

# HOME ENTERTAINMENT

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## EXTREME MAKEOVER— INSIDE EDITION

A COMPLETE INTERIOR UPDATE OF AN OLD-WORLD ESTATE SATISFIES THE OWNERS' REQUEST FOR FRESH, CUTTING-EDGE DESIGN AND A CHOICE OF ENTERTAINMENT VENUES.

> By "De" Schofield

> Photography by Scott Braman

What is a sleek, contemporary interior design doing within a 1920s English manor home? According to its owners, it's doing very well, thank you. While the exterior of this home presents a stately and elegant first impression, the interiors have transformed this venerable estate home into the ultimate modern residence with 21st-century cool decor that's fully compatible with the family's active lifestyle.

Resplendent in the true English manor vernacular of granite and limestone, the ambitious 2,000-square-foot addition enlarged the home's original floor plan to more than 11,000 square feet. The Old-World facade remained intact, while the interior was fully gutted. Floors were reframed, walls were moved and windows were replaced. To orchestrate the owners' vision, architect James Paragano, who is well known for designing and renovating grand estate homes, was brought in to work with interior designer Patti Smith, who orchestrated the interiors for the owners' previous residence. Gabriel Karlis, of JD Audio & Video Design Inc., oversaw the technological design and installation.

Some of the project's most challenging aspects involved the owners' request for multiple entertainment centers. To that end, the first-floor dining room was retrofitted into a family room, complete with a full media setup. The basement's multifunctional entertainment zone—including a billiards room and bar—required a major excavation and additional square footage to accommodate the necessary 9-foot-tall ceiling.

The new mediacentric family room, directly adjacent to the kitchen, was inspired by the wife's request for a multifunctional gathering space. "She preferred a flexible format—as opposed to a dedicated theater—that would accommodate everyday activities like watching movies and informal entertaining," Smith says, adding that the room's design scheme is uncluttered and unfussy, yet sophisticated at the same time. "Something streamlined and ordered, yet still warm and inviting," says Smith of the owners' request.

The resulting decor counters timeless transitional style with state-of-the-art



technology to produce a fresh and lively living environment. "The owners wanted all of the equipment out of sight and requested that the TV not overpower the room," Karlis says. "The space works for everyday TV viewing, but is equipped with a stealth surround-sound system that's similar to real home theater quality—and very near that which we installed in the entertainment center downstairs."

Now the enlarged 550-square-foot family room accommodates a casually elegant entertainment area for at least a dozen guests. The warm yet bold palette of paprika, copper and bronze sets a relaxed, informal mood that deviates from the home's neutral colors. Fine architectural detailing, such as a coffered ceiling, lends a sense of scale and intimacy within the grand-proportioned space, while metallic-colored walls in bronze provide a glamorous backdrop for the home's transitional furnishings. Two low-slung



*In the family room, top, the 50-inch Fujitsu television is wrapped with stacked stone, a treatment orchestrated by the interior designer. The fireplace wall was made deeper to accommodate the recessed television and to divert heat from the set. Instead of installing floor-to-ceiling draperies, the interior designer utilized striped velvet cornices in paprika, bronze and chocolate.*

*"The televisions, projector and screen were selected for their ability to provide good viewing from multiple angles," says the custom installer of the basement media room, above. Arranged for everyday use, the television setup allows the family to view two programs simultaneously. Or the family can watch a movie or sporting event on one screen while monitoring the security system on the other.*





*Previous page: When the 110-inch electric Stewart Film screen Firehawk descends in front of the two flat-screen televisions, the lights automatically dim for a bona fide theater effect. The wall-to-wall carpeting aids the acoustics. The conversation grouping revolves around two mahogany-finish cocktail tables with polished chrome trim.*

*The lounge area, top, is equipped with a 40-inch Sony Bravia LCD screen. In the billiards room, left, suede-padded walls surround the 42-inch Fujitsu television, while adding textural interest and sound modification.*

sofas and velvet-clad club chairs are grouped around an ottoman covered in a laminated woven fabric. The ottoman doubles as a cocktail table.

The family room's floor-to-ceiling fireplace acts as a backdrop for the powerful entertainment system. Smith's custom-designed plasma television frame, which envelops the 50-inch Fujitsu television, lends a touch of art. The trio of Sonance 623TR speakers are recessed in the ceiling above the television. A pair of Sony surround-sound speakers, some Velodyne subwoofers and a Sony DVD player are hidden in a custom cabinet tucked into the rear of the room. A duo of Sonance rear speakers are recessed in the ceiling just above. All of the media room's technology is controlled easily with a Crestron wireless touch panel/remote that also manages all of the home's distributed audio, lighting, security cameras and HVAC systems.

**D**escend downstairs into the 1,800-square-foot entertainment zone comprising a home theater, billiards room, bar/lounge

and 400-square-foot playroom. "Our goal was to defer to the fact that you're on the lower level," Smith says. "We deliberately wanted something striking and sharp to denote that all the great stuff wasn't over [when you leave the] upstairs."

