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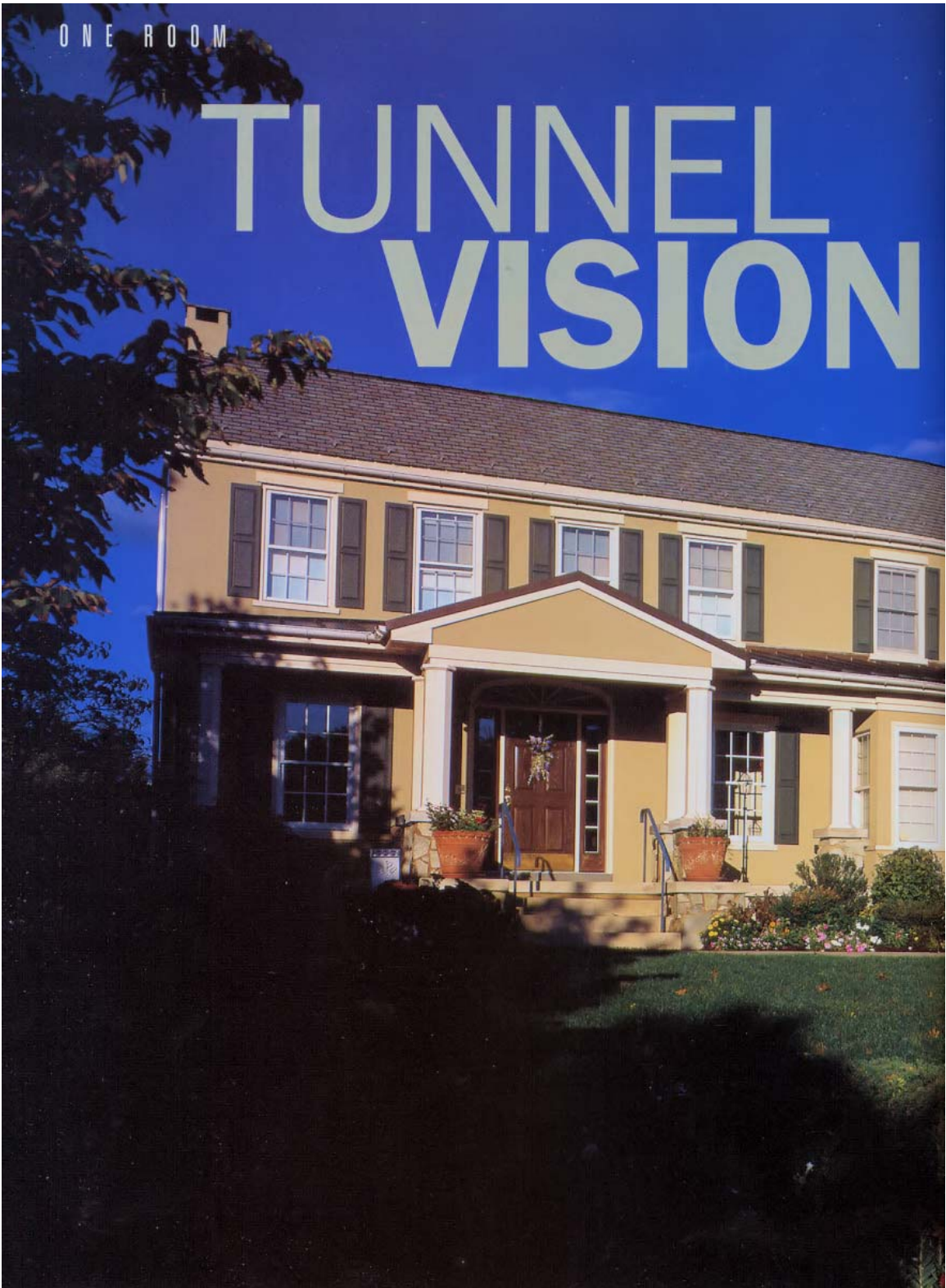
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