

A photograph of a home theater room. A large screen at the front displays a tiger walking in a savanna. To the left, a wall is decorated with framed movie posters, including one for Star Wars. The room features dark wood trim, recessed lighting, and blue upholstered seats. A large, bold title is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

A DIY Delight

**Randy Mobley, you've
designed and built a winner!**

by V. Coghill



When the home theater bug hit Randy Mobley of Atlanta, Georgia, three years ago, little did he realize that it would land him in the pages of a magazine. Last November, *Home Theater* invited our readers to send pictures of their home theaters for possible publication. Of the hundreds of pictures we received, Randy was practically the first in line. What set him apart so dramatically was that he built and installed everything in his dedicated theater himself. He did everything to such a painstakingly detail-oriented level that we couldn't wait to showcase his theater in the pages of *HT*.

Randy began his project after he saw a couple of theaters in retail stores. He quickly realized that he could turn an existing 30-by-15-foot space in his

1,000-square-foot basement into something a darn sight more entertaining than what he was using it for: a storage unit. First, Randy wisely subscribed to *Home Theater* magazine, where he could research home-theater-related gear (unabashed plug). Then, he started sketching diagrams of how he wanted his theater to look.

Randy used to work in the van-customization business, and he readily admits that he's a pretty handy guy. "The funny thing is," commented Randy, "I had contractors lined up to begin work from my drawings, but everyone kept flaking on me. So, I decided, 'What the heck. I'll just do it myself.'" He also decided, since he was at it, why not go whole hog? So, he designed an almost-professional sports bar and grill at the entrance to the theater, complete with a flat-top grill and a side-by-side refrigerator. This area has become a great place for friends to hang out before watching the big game.

Since there was a lot Randy was unfamiliar with, he began taking Home Depot weekend courses that the infamous DIY store holds on Saturday mornings. He soon learned the



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basics of plumbing, electrical systems, and carpentry. It was enough to get him on his way. He purchased all of his building supplies at Home Depot.

While deciding what equipment he wanted—a process that continues with upgrades today (the Denon AVR-5800 receiver is hot on his list)—Randy outlined the positions of his theater seats on the concrete floor with masking tape. Then, he built risers for the middle and back rows of seats

need to be to avoid obstructions in the line of sight, which was a very time-consuming process.

Randy was still researching equipment when he started to purchase gear. First on his list was the highly acclaimed Denon AVR-5700 receiver. The people at Denon, Randy claims, were incredibly helpful. “I must have been on the phone with Richard in tech support three or four times a day, and he never let me down.”

Then, Randy wired the ceiling for lighting—including the eyeball



that the left, center, and right channels would align as closely to the screen as possible. Both subwoofers are located beneath the enclosure, which has transparent speaker cloth from Cloth World stretched around its framework.

Randy bought most of his audio and video gear from Don Flora of Entertech, a professional sound, lighting, and video company. He purchased his satellite system and line doubler from Spencer Fox of Audio Video Interiors, a specialty audio/video store, and is very pleased with how much high-def programming he receives with his RCA HDTV satellite system. Said Randy, “There is actually more high-def being broadcast than I thought there would be. Spencer Fox was incredibly helpful and offered me plenty of technical assistance. When the theater was finished, he asked me if I wanted a job, as I had been such a good student!”

Since his Zenith PRO900X CRT projector had a ghosting problem, Randy approached Spencer about a line doubler. “[The projector] was great for movies. But, as I watched sporting events, especially my favorite car racing, the images in 4:3 looked as if they had squiggles around them,” said Randy. Once he hooked up the DVDO iScan line doubler, these motion artifacts



A. Randy decided to build his own personal sports bar and grill at the entrance to his home theater.

B. Remembering his days in van conversion, Randy made sure that everything was carpeted and the theater seats fully reclined.

from pressure-treated two-by-sixes and two-by-twelves. He decided to attach the first row of seats directly to the concrete floor. To cut down on squeaking and rattling, Randy glued the floor decking and screwed 0.75-inch plywood onto the 6-inch-high center row. He had to configure the exact location of his projector and determine exactly how high the risers would

lighting for his movie posters and the scalloped lighting for the theater's six columns. Randy also decided to purchase Definitive Technology speakers, so he wired for the side and rear channels—again configuring the exact placement (5.5 feet from the floor) for the side-channel speakers.

