

Home cinema rooms have moved on from the 'bachelor cave' look. The latest tech can be seamlessly integrated, allowing design to take a starring role, says **Katrina Burroughs**

Back in the 1990s, the default look for a home cinema was black leather bunker. The tech was the star, with the decor dictated by audiovisual specialists rather than interior designers. Great if you wanted to play media mogul in your basement, but not so good for laid-back screenings with your loved ones. With the latest screens and speakers, there's no need to create a darkened lair with raked seating for that authentic cinema experience, so decorators are designing bright, airy media rooms featuring colour, cosy textures – and almost invisible AV kit.

In two decades of installing home cinema, David Graham, of Grahams H-FI, has seen an aesthetic revolution. A former chair of Cedia, the professional body of the design and installation industries (cedia.org), he now sits on the board of the British Institute of Interior Design (biid.org).

"There are really no compromises any more," he says. "In the early days, there was a battle between the interior design and the technology. Now there is no reason at all why you can't have a good movie experience in your living room and not compromise on design."

The key development that brought about this change was the replacement of the cathode-ray-tube television with the flatscreen. "Before

the flat-panel TV screen, the only way to get a cinema experience was with a projector," Graham says. About 15 years ago, the biggest screens were 30in–35in. So, if you wanted a big screen, you'd need a projector, and once you have a projector, you need to control the light in the room, so you end up with a dark interior.

"Large plasma screens were the game-changer. Nowadays, 65in liquid-crystal displays are quite normal."

The leap forward in screen tech came with a drawback: "The sound isn't great with a flatscreen. Options include adding a sound bar or, better still, proper speakers and AV amplifiers. You can have hidden speakers plastered into the wall, and TVs that disappear behind panels."

The hottest entertainment rooms are those that look least like the Batcave. Kate Moss, in the interior she created for the Lakes by Yoo, opted for a "playroom" instead of a traditional home cinema. The Barnhouse playroom combines a Cotswolds view of water and woods with a recessed 60in UHD 4K TV and a Sonos Playbar sound system.

When the room is used for watching a film, concealed pocket doors allow it to be closed off from the main living space, and House of Hackney curtains are drawn to exclude light. It has a velvet-clad vintage sofa and an elegant Fiona MacIul, Donald Luca chandelier.

The product and interior designer Lee Broom created a seven-seat cinema in his



In this colourful entertainment suite by the interior designer Jo Berryman, the AV, installed by Inspired Dwellings, includes a Ginecasson projector and a Triad surround-sound system. Hand-rendered chartreuse walls, coral leathers and red velvets give the decor a luxurious feel; shiny surfaces, including a burnished bronze bar and mirrored panels from Dominic Schuster, create Hollywood glamour. The total cost was about £65,000. joberryman.com

Screen stealers



◀ The interior designer Niloufar Bakhtiar-Bakhtiar's cinema room is a family space with luxury finishes that aid the acoustics. The gunmetal leather flooring is by Element 7, and the shutters are covered in horsehair fabric from Abbott & Boyd. Her bespoke NBB Design sofa is more of a focal point than the 65in Sony flatscreen, and the AV equipment is concealed when not in use. A similar room would cost £240,000. nbbdesign.com



◀ The AV equipment in this cinema room by Thorp Design, for a villa in the south of France, includes a projector and a fixed pro canvas screen. The walls are covered in battered fabric, for good acoustics, and the windows have leather-wrapped shutters to block out the light. In the back row, the oversized armchairs have bronze cup-holders and footstools. In front are day beds with cashmere throws. It cost about £30,000 as part of a Thorp project. thorp.co.uk



▶ Here's a floral cinema interior by Emma Hawston, head of design interiors at Liberty. The chinoiserie motif is from hand-painted artworks created for Liberty in the 1920s and 1930s, selected by Sir Roger Moore to be revived this spring. The pattern is called Lady Kristina, after his wife. The wallpaper costs £90 a roll, the linen £88 a metre; cushions start at £110. liberty.co.uk

home, a converted fire station in south London, using reclaimed furnishings in scarlet velvet. Broom, whose background is in theatre and fashion, is renowned for taking traditional forms or crafts and adding his own original, often theatrical twist. "I was aware of the clichés of home cinemas," he says.

"I wanted to do something a lot more authentic and boutique, so I contacted some people I knew in architectural salvage and found these seats from a 1930s cinema. "We have a popcorn machine, so the room smells of popcorn. The curtains that cover the screen are electronic, so they swish

back, like a real cinema. And when you leave, there's that strange post-cinema feeling of emerging into reality afterwards." That sense of enchantment is something the designers and installers work hard to re-create in a modern multitasking interior. "The art is now to make the

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→ technology disappear," says the home tech expert Giles Sutton, founder of James + Giles and vice-chairman of Cedia.