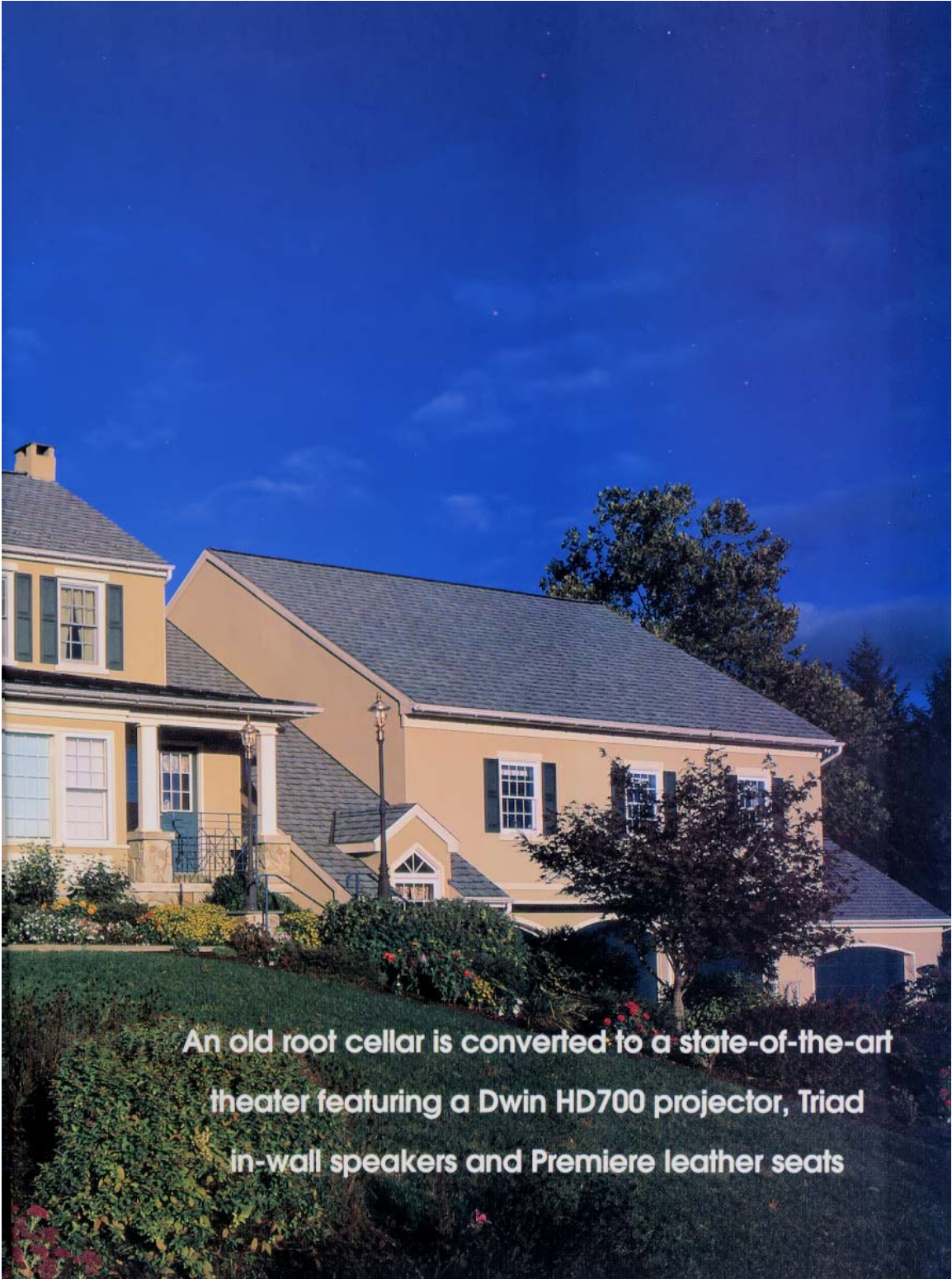
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ONE ROOM

