

Old-fashioned Entertainment

HiFi House matches a modern-day home theater to a centuries-old aesthetic.

>> by **KIRSTEN NELSON**



THE LAST PLACE YOU'D EXPECT TO FIND A STATE-OF-THE-ART HOME THEATER IS IN A 19TH-CENTURY FARMHOUSE. BUT IN THE RURAL AREA AROUND WEST CHESTER, PENNA., THE NEW CONSTRUCTION OF RUSTIC REPLICA HOMES HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ONE COUPLE TO DISCREETLY INTEGRATE A TOP-NOTCH ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM INTO AN OTHERWISE OLD-FASHIONED RESIDENCE.

When the builder and architect of this particular farmhouse were informed that the gentleman of the house wanted to nestle into his quaint basement a full-blown home theater, complete with stadium seating and a stellar sound system, they weren't the only mortified parties on the project. His wife wasn't exactly thrilled, either, especially because the theater was to be built underneath her home office. But by way of compromise, she agreed to the addition of the theater if it she couldn't see or hear it.

"In a normal house that would be difficult enough," comments

Harry Blanchard designer for the HiFi House Group. "But in this particular house, because they were talking about floorboards that don't meet entirely and other old-style construction techniques—quite frankly the house leaked like a sieve when it came to sound. That's not a flaw, that's a nature of the design of these homes."

Hence, on a mission to make both homeowners happy, Blanchard worked with the architect and builder to craft a completely unique solution to this modern-day country house conundrum. A totally sound-proof home theater was built utilizing the "floating room" techniques found in recording studios. This meant all four walls, the floor and the ceiling were hung on rubber isolators, physically separating the room from the rest of the house and making it all but impossible to hear even the loudest movie soundtracks outside the room.

"My main goal was to give them a room that blended into the rest of the house as much as possible," Blanchard says. "The loca-





tion of their farm is literally out in the middle of nowhere, so it's very quiet. The sound-proofing we did ensured that upstairs in the office above the theater, she could read a book and listen to the birds sing, and not be interrupted by Terminator Three.”

Careful attention to the aesthetics of the home were employed throughout. Even the double-door Blanchard recommended for the ultimate soundproofing turned out to be a decorator's dream solution. While the inner door was a modern, acoustical barrier, the outer door was identical to the other wooden farmhouse doors in the house. So from the outside, the entrance to the theater blended seamlessly into the living environment.

The subtle integration of technology doesn't end with the home theater in this house. An Adagio music server from Crestron Electronics makes it possible for relaxed listening indoors and outdoors.

Controls for the system are small, unobtrusive touch panels that make it easy for the homeowners to access their entire collection of music. In fact, the entertainment system proved so appealing in its user-friendliness, that upstairs in her quiet office, the lady of the house decided she wanted a pair of speakers connected to the server.

All in all, the entertainment technology in this house helps the homeowners get back to the peace and quiet they were looking for in their country home. The home theater, which features a high-definition projector to bring the “phenomenal” cinematic picture the owner requested, is decorated with images of constellations and planets to match the farm's name: “Starry Night.” Now those nights can present spectacular sound and video entertainment or just a quiet evening at home—simultaneously. ■

