

# HOMESWEETHOMES

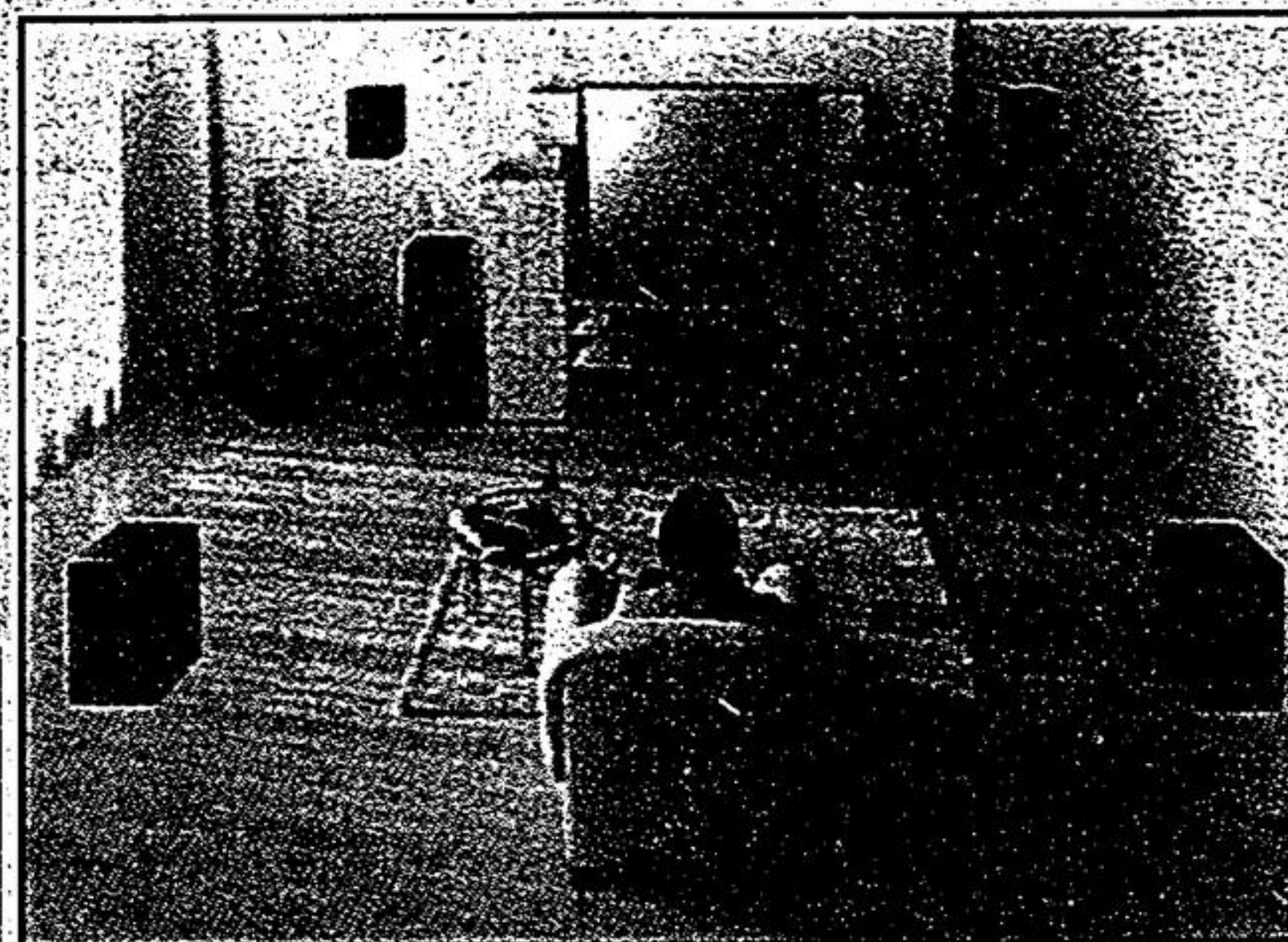
## Getting started with home theatre

The best-selling author and futurist Faith Popcorn predicted in the early '90s that cocooning would become a popular lifestyle choice in the decade to come. She said that people would be staying home in droves and looking for new home-based pursuits to occupy their leisure time.

To a large extent, Popcorn's prediction was right, and one of the biggest phenomena to grow out this trend is home theatre.

What exactly is home theatre? Quite simply, a home theatre is a system that enables you to enjoy movies at home with the audio and visual impact that you would expect from a local commercial theatre.

There are three basic levels to home theatre, an entry level system, an intermediate system and an advanced system. Within these categories there is a lot of range and flexibility.



An "entry level" home theatre combines the following elements: at least a 20" TV, Dolby® Pro Digital receiver, Hi-Fi VCR, laserdisc player or DVD player, front left & right speakers, a centre channel speaker, subwoofer, and a pair of surround speakers. "With the entry level surround system, components can be arranged in a number of different ways in a variety of rooms around the home," says Benny Kwok, owner of Kennedy Hi-Fi in Markham. "These kinds of systems are a good introduction to the home theatre experience and are priced in the \$1,500 - \$4,000 range."

The intermediate level is a more elaborate system and the various components are positioned more precisely around the room. This type of system typically includes sound treatment screen, overhead projector, amplifiers, a DVD player, satellite dish with HDTV (High Definition television), a multi-room and multi-source capability, and cable installation.

At this level, some people also add in things like a multimedia computer, video game system, and audio components (CD, CD changer, tape, even a turntable). The price range for the intermediate system ranges from \$5,000 - \$14,000.

For anyone looking beyond the beginner or intermediate levels, there are custom home theatre systems that combine sophisticated audio/visual technology with custom design elements. To get a complete "just like a theater" system it can cost from \$50,000 to \$500,000, and that does not include the cost of the room to house it.

"Typically, the advanced home theatre system involves the custom design of an entire room that resembles an actual theatre," says Kwok. "It will include the latest stereo and audio technology, custom lighting and an interior design that suits one's lifestyle."

For many movie fans, installing a home theatre is usually the first step in an ongoing process of creating the best possible system for their home.

If you're just starting out, talk to many audio experts and read as widely as possible on the subject before making a purchase. It's easy to get confused by terms such as Dolby Pro Digital, THX and DTS, but learning about them is also part of the fun.

"When shopping around for home theatre components, many people focus only on the size of the screen or the speakers," says Kwok. "But it's also important to choose the right cables and wiring. They're just as important to the overall sound quality."

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