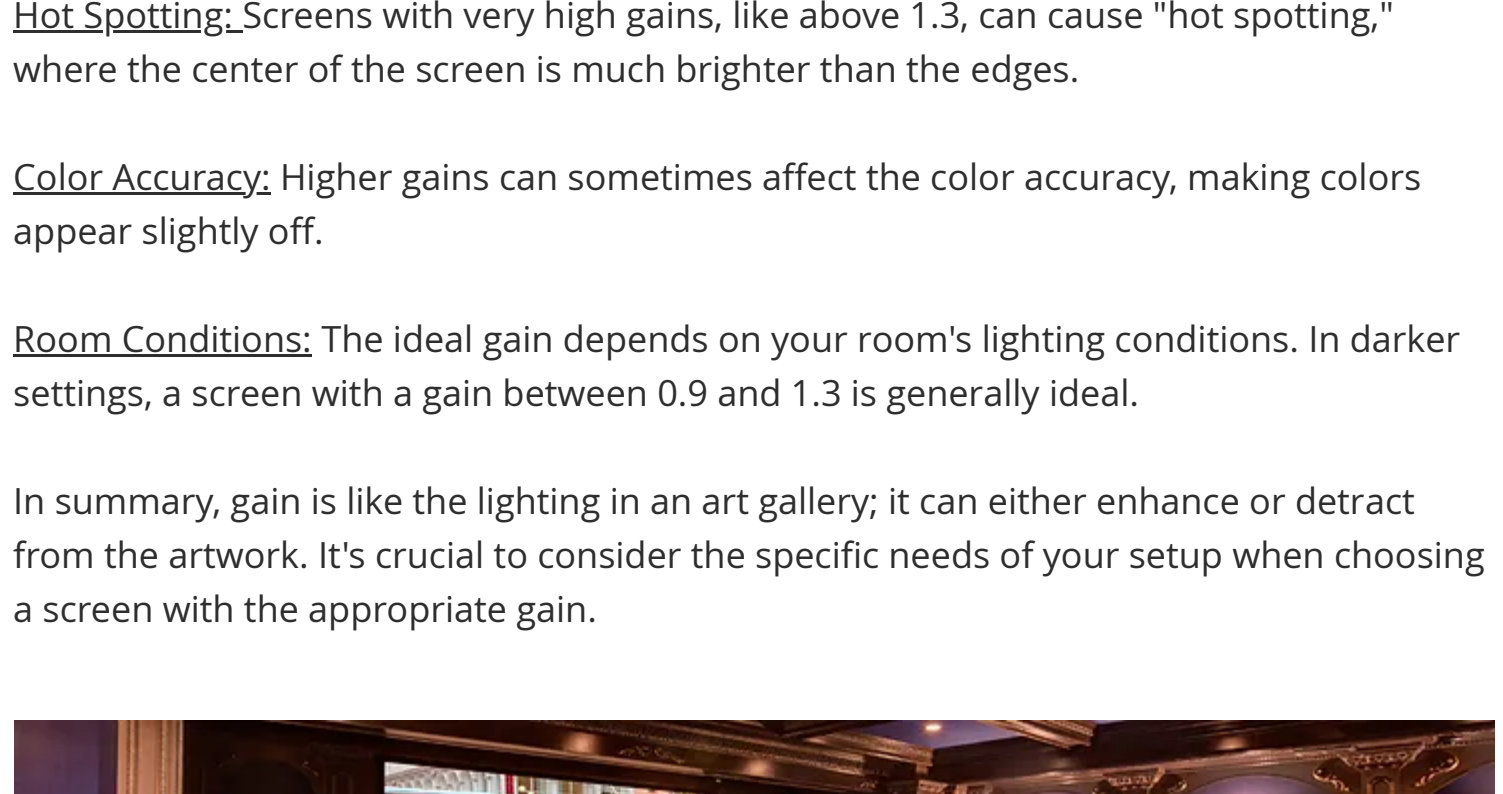
Budget and Preferences:

Cost: Screens can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. Know your budget but also understand that you often get what you pay for.

Features: Some people may want added features like motorized screens, acoustically transparent materials, or specialized coatings for better color reproduction.

Consult the Experts:

Professional Advice: If you're still unsure, consult professionals or visit showrooms to see different screen types in action. This can provide invaluable insights into what will work best for you.



Q: Could you delve into the various types of projector screens, highlighting their pros and cons?

