WSR's Holosonic™ Home Theatre System
Part VI — Aesthetics And Lighting

SPENCER KALKER

Widescreen Review's New State-Of-The-Art Reference Theatre At New Facility

This is Part VI of a seven-part series of articles on the design, development, and execution of a new state-of-the-art Reference Holosonic™ Home Theatre Lab, built from the ground up, at *WSR's* new facility in Temecula, California (north of San Diego, southeast of Los Angeles). The new facility serves as *Widescreen Review*'s and SurroundMusic.net's review laboratory. Part I appeared in Issue 48 (May 2001) and Part VI appears in this issue.

When Gary Reber contacted me to develop a lighting design, provide lighting products, and seating for *WSR*'s Holosonic Home Theatre Lab, I was very intrigued. ImageCrafters designs, including lighting, seating, and cabinets, are displayed and sold by high-quality specialty A/V stores around the country. This was the first time we would be working on a project, where the theatre was actually going to be used to actually review new DVD releases and products, or so I thought….When I arrived at Ontario Airport at 11:00 pm I whipped out to the curb to a waiting Gary Reber. In a flash, we were off to beautiful Temecula, California. On the 45-minute drive, we discussed in detail how exactly the room was to be used. To my surprise, the plan needed to include more functions and zones than we had ever used in any prior design, more than even "The Ultimate Theater" we worked on with TMH, at Bjorns Audio/Video in San Antonio, Texas.

The lighting plan needed to include the following:

- An entry scene
- A presentation scene
- A front loudspeaker scene
- A surround loudspeaker scene
- A surround back loudspeaker scene
- An equipment scene
- A reviewer's working/writing scene
- A front seating scene
- A back seating scene

ImageCrafters' Spencer Kalker Checking Lighting Install

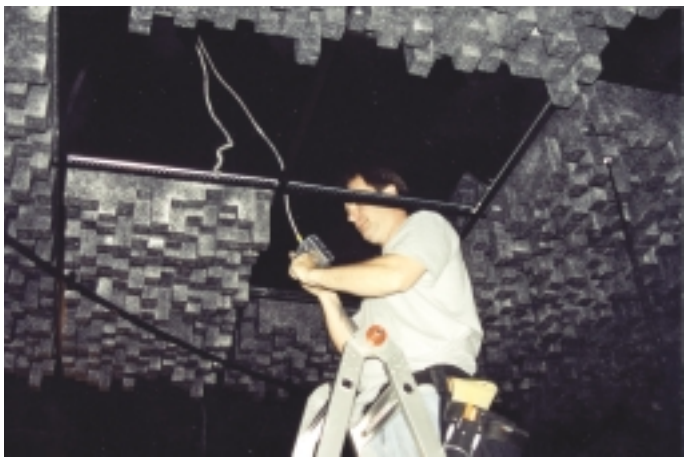
This meant we needed over ten independent lighting zones with as many as ten separate scenes, to accomplish the goals Gary had described to me during the drive. Considering it was after midnight, we called it a night, and met for breakfast to review the actual project site, and determine what specific lighting systems we would use to accomplish the goals.

Once we walked through the space and discussed it in more detail, we decided to use our IC Lights LiteRail system to follow around the "circle of sound." LiteRail can be broken into multiple zones, but will still remain connected, maintaining the appearance of a continuous circle directly above the products. We isolated each zone with our in-line isolators. This all made sense, except we had to also deal with the multiple-level face of the acoustic RPG Diffusor Systems' Skyline ceiling. We overcame that by simply hanging the system through the ceiling with our metal stems (stand-offs), keeping the rail just below the lowest level of the ceiling.

We also added two additional meter-long LiteRails above the electronics as an independent zone. I choose to use Trapeze fixtures for all of the fixtures used to light the equipment, loudspeakers and electronics.