TUNNEL VISION





An old root cellar is converted to a state-of-the-art theater featuring a Dwin HD700 projector, Triad in-wall speakers and Premiere leather seats

STORY BY KRISSY RUSHING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHUCK SPANG

This mid-1800's two-story colonial farmhouse in Lancaster, Pennsylvania remarkably juxtaposes the old and the new. Over the last several years, the homeowners have renovated the home, tacking on several new additions and, most recently, an underground state-of-the-art home theater.

This home theater, however, is not your typical basement install. It was created in the old farmhouse's 14-foot x 26-foot root cellar—a structure used from the 1800s, before the days of the

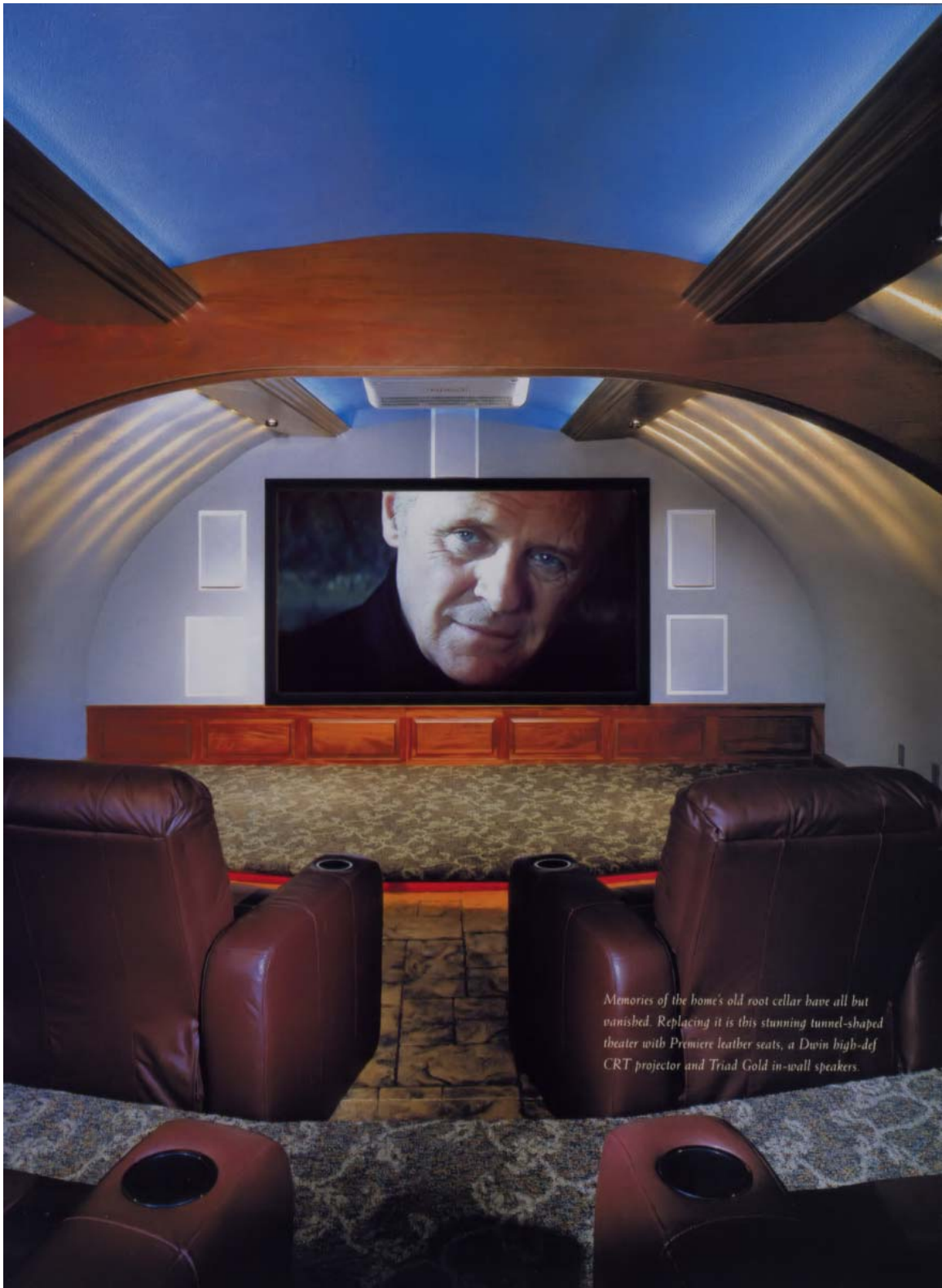


refrigerator, for storing crops and roots, like carrots and potatoes (hence the name) that needed to be kept cool. Quite narrow with low, arched ceilings, and made of dry, laid stone and dirt floors, you'd think a root cellar would be an acoustical and sight-line nightmare, but installer Matt Early of Residential Media Systems in nearby Manheim rose to the challenge. He soon realized, however, that the space wasn't as tricky as he'd first expected.

The room, which metamorphosed once before into an office, had been previously finished with a stamped concrete floor and a concrete stucco finish for the walls. "While the room had a definite reverb issue," says Early, "surprisingly, the tunnel's shape possessed a quality in sound where there was a minimal amount of standing waves, resulting in a warm deadness in the acoustics."

To tame the acoustical weaknesses of the room, Early

and his team, which included Garry Longnecker of Longnecker Construction and Gary Hampton of Hampton Cabinetry, created the necessary staging and risers, then installed carpet and strategically placed mahogany "trays" or crowns, to counteract resonance.



Memories of the home's old root cellar have all but vanished. Replacing it is this stunning tunnel-shaped theater with Premiere leather seats, a Dwin high-def CRT projector and Triad Gold in-wall speakers.

Tunnel Vision



While there were existing phone lines and a few electrical outlets in the cellar-turned-office-turned-theater, Early didn't use any of them for the project. Instead, he used the architectural and design elements to stealthily wire the theater. The trays, arches, and staging provided a space for a network of channels for all the wiring needs. "We carefully laid out the wiring to keep all high and low voltages separate," says Early.