TC: Absolutely, let's unpack the most popular types of cinema screens:

Fixed-Frame Screens: These are the gold standard for home theaters, offering unparalleled image quality. They're permanently mounted, which is rarely a problem in a dedicated theater space.

Electric Screens: They're motorized for ease of use but are more expensive than a fixed screen. They are designed for environments where the owner does not want to screen deployed unless there is a movie on. They can also be integrated into your automation or cinema system, so at the press of a button the screen deploys, the projector comes on, and your movie begins to play.

Q: Can you delve into the different types of screen materials and how they affect the viewing experience?

TC: Absolutely, the material of your screen is like the canvas for a painter; it sets the stage for everything. There are several types of materials, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Matte White Screens: These are the most common and versatile, offering excellent color and light diffusion. They're great for rooms with controlled lighting.

Grey Screens: These improve black levels and are ideal for rooms with some ambient light. They can make darker scenes look deeper and more detailed.

Ambient-Light Rejecting (ALR) Screens: These are specialized screens designed to perform well in rooms with a lot of natural or artificial light. They minimize glare and reflections, ensuring a crisp, clear image.

Acoustically Transparent Screens: These allow sound to pass through and are perfect for setups where the speakers are placed behind the screen. However, they can be pricier and may slightly degrade image quality.

So, the material you choose should align with your room's lighting conditions, your projector's capabilities, and your personal preferences. It's all about creating a harmonious balance for the ultimate viewing experience.

Q: Could you elaborate on the concept of screen gain and its impact on the viewing experience?

TC: Certainly, screen gain is another pivotal factor that can significantly influence your home theater experience. Gain measures how much light the screen reflects back to the audience.

Brightness: Higher gain screens can make the image appear brighter, which is especially useful in rooms with ambient light.

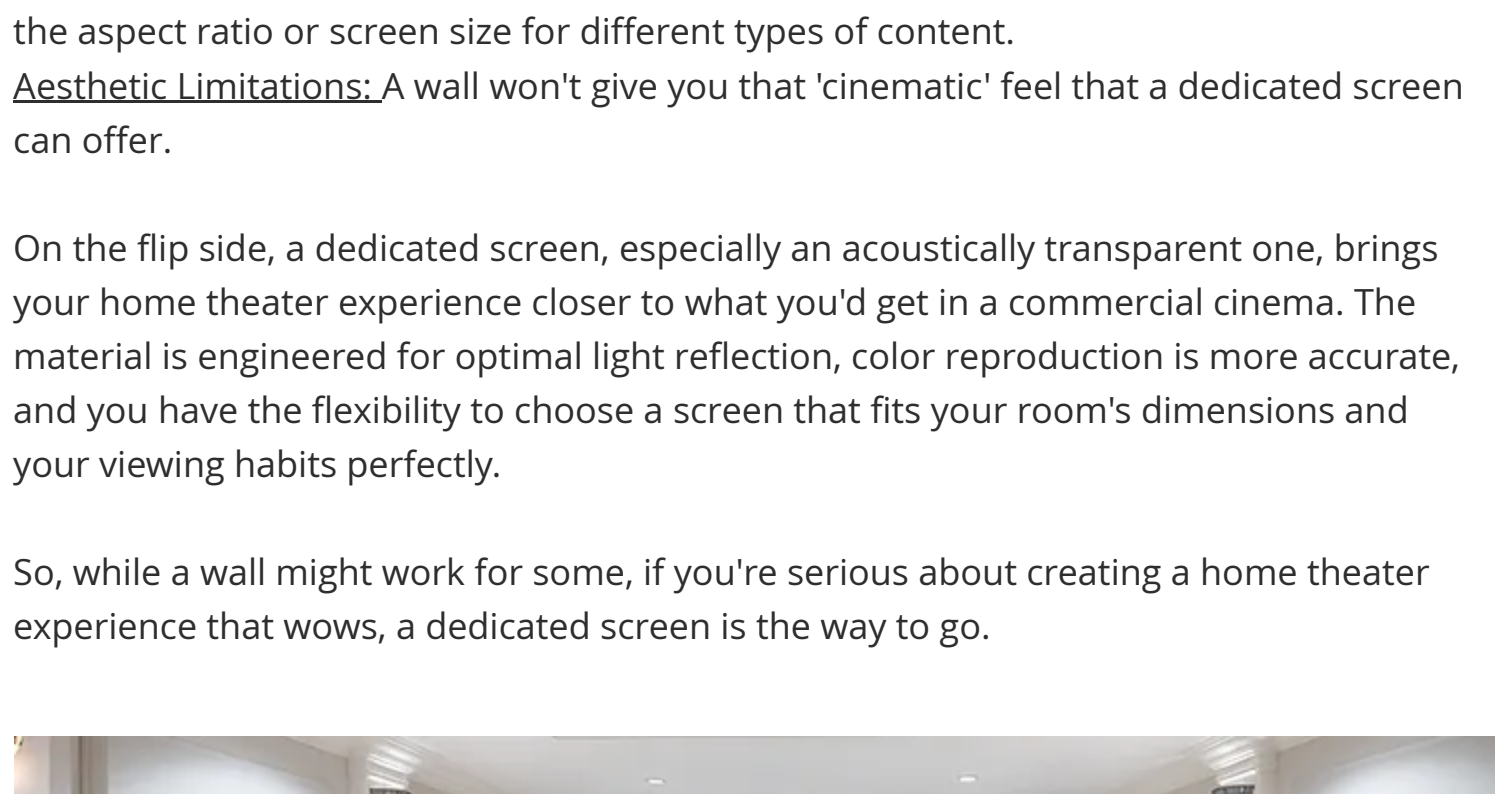
Viewing Angle: Higher gain narrows the viewing angle, meaning the image may appear dimmer when viewed from the sides.