Yet sometimes a spot of showy tech precisely meets a client's needs. For a north London family with two Harry Potter-crazy kids aged 8 and 6, Sutton designed a media room that's controlled by a magic wand. "We discovered this wand on the internet. It sends an infrared signal to a receiver. We placed a receiver under the screen and put it through a control box, which acts like a TV remote. By twizzling the wand in a circle or moving it left to right, you can stop the film or turn the volume up or down."

Graham says that 80% of his installations now go into multi-use media rooms, rather than dedicated cinemas. Yet that's not to say the



This energy-efficient home in Hampstead, north London, by James + Giles, won Cedia's award for Best Integrated Home Under £100,000. In the concrete construction, the biggest issue was how to hide the speakers (in the wooden box above the wall). Unusually, it has no screen, just the white wall, and no blackout blinds, as the residents only watch films after dark. A similar room would start at about £20,000. jamesandgiles.com



The designer Lee Broom's evocative screening room features speakers by KEF and a projector from Epson Home Cinema. The reclaimed cinema seating is from englishsalvage.co.uk (a similar set of five is available for £400), and was reupholstered in Designers Guild velvet. A popcorn machine is the finishing touch (from £495; popcornandcandyloss.com). leebroom.com



← Buster + Punch used many of its own products in this project, including a Hooked light in brass, matt rubber and bronzed gunmetal, smoked bronze dimmers, sockets and USB inserts throughout, and quilted velvet pillows. The AV kit is from Cambridge Audio, the wall unit is by the Workshop by Mmale + Man (minalandmann.com), and the walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Railings. A similar room would set you back about £18,000. busterandpunch.com



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Mark C O'Flaherty, Ray Min, David Vessi CP

Winner of Cedia's award for Best Media Room Over £10,000, Tim Gosling's design combines advanced tech – a Runco Full HD projector with a Cinemascope lens and processor, and a 150in screen – with luxury fabrics and finishes. The sofa moves forward to reveal a row of cinema seats; the speakers are built into the wall and covered with acoustic fabric. As part of a larger project, this room would start at £43,000. tgosling.com

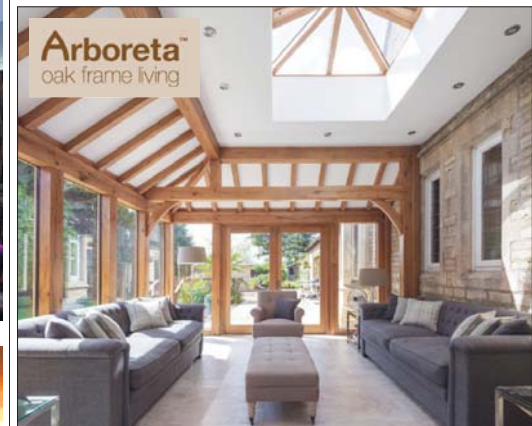
underground home-movie theatre has had its day. For the basement-digging classes, dedicated rooms are still a must – they just look different from their 1990s ancestors.

An award-winning project by the bespoke furniture designer Tim Gosling combines astounding tech with superyacht luxury. Gosling, who is celebrated for his exquisite cabinetry and opulent finishes, says: "I love tech, but you want it to work beautifully, without it being in your face. You want it calm and relaxing."

In repose, the room is serene enough, but at the touch of a button, it launches into a show-stopping routine almost certainly choreographed by Busby Berkeley. Projectors appear from the side wall, blinds drop over the windows and a 150in screen descends. A low table in front of the sofa sinks into the ground and the couch slides forward to reveal a row of seating rotating upwards from underground, like high-kicking chorus girls. Sheer movie magic.



In this bedroom installation by David Graham, the projector is mounted behind the wall above the headboard. The AV includes an 80in Vutec drop-down projection screen, Bowers & Wilkins in-ceiling speakers and an Arcam AV receiver and Blu-ray player. The system is controlled with a bedside Control4 touch panel or a handheld remote. The cost of the hardware, installation and programming was £11,940. grahamsc.co.uk



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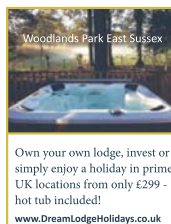


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The acoustics in this cinema room by Carden Cuiletti are improved by fabric-covered walls and a deep-pile carpet. The bed-sized sofas are by Dom Edizioni. On the ceiling, a framed fabric is backlit by LEDs to look like a night sky. The room cost approximately £50,000. carden-cuiletti.com