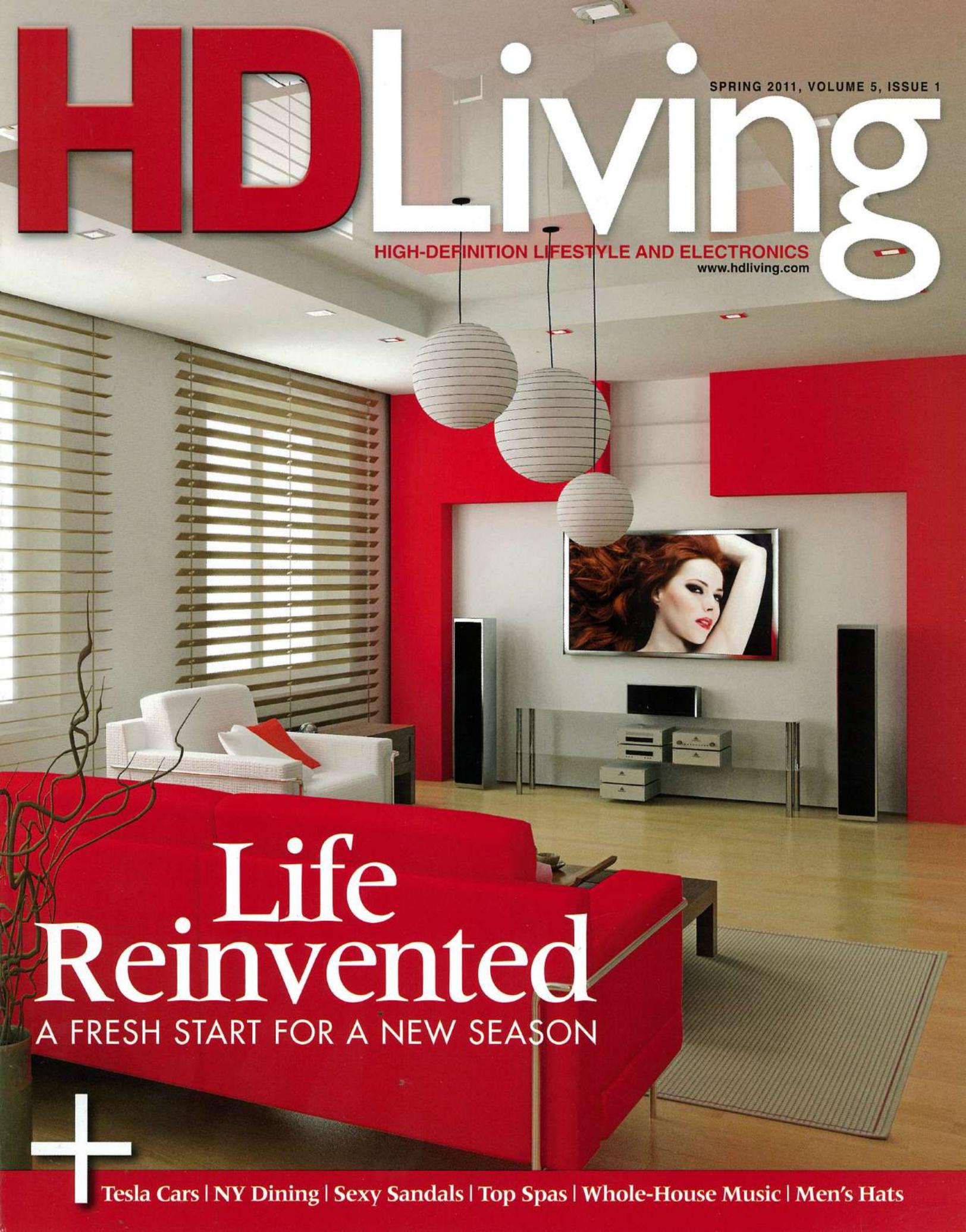


HD Living

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Cave Comfort

Electronics Design Group provided homeowner with the 'man cave' of his dreams.

Marriage is, among other things, about compromise. When these New Jersey homeowners were planning their dream home, she got the kitchen and master bath she always wanted. He got his man cave, complete with bar/kitchen, wine cellar and home theater.

The lower-level space was a blank canvas when blueprints began, so EDG gave the man the cave of his choice: a dedicated enclosed screening room with cinema-style seating or the kind of open multi-purpose entertainment space many customers opt for today. He chose home theater classic where family and friends could relax watching sports or movies with a no-compromise audio/video system.

EDG designed rows and risers so that everyone





would have a clear view of the screen, and they met the customers' wish for extra seating with a third row of stools with a bar in front to accommodate food and drinks. Comfortable theater seating is a must, but EDG also likes to design in creature comforts, and home theater audiences don't want to have to balance food on their laps while watching the big game or a movie. Here, they have the best of both worlds.

EDG designers use computer-aided design programs to ensure sound and video are optimized for each seat location. The owner wanted to experience movies in aspect ratios of 2.35:1 or 2.4:1, the way most movies are shot, so EDG designed a Runco and Stewart Filmscreen projector and screen system that would accommodate those movies. That eliminates black bars at the top and bottom of the screen when 16:9 movies are up.

Exceptional sound was another note on the wish list and EDG met the challenge with an array of B&W loudspeakers built into the walls around the theater. Front-channel speakers stream the main left and right channel sound, a center-channel speaker delivers dialogue, and surround- and rear-channel speakers fill out the effects that place you in the middle of the action. Two B&W subwoofers give every crash and boom its full punch.