We particularly enjoyed the raised platform that Randy built for his front-loudspeaker array so

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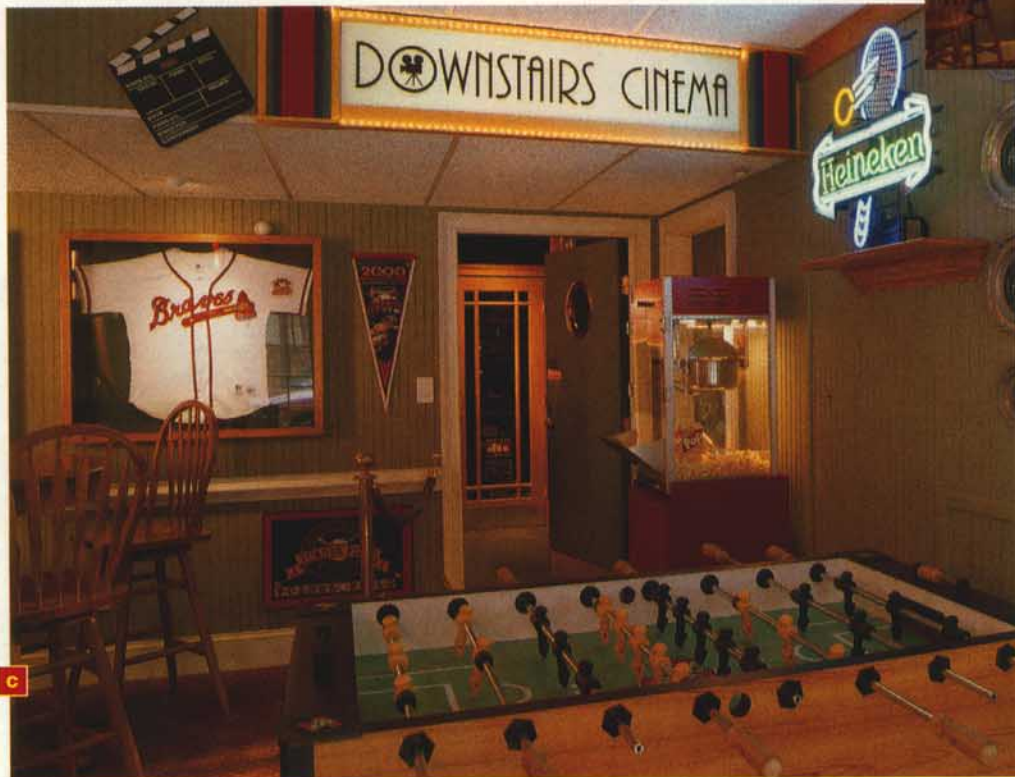
disappeared. Mounting the projector himself was difficult, but not insurmountable. "I counter-sunk the projector into the rafters using a saber saw. I then built additional two-by-fours into the ceiling to beef up the upstairs flooring so I wouldn't weaken it when I attached the mammoth projector."

One of his biggest frustrations was trying to converge the projector. "I wanted to throw the remote across the room." Hooking up the gear took the equivalent of a full week. "I really learned that some

that wouldn't reflect too much light if the room weren't completely dark. Randy wanted to be able to watch sporting events with the room partially illuminated. Da-Lite recommended a 138-inch-diagonal, 16:9, high-gain screen that Randy has been more than satisfied with.

Although he thought he'd get enough bass from the two Definitive Technology subwoofers at the front of the room, Randy decided to really have some fun with his theater. He opted to

to the equipment closet at the back of the theater, where they're attached to a Crown power amplifier that supplies 75 watts of power to each bass shaker for real feel-it-in-your-seat home theater rumbles.



C. In a Randy Mobley home theater, sports and the cinema are equally important.

manuals are easy to decipher and others are gibberish."

Initially, the correct screen and screen size were a big question mark. Randy contacted the folks at Da-Lite and explained that he wanted a screen that would be large enough. He'd opted for front projection and needed a screen

attach a bass shaker to each chair, which wasn't as easy as it sounds. First, he made pedestals from 8-inch steel tubes welded to a plate and bolted them to the underside of each seat, and then he bolted each chair to the floor. The bass shakers are inside the 8-inch tubes, while the wires go down through the floor and snake



The equipment is housed at the rear of the theater in a closet that Randy built. He bought an Avrak gear rack that he found in the pages of *Home Theater*, and he swears by it. Said Randy, "The rack swivels completely around for easy access to the gear, and I'm really happy with it. I was concerned about the equipment becoming too hot, so I bought a 20-inch box fan from Home Depot and built it into the ceiling grid in the closet. The fan takes the hot air, channels it through the rafters,

Resources:

Audio and video from Entertech Professional Sound, Lighting, and Video
6820 Meadowridge Ct., Alpharetta, GA 30005
(770) 887-5606

Technical assistance, satellite system, and line doubler from Audio Video Interiors
408 S. Atlanta St., Roswell, GA 30075
(770) 640-1120

Seating and ottomans from Bonnie Corbell, Liebroc Industries, Inc.
3601 Conway, Ft. Worth, TX 76111
(817) 589-1241

Lumber, electrical supplies, and carpet from Home Depot
870 Woodstock Rd., Roswell, GA 30075