Not only did the theater's structural elements help hide the wiring, but they house the intricate lighting system. "The concept of the lighting was to enhance the interesting shape of the room," says Early. "There had to be a balance between creating indirect lighting while trying to keep the imperfections of the rustic location from being revealed." Early picked Lucifer Lighting (controlled by a Lutron GrafikEye) for the main lights in the room, while strip lights were used



under all the steps and staging as well to create the illumination of the ceiling. Spots were placed on a strip-lighting track to create the lighting pattern on the walls, and P.U.K. lights were implanted into the flat part of the tray to shed light on the 12 burgundy Premiere leather seats. Early achieved the ethereal effect of the ceiling by creatively employing blue filter gels on the uplighting to give the audience the feeling of sitting in moonlight.

Although the ceiling came out beautifully, its inherent proximity to the ground could have posed significant sight-line problems. Ideally, installers would design a room from the ground up, building in risers to their heart's content, at the ideal levels. With an existing, low-ceilinged room, Early had to make the risers shorter than he would have liked to accommodate headroom in the back row. "I am 6-feet, and I feel comfortable in the back row," says



Theater

Vutec VIXWF50X89BW screen
 Dwin System 8 HD700 and transceiver
 Lutron GRX-MR-6-T-BL GrafikEye
 Lutron FRX-IA-232 RS-232 interface
 Middle Atlantic 5-43 racks
 Mitsubishi HSU-776 VCR
 Phast PLBAS8 audio switcher
 Phast PLPCF10 mainframe
 Phast PLCROUT IR card (2)
 Phast PLCSER RS-232 interface
 Phast PLCMCU4 mcu card
 Panja PMB-RF RF remote
 Phast Viewpoint touchpanel
 Premiere Marquee RC-B/47
 Premiere Marquee RCR/52
 RCA DS4440RE satellite receiver
 Sony CDPCX333ES 300 CD player
 Sony DVPS9000ES DVD player
 Sony ST-SE200-ES AM/FM tuner
 SpeakerCraft BB865 multi zone amp
 Triad In-wall Gold LCR/10
 Triad In-wall Gold speakers
 Triad In-wall Silver/15
 Triad Silver Power subwoofer
 Phast PLKMS-1
 Stereostone Classic Stealth speakers
 Stereostone River Rock
 SpeakerCraft Aim Two
 Provideo CVC1700W cameras
 Butticker Bass Shaker
 Carvin DCM-2000 amp
 Peerless JM2650
 Acurus Act-3 pre/processor
 Acurus A200X5 five channel amp
 Lucifer Lighting

Early. "We managed to maximize the dimensions of the room while not obstructing the screen with viewers' heads."