Hot Spotting: Screens with very high gains, like above 1.3, can cause "hot spotting," where the center of the screen is much brighter than the edges.

Color Accuracy: Higher gains can sometimes affect the color accuracy, making colors appear slightly off.

Room Conditions: The ideal gain depends on your room's lighting conditions. In darker settings, a screen with a gain between 0.9 and 1.3 is generally ideal.

In summary, gain is like the lighting in an art gallery; it can either enhance or detract from the artwork. It's crucial to consider the specific needs of your setup when choosing a screen with the appropriate gain.



Q: What should one consider regarding screen geometry or aspect ratio for TV and movies?

TC: Ah, aspect ratio! It's one of those terms that sounds technical but has a significant impact on your viewing experience. Let's break it down. The aspect ratio is essentially the ratio of the screen's width to its height. For most modern TVs, the standard aspect ratio is 16:9, also known as 1.78:1. This is perfect for watching most TV shows and many movies.

However, if you're a cinephile and love those epic cinematic experiences, you might want to consider a screen with a 1.2:40 aspect ratio. This is much wider and is often used for blockbuster films. It gives you that immersive, "I'm in a movie theater" feeling right in your living room.

Now, why does this matter? Well, if you choose the wrong aspect ratio for your primary type of content, you might end up with black bars at the top and bottom or the sides of your screen. For example, if you're watching a movie with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio on a 16:9 screen, you'll see black bars at the top and bottom. Conversely, if you're watching regular TV shows on a 2.40:1 screen, you'll get black bars on the sides.

So, when choosing a screen, think about what you'll be watching most often and select the aspect ratio that best suits your library. It's all about optimizing your viewing experience to get the most bang for your buck.

Q: Tom, what are the industry recommendations for screen size and viewing angles, and how can one customize these aspects for their own home theater?

TC: Great question! Let's break it down:

Industry Recommendations:

SMPTTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers): SMPTTE suggests a minimum viewing angle of 30 degrees for a cinematic experience. This is a solid baseline for most home theaters.

THX: THX recommends a slightly wider viewing angle of 36 degrees to fully immerse the viewer in the visual content.

Customizations: Field of View: While 30 and 36 degrees are the industry standards, we've built theaters with a 60-degree field of view that have received rave reviews. A wider field can offer a more immersive experience but may not be suitable for all room sizes or types of content.

Personal Preference: The "ideal" viewing angle can be quite subjective and depends on your comfort and preferences.

Room Size: Your room's dimensions will also significantly impact the optimal screen size and viewing angle. Larger rooms can accommodate larger screens and wider viewing angles without compromising on image quality.

Practical Steps: Showroom Experience: To get a real sense of what works best for you, I highly recommend visiting our showroom. You can experience different setups and discuss your specific project needs with our experts.

Consultation: A detailed consultation can help tailor the screen size and viewing angle to your room's acoustics, lighting conditions, and seating arrangements, ensuring you get the most out of your home theater experience.

In summary, while industry standards offer a useful starting point, the best screen size and viewing angle for you will depend on a variety of factors, including your room's characteristics and your personal preferences.

