

PRESS RELEASE

Smart cinema seating

Five things to consider when investing in home theatre seating.

28 February 2018, Johannesburg: The first thing anybody thinks of when they think of home theatres is the technological equipment. However, it really ought to be seating, says Claire Gibson from leading furniture manufacturer, La-Z-Boy: “Surprisingly, the first undertaking that needs to be done in any home theatre design, is choosing the number and type of seats that will be placed in the room in question. Although this might sound strange to most AV enthusiasts, when you understand the reasoning behind it, it makes sense – the seating choices will end up dictating a lot of the other elements needed in the room, including acoustic treatments, as well as subwoofer and speaker type and placement. As such – it is far easier to work backwards – select the seating, and then work out from there.”

In fact seating is so important, that leading furniture manufacturer, La-Z-Boy, has partnered with another local seating manufacturer, Grafton Everest, and prominent home theatre and automation experts, Cinema Architects, and designed and built a Home Theatre Showroom at The Bravo Group Head Office in Longdale, Johannesburg. Says Claire: “Seating is an integral part of any home theatre, however, there are very few places that customers can go to get a tactile impression of what the seating will look and feel like in a home theatre setting. As such, in partnership with Grafton Everest and Cinema Architects, we have recently completed a purpose-built Home Theatre Showroom, where customers can enjoy a one-stop home theatre solution – they can come and view, sit in and try out a selection of home theatre suites, as well as take in the mind bending AV experience of a proper home theatre, and speak to experts about what they would like to order for their own home theatre. Customers can view and experience the showroom by appointment.”

However, aside from the aesthetics and how they feel, she says that there are other things that need to be considered when making the seating selection for your home theatre – these include:

1.) Seating placement approach

Claire explains that there are two ways to go about designing cinema seating: from the “outside in” or from the “inside out”:

- **Outside in:** If you are turning an existing room with fixed dimensions into your home theatre, then it is advisable to use the “outside in” approach. Claire says that this approach entails using the size of the room to dictate the maximum number of seats, as well as their type and arrangement.
- **Inside out:** In circumstances where a new room is being built to specially accommodate the home theatre, and there is flexibility in its dimensions, then Claire says you should use the “inside out” method: “Here, you are

completely in control of the outcome, as the flexibility in the final dimensions will allow you to select the ideal number of seats, their type and arrange them in rows.”

2.) Primary versus secondary seats

When deciding how many seats you would ideally like to accommodate in your home cinema, it is always best to first consider how many people will be using it most often. Says Claire: “The majority of people who are building a home theatre would like to design it for the extreme cases – such as having friends and family over to watch the rugby, or big movie evenings. However, the truth of the matter is that 95% of the time it is going to be used only by you and your close family.

“Let’s say, for example, that ideally, you would like 12 seats, and this number was derived by you thinking of the maximum amount of people you would like to accommodate in your home theatre at any one time – the extreme case. In reality, it will just be your family of four using the home theatre for 95% of the time. As such, instead of designing the room for 12, it would be a wiser approach to design it with four really good seats with regards to sound and seating so that it offers the best comfort, acoustics and visuals for 95% of the time. Then, for extreme cases – 5% of the time – you can accommodate the extra people by adding other couches, bar seating or even beanbags,” Claire explains.

3.) Performance-related seating placement

Of course, a home theatre is not just about looking good and feeling comfortable – it is also about the entire viewing experience. As such, Claire says that there are a number of performance-related design principles that need to be considered when designing the layout for the cinema seating, including:

- **Viewing angles:** For the display to fill the viewers field of vision, the viewing angles should be between 36 and 50 degrees.
- **A clear view:** All seats must have a clear and uninterrupted view of the screen in its entirety. As such, if there is more than one row of seating, each row thereafter will need to be on a riser or raised platform so that the viewer’s line of sight is above the people sitting in front of them. Alternatively, the flooring can be angled to accommodate this, as it is in a traditional cinema.
- **A similar bass response:** Due to the influence of room modes, the bass response changes dramatically throughout the room. Although it is a complicated design process to get it just right, each seat should have a similar bass response – this requires consideration of the spatial distribution of room mode peaks and nulls, as well as the influence of speaker and subwoofer placement.
- **Placement from the speakers:** To ensure that the surround speakers are not localised for enveloping sounds, or in other words, the sound pressure level from the surround speakers is not significantly louder than the main screen channels – the listener’s heads should be positioned a minimum of 30cm from the speakers.

4.) Practical seating placement considerations

As with any composition, there are practical considerations that need to be taken into account to maximise the comfort and functionality of the room in question. Claire offers the following two tips that are particular to home theatre design:

- Leave a minimum of 1m for walkways so that people can easily enter and exit the theatre.
- For single recliners, it is advisable to leave a minimum of 0,25m between seats for maximum functionality and comfort.
- Leave a minimum of 1m between rows of seats to accommodate the reclining or inclining functionalities of the motion seating.

5.) Seating types

It is important to select what type of seating you want in your home theatre, as it will dictate the measurements that you need to finalise the seating plan. The most popular type of seating is, without a doubt, motion seating because they are supremely comfortable and supportive. They allow you to recline and put your feet up, while simultaneously providing full support for your back and neck. When it comes to motion furniture, Claire notes that you can choose from recliners or incliners: “An incliner slides forward, while a recliner moves backwards. The advantage of the incliner feature is the ability to position seating just 10cm from the wall, allowing you to maximise the available space.”

She says that cinema seating is very similar to stand-alone reclining chairs, but that they sit together in rows, sharing the armrest space between the seats. She says that you need to consider whether or not you will curve the row of theatre seats or not: “Having a curve in the seats means that people sitting on the ends of the rows will not have to turn their heads towards the centre of the screen, like they do in a straight row. Instead, all seats are pointed to the centre of the screen. However, if you decide to choose this option, you need to keep in mind that a curved row takes up quite a bit more space than a straight row would – it has to be deeper to accommodate the curvature.”

If you would like to experience the La-Z-Boy, Grafton Everest and Cinema Architects’ Home Theatre Showroom, you can make an appointment by calling Cinema Architects on 016 455 1000 or sending an email to info@cinea.co.za or 011 661 1315 to view the seating showroom.

ENDS

Released on behalf of La-Z-Boy (www.la-z-boy.co.za) by The Line (www.theline.co.za).

