

# THEATER HAS EVERYTHING, EXCEPT HIGH TICKET PRICES



Paul and Ann Eckert's Ledgewood home theater features a 156-inch perforated screen, seven RBH speakers and eight comfy recliners. Above, from left, next-door neighbor Brett Osetec, James Eckert, Laurel Ann Eckert and Chris Eckert take in a movie.

With a theater that rivals that of AMC Loews, Paul Eckert of Ledgewood has taken his love of the movies to the next level. After nixing the idea of transforming what was once a playroom for his kids into a guest room, Eckert thought of a way that he and his family could actually use the space almost every day.

His vision came with a \$42,000 price tag, but with the help of Innovative Sound and Security, he got the works: a 156-inch perforated screen (there are speakers installed behind it!), a total of seven RBH speakers (with two additional subwoofers in the ceiling), an upgraded Sony projector, eight cozy suede recliners, a stage and two-step platform for the seating, and two 400-DVD-changer carousels that will play any movie they own with a click of a button.

"At first, I thought it might keep us from going to the movies as often, but that really hasn't diminished," Paul says. "What's nice about our theater is the quality; it's better than going out."

An added bonus, as his 10-year-old daughter, Laurel Ann, points out, is that they never have to deal with other people whispering.

"And there's no sticky stuff on the floors," adds James, 12.

The home electronics ran about \$22,000 on their own, and Paul has his eye on a single \$1,200 LCD remote control that would control all of his theater's components.

"I get a little crazy sometimes," Paul says.

To top it all off, movie posters featuring such films as "The Godfather," "Star Wars" and "Rocky" adorn the walls. He's even made room to commemorate more recent flicks, like "300," which is perfect, because that's precisely how many movies he owns, and about how much money he typically drops on a trip to a movie store.

"We can't go to FYE and walk out without 15 new movies. Some people may go to Blockbuster and buy previewed movies, but I like buying brand new; that way, they're fresh," Paul says. "The idea of a home theater is that you might spend as much as \$25 on a movie, but you can watch it forever."

An old-fashioned (but fully functional) popcorn machine sits in the corner. Heavy curtains are draped over the room's two windows, so that even in broad daylight, a flick of the light switch will shield movie watchers from anything but the screen.

"The rest of the house can be functional, and what we're watching doesn't interfere with anyone else. There's never any 'shushing' going on here," Paul says.

Despite all of the high-tech equipment and the potential for the ultimate movie experience every single day, what Paul enjoys most about his home theater is something actually quite simplistic, and entirely free.

"I like that I always know where my kids are," he says.

**Name:** Paul Eckert.

**Town:** Ledgewood.

**Age:** 42.

**Occupation:** General manager of recycling operations at a New York-based material producer.

**Spouse:** Ann, 42, stay-at-home mom.

**Kids:** Christopher, 14, James, 12, and Laurel Ann, 10.

**DVD collection:** 300, all accumulated within the last year.

**Favorite genre:** Sci-fi, action/adventure. Each Eckert has a different preference: Ann loves the classics, Christopher is into horror,

James is obsessed with his comedies and Laurel Ann likes musicals.

**Movie Paul could watch over and over again:** "The Godfather."

**TV show(s):** "Lost." "I don't often watch TV, unless we're watching a movie that happens to be playing on TV," Paul says.

**Total number of TVs:** Seven flat-screens. "We're pretty television-oriented," he says.

**Other hobbies:** Riding quad motorcycles with the kids or taking his convertible corvette out for a spin on the weekends.

**Average cost for a family trip to the movies:** \$75.

## A GIANT SCREEN FOR A GIANTS FAN

It was a love of the game that initially inspired Pete Rizzolo of Randolph to install his own home theater. After the diehard sports fan went on a walkthrough of a model home (with a basement home theater) in his neighborhood, Rizzolo immediately recognized what a big-screen TV, Surround Sound speaker system and lots of seating could do for his Monday-night football experience. He was hooked.

"I said right then and there that if I get anything in my house, this is what I'm doing," he says. "I wanted a room for myself, and I wasn't asking for a tool shed or a new car ... but for something everyone can enjoy."

Though it's still a work in progress, Rizzolo has already shelled out \$10,000 for his theater. The system, which was installed by James Leckie of Innovative Sound and Security, includes a 100-inch screen, six black leather theater-seat recliners, a Sony projector, five Surround Sound speakers and other Sony AV components tucked away in a closet. Rizzolo built his own stage to elevate the second row of seating and installed lighting around the edges to further simulate an actual movie theater.

He's taking his time deciding on what to do next, but hopes to eventually add light sconces, curtains and posters, in addition to a microwave, refrigerator, Coke machine and a concession stand. It was easy for him to decide on the color scheme, though: blue, red and white, for his favorite team, the Giants.

When his buddies aren't over helping him root his team to victory or watching Ultimate Fighting Championship, the room becomes an escape for his wife and kids. His 3-year-old daughter, Julia, and 8-year-old son, Nicholas, take turns watching films like "Enchanted" and "Transformers" on "the big screen," as Julia calls it, and Pete says he often catches his wife and her girlfriends watching "some chick flick."

"When I see them watching 'Flicka' or 'Steel Magnolias,' I tell them, 'you can't watch that in here!'" he jokes. "I say, 'I did this for football,' but in reality, we just like to watch videos together. I don't tell anybody that, though. I still say it's for the Giants."

"It's a guy thing," Maria laughs. **RM**



Pete Rizzolo's home theater in Randolph features a 100-inch screen, six black-leather theater-seat recliners, a Sony projector and five Surround Sound speakers.

**Name:** Pete Rizzolo.

**Town:** Randolph.

**Age:** 39.

**Occupation:** Police officer, Parsippany.

**Spouse:** Maria, 37, national sales manager for Rampage (NY).

**Kids:** Nicholas, 8, and Julia, 3.

**Favorite sports team:** New York Giants.

**DVD collection:** 120 (the kids have their own collection).

**Favorite movie(s):** "Anything new," Pete says. "For every birthday or holiday, DVDs

are all I ask for."

**Other family hobbies:** "We love vacations and travel a lot," Maria says. "We're going to Italy this year, we go to Arizona a few times a year, we're doing Wildwood in the summer, Disney World in the fall and day trips like Atlantic City in between."

**Total number of TVs:** Eight total, with Surround Sound speakers and other home electronics throughout the house. "We're a big TV family," Pete says.

**Average cost for a family trip to the movies:** \$60.