Since plans for the theater were drawn up before the house was built, EDG was able to work with the architect and builder to create the dual entry to the theater

that the homeowner wanted. One entry is through the bar area for informal sports viewing. When it's time for a night at the movies, guests enter through the foyer past the formal lobby with movie posters where they can stop to pick up a bag of steaming popcorn from the popper.

Lighting plays a starring role in this ultimate screening room. A Lutron lighting system comes with a keypad that the family uses to choose automated scenes for a particular event. Lights are programmed at brighter settings for Monday night football, for instance, so when the Sports button is tapped, lights preset to a higher level appropriate for socializing and viewing a football game. A Movies button brings lights down slowly over 30 seconds to give viewers time to settle into their seats before lights fade out to dark. When the movie is over, a tap on the remote control reverses the light fade, bringing levels up slowly while the audience adjusts to the brightness.

It takes a pile of heat-producing equipment to create the atmosphere of a movie theater. EDG built an equipment room adjacent to the theater where support gear is stored and kept cool to preserve the life of the electronics. When it's time to upgrade or service equipment, there's plenty of room to access the neatly stacked gear that comes with its own carefully labeled wiring diagram.

Comfort meets quality in this Digital Age cave and the audience never leaves disappointed. 

| ELECTRONIC DESIGN GROUP

Service on Steroids

Electronics Design Group establishes revolutionary new Client Care Center to address customers' continuing service needs.

In a perfect world, you'd have a home theater installed in your home and it would function perfectly forever. End of story. But we all know that's an unrealistic scenario.

Truth is, over time, even the finest electronics equipment money can buy will go. Batteries will run out of juice. Lights will burn out. Nothing lasts forever.

One innovative home theater specialist, however, has come up with its own solution to this challenge. Electronics Design Group (EDG), an integrator based in Piscataway, N.J., has established a new Client Care Center, an operation which has the singular purpose of doing everything possible to ensure EDG's customers continue to experience flawless service for years to come.

"The Client Care Center is basically a service department on steroids, for lack of a better term" comments EDG Director of Client Care Keith Cottrell. "Our goal is do something that this young industry has been unable to do traditionally, which is to raise the bar on service, be a little bit more proactive in our approach, trying to touch base with clients before their systems break, which is like having a crystal ball sometimes."

Established in the fall of 2008, the Client Care Center is the go-to destination for EDG customers seeking service, repairs, upgrades, or simply answers to their questions. It's Cottrell's goal that the center will break the mold of what people expect from a traditional service department.

"No matter what industry you're involved in," he says, "no one likes to call a service department, because it means something's broken. It means you have to pay for something to get fixed and it's just a stressful situation when you want something to work and it doesn't."

To set itself, and EDG in general, apart from the rest, the CCC is looking at what other service departments are doing in the home theater industry—and then doing things completely differently. "We're kind of reinventing the wheel," Cottrell says, "and trying to dig into other resources in terms of what customer service is all about. ... Things break, so it's frustrating, especially if (customers) haven't used their systems for a while. They go to have a party, or entertain, or sit back and relax with their family—and the system doesn't work. Usually it's on a Friday or Saturday night when that happens."

"One of the first things we did to make sure we get that far-reaching approach across is we established an emergency care rotation," Cottrell says. "Every technician is on call. There's one technician on call after hours, Monday through Sunday. ... It's also backed up with a supervisor. Most of the time it's things that we can remedy over the phone."

In hopes of preventing outages from occurring, the Client Care Center is trying to work more proactively—and encourage clients to do the same. "There's no way for any of us to know when electronics are going to break," Cottrell says. "Even properly maintained electronics—when they want to go, they go."

Things like batteries, bulbs on projectors, power supplies, connections, that, over time, come loose or break—all can be inspected on periodic system checkups. Wiping down video monitors so your TV has better brightness or picture quality—most folks don't think about that."

But if the center is successful in its mission, clients will think about such things. "The maintenance is really going to drive that point home. ... We have to establish the value, which is part of the education that your electronics are going to break and our number one job is to reduce your stress. In order to do that, you need to allow us to get in there and do the maintenance."

One recent interaction with a client showed Cottrell how effective the center can be. "We had a client up in Connecticut," he recalls. "His home is about an hour and a half from our location. He (contacted) our after-hours support on a Sunday because his Crestron and Lutron systems were down. He spoke to our on-call technician who tried walking him through a reset on the phone that didn't work. ... The next day, after one of our dedicated technicians was done with his service calls, we rolled his van all the way up to Connecticut to do an on-site assessment."

"It turned out that his Crestron processor had taken a hit by a surge or a lightning event," Cottrell continues. "We were able to find (a replacement processor) in our warehouse (and) get it pre-programmed by one of our project managers. We had it delivered via courier to the technician, who got the system back up and running. So less than 24 hours after he initially called, we got him back on line. I received an e-mail thanking us profusely for being able to do that for him."

For now, Cottrell is focused on spreading the message about the center and educating EDG clients on preventative measures they can take at home, including stocking their own backup parts such as bulbs and batteries, so repairs can be done quickly if something goes.

Cottrell believes that over time, EDG customers will embrace the Client Care Center and take advantage of what it has to offer. "It's a good value," he says. "Just like any other program, you get out of it what you put into it."

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