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the big ticket: surround sound systems

AN IMMERSIVE CINEMA EXPERIENCE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR SOFA IS WITHIN REACH - HERE'S THE LOWDOWN

The idea of home cinema experience – one where you can hear every quiet whisper or subtle sound effect as if they're happening around you – is an appealing one. As far as a cinema-like set-up goes, it's an essential, allowing you to hear the film just as the director intended. And with so many award-winning productions across so many streaming services, doesn't it make sense to invest in something that brings the cinema to you?

A luxurious surround sound system is something many of us would love to have – but it's also something that can be hard to make a start on. With the popularity of soundbars and Bluetooth speakers booming over the last few decades, looking at true home theatre systems comprising multiple speakers can seem overwhelming in comparison. But building a sound system is relatively simple and can be done in a variety of ways depending on your comfort level, experience and the space you have to play with.

Broadly speaking, you can opt for a complete kit with everything you need, or you can pick and choose for a tailor-made system, which takes a little more thought but is easier to expand gradually. Setting up a DIY system requires assembling only the speakers you need or have the space for, with the option to add more in the future. Many brands offer both, with starter kits and standalone speakers, subwoofers and soundbars that can be added to the system whenever you choose.

A 5.1 surround sound system – a popular choice – will comprise two front-facing speakers, two rear speakers, a centre speaker and a subwoofer. True surround sound systems require an AV receiver to work together, so this should be your first step. Many ready-made surround sound systems will include these, but some will not, and if you purchase separate speakers to create your own system, you'll need to add one.

After this, the centre channel needs to be your next concern. The centre speaker is responsible for essential elements in the soundscape, like dialogue, so a good one is essential for anyone using their system with a TV. If you have a particular brand in mind, you'll want to ensure that your receiver, speakers, subwoofer and soundbar (if you're including one) are compatible with one another. The best way to do this is to stick to one brand for everything, though some will allow you to mix and match.

SOUNDBARS THAT
COME WITH EXTRA
SPEAKERS ARE A
SOLID CHOICE IF
YOUR MAIN PURPOSE
IS MAKING YOUR TV
SOUND BETTER



Bespoke joinery by HUX London ensures a sleek surround sound system

Next, consider your wider speaker set-up. Soundbars that come with additional speakers are a solid choice if your main purpose is making your TV sound better. High-end soundbars will often come with their own rear speakers and subwoofer, but floor-

standing speakers are an extra. Unlike bookshelf speakers, floor-standing speakers should be 'floating' away from walls and at an equal distance from the centre speaker on either side. It's common to place them on each side of a TV. The subwoofer, meanwhile, is responsible for much of the depth and bass of your audio and is usually placed on the floor close to the rest of your set-up.

Happily, today's surround sound systems are sleeker, subtler and have fewer messy wires than older versions – so incorporating one into your scheme should be seamless. It might sound like a complex undertaking, but once you're set up, you've got a versatile cinema-like arrangement that will improve film nights like nothing else.