Q: Tom, a question that often comes up is whether one really needs a dedicated screen for their home theater setup. Why can't they just use a wall? What are the pros and cons?

Tom: Ah, the age-old debate of screen versus wall! It's a question I hear quite often, and it's a valid one. Let's break it down, using a wall as a projection surface is certainly the more budget-friendly option, and for some casual viewers, it might suffice. However, you're sacrificing a lot in terms of image quality. Walls are not engineered to reflect light in the same way that a dedicated screen is. Even with a coat of specialized projection paint, a wall will not offer the same level of color accuracy, brightness, or detail that you'd get from a screen designed for that purpose.

Now, let's talk about the pros and cons:

Pros of Using a Wall:

Cost-Effective: No need to invest in a screen; a smooth wall and some paint might be all you need.

Simplicity: No installation required, and you don't have to worry about screen size or aspect ratio.

Space-Saving: Without a screen, you have one less piece of equipment to worry about in your room setup.

Cons of Using a Wall:

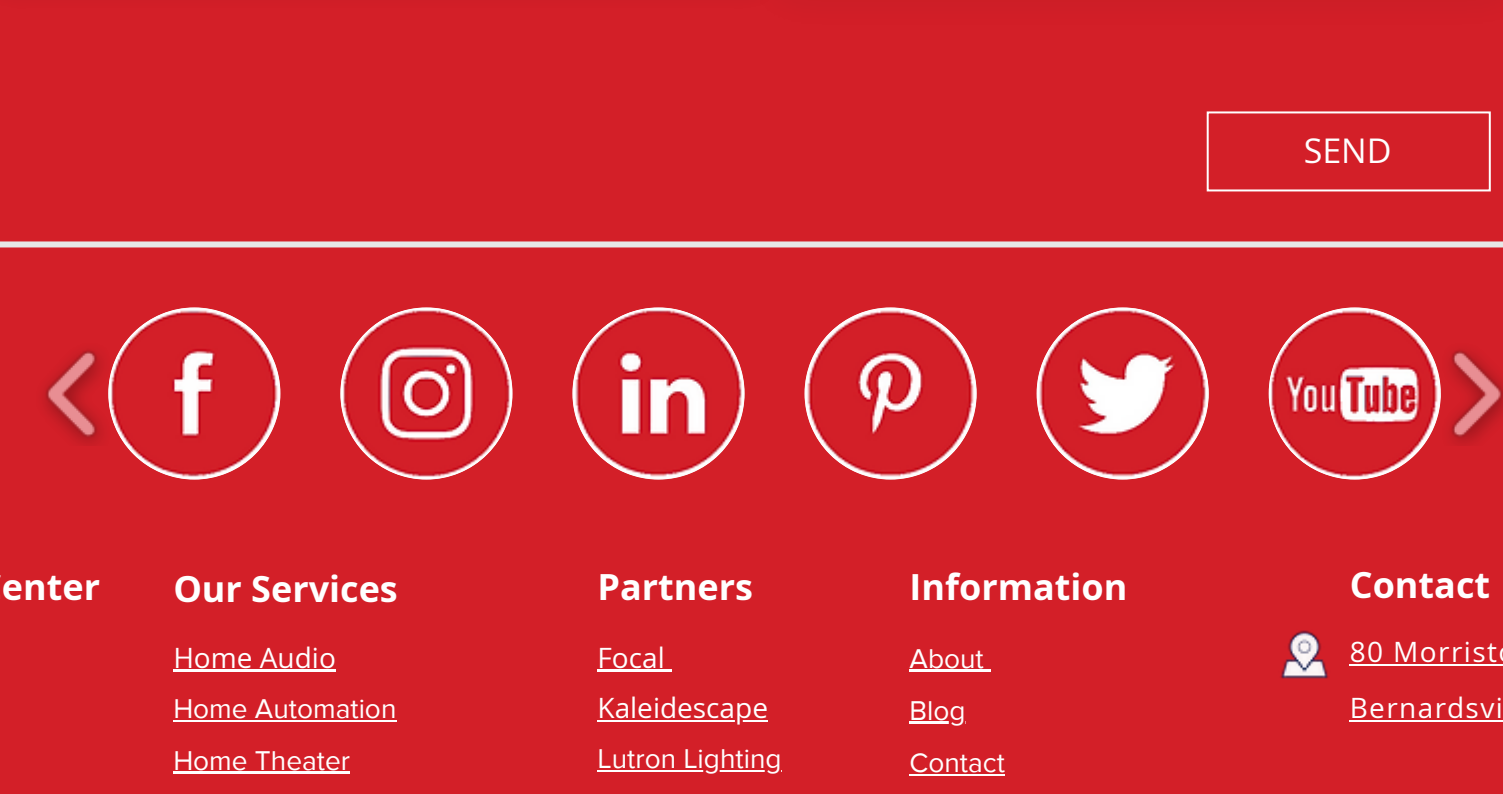
Subpar Image Quality: Walls are not made to the same reflective standards as projector screens, affecting color reproduction and brightness.

