****Home Theater Lighting****

I like to think of Home Theater lighting in two parts: The lighting design (fixture selection and placement) and lighting control. Home theater space must have complete control of both artificial light and natural light (outside light coming through windows).

**Goal**

Entering a beautiful lit room but total darkness when the movie is playing.

**Lighting Design**

*Artificial light*

The lighting environment should not impinge on picture quality. Stated another way, no external light should be allowed to leak into the theater during viewing. There are typically three types of lights involved in a home theater:

* Ceiling-based general ambience lighting. (strip or recessed lighting)
* Decorative accent lighting
* Safety or path lighting

*Natural light*

Where windows or doors are present, we need to install blackout shades.

**Lighting Control**

Lighting control allows you to command all the lights in the room with the press of a button on a keypad, a lighting remote, or your smart phone or tablet. Naturally, lighting control will be included in the overall control of the home theater.

Theater entry and egress lighting should be subdued and easily controlled from the viewing seating. The following are typical preset scenes:

* Presentation – Lights set to show off the detail of the room at its best. Lighting has a tremendous effect on the room aesthetics.
* Entry/Exit – Lights at approximately 50% dimmed. Great for pausing the movie for a snack break, etc.
* Watching Mode – Lights off whenever possible except for path lighting and exit illumination whenever required.
* Cleaning mode – All lights on.

***Conclusion***

To achieve a home theater that comfortable and functional you need lighting design and lighting control.

For additional resources, please visit our website’s Knowledge Center. Here you will find several articles on home theaters. Additionally, please check out our gallery of home theater photos. There you can find a series of 19 photos that chronical a home theater install from start to finish.

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Tom Curnin, the owner of Bravo AV, is a CEDIA Professional Designer, THX-certified professional home theater Level 1, and Home Acoustic Alliance trained to Level II.

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