Next, we reviewed the remaining zones and determined that we wanted to simply drop fixtures in specific areas. I recommended the IC Lights LiteDrops system. These are basically canopies that can be attached to the ceiling or walls, and provide a single or multiple connection point for any of the IC Lights UniLite Fixtures. We reviewed our options and decided on using a more decorative fixture, because they would be in view most of the time.

We selected the Radar fixture. It comes in four different lengths and would accept any of the 26 decorative glass shades that are available. Gary really liked the blue glass cone for the front of the room, not only because of the beautiful blue color when it lights up, but because it is relatively dark when it is turned off, not distracting the



ImageCrafters Technition Wiring The Spots

reviewers and movie watchers.

We used these fixtures for the remaining zones including the stage, seating (both front and rear), and the work area. Also, however, we added the blue cones in the back of the room.

Last, but certainly not least, we needed to select a control system that would do the job. I recommended two of Lutron's six-zone Graphic Eyes. Using quality lighting controls with a well-designed lighting system is simply magical. I also recommended their 12-scene remote control, giving the holder complete control over each scene and also the ability to raise or lower the lighting level of each scene. Graphic Eyes work great with line voltage or 12-volt systems, and can be tied into other more sophisticated system controllers.

We reviewed the overall system over lunch, and agreed it completely met all of Gary's stringent requirements, and would enhance the overall function and visual appeal of the space. With the system basically designed, it was time for me to fly back to Boston to make arrangements for the installation, and determine possible bulb selection for each specific fixture.

On the way back to the airport, Gary and I discussed seating for the theatre and his concern that all the chairs he had previewed had high backs that interfered with the true 360-degree, holosonic experience. I informed him that not all theatre chairs had tall backs. In fact, we had designed a chair (model #1933) that had a lower back for that specific reason. We also discussed the quality of the chair and the importance of comfort and surface covering. I reminded him that we used high-quality hardwood frames, high quality recliner mechanisms and cushion foam, and that he could select from eight colors of top quality leathers or over 80 colors of what I consider the perfect material for theatres, Nova Suede. This man-made material feels like top quality suede but with a couple of important differences; it wears like "iron" and is washable, which means popcorn, coke, even wine can be cleaned out—try that with leather. Gary was sold. We ordered three chairs and selected a dark gray color for two and black for the third chair. The overall dark charcoal appearance fit in beautifully with the monochromatic motif that Gary had selected.

Weeks later, our installers were finishing up the installation, and I arrived to make the final bulb selection. One of the most important parts of the system is the bulb selection. All MR 16 bulbs are not created equal. We use high-quality bulbs from Germany that have special qualities such as longer life, better quality reflectors, and a broad selection of beam spreads and wattages. We offer 10-, 38-, and 60-degree beam spreads, and 20, 35, and 50 watts of power. I choose primarily all 10-degree, 35-watt bulbs, giving me the ability to isolate each product and area. This really makes a difference when you need a light turned on, and don't want to light up the whole room. In this case, it allows the *WSR* staff to take notes, type on a laptop or look up specifications in a manual while reviewing. In your home, the scenario may be your spouse reading *Home & Garden* [wait a minute, you mean *Widescreen Review*—Editor Gary] while you're watching *Gladiator*.

With the bulb selection complete, I re-aimed each fixture to maximize the effect, I reviewed each scene, adjusting each zone to provide Gary and his staff the ability to create the perfect scene for each function the room needed to perform. We sat in our IC Chairs, and I went through each scene. Gary then turned to look at me with a huge grin on his face, and said, "This is unbelievable, what a difference." I replied, "Lighting is magic, quality theatres need and deserve quality lighting systems." ■

For more information on ImageCrafters products please contact: Spencer Kalker, President, Image Crafters, Inc., 62 Grace Meadows Drive, Taunton, Massachusetts 02718, 508 828 2668, www.imagecraftersinc.com.

WSR's Reference Holosonic™ Home Theatre Lab Showing Off The Finished Lighting Effects