Limited Customization: You're stuck with the wall's dimensions and can't easily adjust the aspect ratio or screen size for different types of content.

Aesthetic Limitations: A wall won't give you that "cinematic" feel that a dedicated screen can offer.

On the flip side, a dedicated screen, especially an acoustically transparent one, brings your home theater experience closer to what you'd get in a commercial cinema. The material is engineered for optimal light reflection, color reproduction is more accurate, and you have the flexibility to choose a screen that fits your room's dimensions and your viewing habits perfectly.

So, while a wall might work for some, if you're serious about creating a home theater experience that wows, a dedicated screen is the way to go.



Q: Tom, many people wonder how crucial the quality of the screen is in the grand scheme of a home theater setup. Can you shed some light on this?

TC: Absolutely, and I can't stress this enough—screen quality is paramount in any home theater setup. Think of it this way: you wouldn't pair a high-end audio system with cheap speakers, would you? The same logic applies to your visual experience.

Q: Tom, when it comes to selecting a screen, what are some common mistakes that people should steer clear of?

TC: Another great question, and one that I think many people overlook until they're knee-deep in the selection process. Here are some pitfalls to be aware of:

Size Matters, But Bigger Isn't Always Better: Oversizing: One of the most common mistakes is choosing a screen that's too large for the projector's light output. This will result in a dim, washed-out picture. Always match the screen size with your projector's capabilities.

Viewing Distance: Another size-related issue is picking a screen that's too large for your seating position. This can lead to eye strain and a less-than-optimal viewing experience.

Quality Over Quantity: Budget Screens: While it's tempting to save money with a budget screen, you'll likely end up compromising on image quality & durability. Remember, a screen is a long-term investment.

Light Conditions: Ignoring Ambient Light: If your room isn't a pitch-black cave, you'll need an Ambient Light Rejecting (ALR) screen. Choosing a regular screen in a room with windows or other light sources will severely impact your image quality.

Material and Gain: Wrong Material or Gain: Different materials and gains are suited for different room conditions and projector types. Make sure you understand what you need based on your specific setup.

Impulse Buying: Lack of Research: Don't just buy the first screen you see online or in a store. Take the time to read reviews, consult experts, and even see the screen in action if possible.

In summary, the key to avoiding these pitfalls is research and understanding your specific needs. A screen isn't just a screen; it's an integral part of your home theater system that requires careful consideration.

Q: Tom, this has been incredibly informative, but it's a lot to digest. Where can people go to learn more or get personalized advice?

TC: I completely understand—it's a complex subject with many variables to consider. For those who want to dive deeper, our website is a treasure trove of information on home theater screens and the overall home theater experience. We've got articles, videos, and FAQs that can help you make an informed decision.

If you have specific questions or need personalized advice, don't hesitate to reach out to us directly. You can email or call us; our contact information is readily available on the website. We're more than happy to assist you in creating the home theater of your dreams. After all, the devil is in the details, and we're here to help you sort through them.

Q: Tom, thank you so much for taking the time to share your expertise with us today. Your insights into home theater screens have been incredibly enlightening, and I'm sure our readers will find this information invaluable as they navigate their own home theater journeys.

TC: It's been my pleasure. I'm always thrilled to help me, and I look forward to possibly assisting your readers in the future.

Interviewer: Absolutely, Tom. And to our readers, if you have more questions or need personalized advice, don't hesitate to reach out to Tom and his team. Until next time, happy viewing!

And there we have it, folks! A big thank you to Tom for his invaluable insights into the world of home theater screens. Stay tuned for more expert interviews on all things tech and entertainment.

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For additional resources, please visit our [Home Theater](#) web page, Tom Curmin, the owner of Bravo AV, is a CEDIA Professional Designer, a certified THX Level 1 home theater professional and a member of the Home Acoustic Alliance trained to Level II. You can contact Tom directly at (908) 953-0555 or through email at Tom@BravoAV.com.

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