

Sound and vision

Design consultant, Tracy Leach, says poor decor could compromise that expensive sound system.

THE mood and function of a room can be strongly affected by how sound travels within the space, yet the acoustics of a room are often not considered as part of the design process.

When buying a new plasma screen or music system, think about how the interior decoration of the room will affect the acoustics, as the quality of sound may be compromised by not paying attention to the décor.

The key to decorating with sound is to think "reverberation". In basic terms, reverberation time is the number of seconds that a sound can be heard in a room after the sound source is cut. In a domestic interior, a long reverberation time turns a room into an echoing cave.

Decorating with the recent trends of hardwood flooring, painted walls, and minimalist soft furnishings will only add to this reverberation problem. Painting a wall or ceiling can reduce its sound absorbency as the surface becomes less porous.

To counterbalance this effect, a combination of materials can be selected for walls, ceilings, floors and soft furnishings. Think about materials with absorbent surfaces.

For flooring, additional thick rugs on a wooden floor would help to soften the effect. Alternatively, use wall-to-wall carpets in a neutral textured weave in the social areas, such as the sitting room and TV room. Hard surfaces, such as tiling and wooden flooring, can be used to define practical areas, such as the kitchen, bathrooms and hall. This layering of natural textures will add depth and warmth to any home.

For walls, think wallpaper. Wallpaper designs have changed dramatically in the last five years, and it is more popular than ever. Amazing textured linen, silk and faux suede can now be used. A strong, bold pattern can be used on a feature wall to give a room depth and an attractive focal point. The traditional technique of "walling", where walls are clad with fabric, would add a luxurious touch to any design scheme.

For soft furnishings, think curtains and luxurious roman blinds. New technology has brought exciting new textures into the fabric world, with laser-cut motifs and silks embossed with velvet.

When considering how to allocate your budget for curtains and soft furnishings, the quality of the making is paramount.

For tight budgets, opt for a simple, natural fabric, and have the curtains or blinds beautifully made by a professional, rather than opting for an expensive fabric and attempting DIY. Ensure that curtains are lined and interlined to give a sense of opulence.



The walls in this music room have been rendered with woven grass paper. The combination of the modern lighting and the traditional woven texture works well in this contemporary/colonial design



AFTER a dozen years in banking, Tracy Leach decided to retrain in interior design. After studying for a year, Icon Interiors Ltd was born, and projects have ranged from one-room makeovers to whole-house renovations. Tracy works from home at Overton and can be reached on 01256 770757, or visit www.iconinteriors.org



This sculpted rug, called Eddy and by Top Floor Rugs, balances the classic/contemporary scheme



Try to ensure that your curtains are lined and interlined to give a sense of opulence.



A feature wall clad in silk wallpaper creates a stunning backdrop in a contemporary space