Glove-soft leather in a robin's-egg blue leads the bold color palette. In the theater, the 9-foot-tall ceilings and minimalist furnishings make the space feel larger than its 500 square feet. Smith's selection of two "sociable" sofas—one a 66-inch-deep, two-sided couch that offers views of the fireplace and the movie screen—provide a jolt of color against the espresso tone-on-tone carpeting. A pair of deep-seated recliners—clad in a geometric-print, raised velvet in aqua and espresso—round out the space.

In keeping with the owners' request for a "nontheater" setting, Karlis installed a 7.1 surround-sound system that features a drop-down Sony SXR D projector and 110-inch electric Stewart Filmscreen FireHawk that's flush with the wall, just above a pair of flat-screen televisions. The projector disappears via a motorized lift that vanishes into ceiling above the double-sided sofa. The

“This project is a stunning combination of a dream client, a gorgeous home, and a cutting-edge design with meticulous execution.”

—Gabriel Karlis, custom installer



upholstered panels of the main media wall frame two 50-inch Fujitsu plasma televisions. Three Triad Silver/6 LCR in-wall speakers, hidden below the televisions, along with two Velodyne 1,200-watt subwoofers, provide movie-quality sound. The Lexicon RV-8 surround-sound receiver is tucked behind the blue-suede-clad push panels that flank the media wall. The remaining components, two pairs of Sonance Symphony S625TR speakers, are hidden in the ceiling toward the rear of the space; the Middle Atlantic AXS-40 equipment rack is installed on slides in a closet on the lower level.

A floating fireplace of bronze-stripped Botticino marble separates the theater from the billiards area. Silver walls and streamlined pendant lighting, accented with silver mesh shades, add a touch of opulence. The 300-square-foot space is anchored with a custom billiards table topped with robin's-egg blue felt. Music and the 42-inch Fujitsu plasma television can be controlled with the in-wall Crestron control panel.

The bar provides seating for five with leather-topped stools. Porcelain tile with a subtle metallic finish yields a practical yet sophisticated backdrop for the interior designer's custom shelving, which is framed with a white glass countertop and backsplash of mosaic-patterned glass. A 40-inch Sony Bravia LCD television rounds out the space.

“This is a young family who wanted the interior design theme to be fresh, timeless and glamorous with transitional detailing,” the architect says. “It's stripped down classicism at its best—restrained but not austere. A very warm, perfect blend of contemporary and traditional.”

The interior designer concurs that the clients were exceptionally happy with the team's hard-won efforts. “We'd asked the family to stay away for the last three days of the installation,” Smith says. “When they arrived to see the finished product, the couple was ecstatic and the kids were jumping up and down. They all loved everything so much.” <sup>[HE]</sup>

## The Technical Side of Things

For custom installer Gabriel Karlis, this installation was an invaluable learning experience. “This is a traditional type of house on the outside, but the interior is very modern, very contemporary,” he says. “And that presented new challenges because everybody does traditional. We have solutions for hiding speakers and equipment in a traditional interior, but the clean lines of contemporary styling require a totally different type of thinking. That really drove our equipment selection.”

Karlis found the Crestron control, distribution and HVAC system a crucial component in maintaining the home's pristine aesthetic, especially in keeping the walls free of light switches and thermostats. “The fact that Crestron offers a full solution made our job so much easier,” he says. “If you don't use Crestron, you have to use a different manufacturer for the audio/video, lighting and HVAC. We've been there and done that, and it didn't give us much control. It did not allow us to easily service the client, because if we had a problem the different manufacturers would just point at each other. With Crestron, we get solutions—not finger-pointing.”

In the media room, Karlis' team maintained a clean look by installing a trio of Triad InWall Silver/6 LCR speakers invisibly within the same wall that houses two 1250-watt Velodyne SC-IW in-wall subwoofers and a pair of Fujitsu P50XHA58EB 50-inch Plasmavision HDTV monitors. Why two plasmas? “They wanted to watch two sporting events at a time, or put on a kids' show and still watch sports,” Karlis says. “Or they could watch a program on one plasma, and monitor the rest of the house on the other.”

If you look closely at the top of that wall, you might notice a 110-inch retractable Stewart Filmscreen tucked away in a tiny soffit—ready to drop down and convert the media room into a stealth home theater. “Normally a screen like this is housed in a 7-by-7-inch case,” Karlis says, “and when you build the soffit, you have to build it for the screen to drop out in front of the wall unit. So you end up with a soffit that's at least 7 inches deep.”

For this client, though, a 7-inch soffit was out of the question. “They wanted it to be no more than an inch or so deep,” Karlis says, “so we had Stewart custom-build what they call a reverse roll so that the screen drops out of the front of the case. So now the 7 inches of bulky box is hidden inside the wall, and we have an inch-and-a-half lip for the screen baton to drop down out of, an eighth of an inch from the wall.”—Dennis Burger

### RESOURCES

**Architect:** James Paragano Architect LLC of Madison, NJ ([jamesparagano.com](http://jamesparagano.com), 973.765.015)

**Contractor:** West End Construction of Mendham, NJ (973.543.8882)

**Custom Installer:** JD Audio & Video Design Inc. of Fort Lee, NJ (201.461.7475, [jdavdesign.com](http://jdavdesign.com))

**Interior Designer:** P. Smith & Co. of Ridgewood, NJ (201.670.3500)



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