The theater's overall look is one of warmth and leisure. Early and his team helped the homeowners pick out the chairs and persuaded them to go with a deerskin gray finish on the walls to minimize light reflection that would interfere with the apparent brightness of the projector. The clients put their stamp on the theater by selecting the neutral carpet and the color of the chairs. "The dream client allows creative freedom with the knowledge and trust that you will far exceed their expectations," says Early. "Their down-to-earth attitude and desire to have a fun room to complement their easy-going lifestyle made the project very enjoyable."

Like the risers that house the wiring, the mahogany arch at the front of the theater also has aesthetic and practical purposes. It discreetly hides the Dwin HD700 projector, which is practically

out of view. The only evidence that it exists is the beautiful image it projects on to the receptive 104-inch Vutec screen. "The Dwin projector and transceiver combination, in my opinion, created one of the best pictures I've seen," says Early. "Clarity and focus are terrific and the convergence has held up wonderfully."

Without a truly powerful sound system, awesome video is useless. To complete the big picture, Early used Triad In-Wall Golds throughout the room and Triad Silver/15 subwoofers. "These speakers have a terrific natural sound with lots of impact and great separation," says Early. "Center-channel voice imaging is perfect." The speakers are flush with the wall and remain hidden, not detracting from the elegant design of the theater. So that all the explosions in the clients' favorite Bond films could be felt as well as heard, Residential Media Systems installed two Butticker tactile transducers powered by a Carvin power amp into the staging.

Control Freak.



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RELAX. If you could push one button and all the lights of your home adjusted to the perfect brightness, thermostats set the perfect temperature and the irrigation system started to water the lawn, would you like that? Now, if you could sit and surf the net while a favorite song played over your audio system, watch television or check your email and voice mail all from the same machine and without rewiring your entire house, would you like that too? We thought you would. **HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE IN CONTROL?**

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Tunnel Vision



The AMX Landmark control system automates all that wonderful audio and video. The theater is controlled by an AMX Viewpoint touchscreen, which allows users to simply push a button and the theater is illuminated, equipment is fired up, and the DVD logo appears on the Vutec screen. There are four DMS keypads throughout the house that control the satellite TV, CDs from a Sony 200-disc changer, AM/FM radio, and the security system.

The carrots and turnips that formerly occupied this root cellar have also been supplanted for those refreshments without which our movie-watching experience would be utterly incomplete. The homeowners had Early excavate a 100-year-old furnace out of a room at the rear of the root cellar, where a kitchenette complete with ice cold drinks, a candy counter, and a popcorn machine were installed, much to the delight of the clients' two children. The room also houses the family's extensive movie collection, which contains gems starring John Travolta and Sean Connery, who are both represented in the theater's unique Hollywood-inspired mural.



The hand-painted murals, including two snacking children and an office door disguised as a hallway, give the space a unique personality and make it appear somewhat larger. A few famous folk also greet visitors as they walk toward the theater's entrance.

Six months from start to finish and a one-time root cellar is now a remarkable home theater. "There can be disappointing moments in any installer's career when a system is complete and no matter how much more money you spend on it, it still doesn't shine like you had hoped," Early concludes. "This is one of those rooms that just came together naturally, is comfortable and easy to use and performs amazingly." A technological marvel in this 150-year-old home, the theater is an elegant haven where the family can dig some underground cinema. ♦

Audio video design and installation by Residential Media Systems
2730 Schenck Road, Manheim, PA 17545, (717) 898-2203, www.rmsav.com.
Murals by Laurie Irwin, (717) 336-0848.

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