

# Living Large

## TK LIVING EXPANDS MARKET FOR DESIGNER FABRICS, FIXTURES, CARPETS, AND ACCESSORIES

by Karen Mitchell

Two years ago, prominent private theater designer Theo Kalomirakis, founder of TK Theaters, and his VP of sales and marketing James Theobald envisioned putting together a collection that would capture the essence of those custom elements that define the "TK signature," making it easier and more cost-effective for installers and contractors to build elegant and inviting home theaters.

The result is TK Living, a distinctive brand carrying the imprimatur of Kalomirakis and CINEAK, the Sausalito, California, home theater seating company founded by Alvin Hellemans.

The collection features innovative specialty products such as acoustically transparent designer fabrics, unique architectural lighting fixtures, luxurious carpets, and a variety of one-of-a-kind accessories that include poster displays, decorative speaker grilles, exit signs, theater-door hardware, and more.

CEDIA EXPO 2010 attendees will get the first full look at the collection in the September, but a sneak preview was revealed last month at the gala showroom opening for the custom installation company SEAL Solutions, in Islandia, New York. SEAL's showroom/theater features one of TK



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Living's theater styles, utilizing many of the items offered in the line. It highlights cost-effective construction, design, and engineering, according to Kalomirakis.

### Three Theater Designs Available

TK Living's proprietary finishes and accessories are sold exclusively through the CEDIA channel to end-users and designers. "This allows custom installers to sell to the end-users the elements that look as good as in the pictures, and if there is a designer involved, he buys the elements with a built-in markup," Kalomirakis noted. "If a client comes in without a designer, the dealer makes the whole margin."



“ This suite of products lets others design theaters on their own, knowing that we’ve taken the R&D responsibility out of it for them. ”

— James Theobald, VP of sales and marketing, TK Living



TK Living's James Theobald (left) boasts a design background that serves him well in his capacity as TK Living's vice president. TK Living carries the imprimatur of Kalomirakis and CINEAK, the Sausalito, California, home theater seating company founded by Alvin Hellemans (right).

Our concept is to allow designers to share in the profits, so they don't do the design incorrectly."

TK Living makes the three theater designs available for custom fitting into the client's home. "For a charge, we can take the design and stretch it to fit a room perfectly, and we provide the package documents to the builder," Kalomirakis explained. "Our elements bring

back flair. Our carpets and acoustical fabrics—our most proprietary elements—don't look like burlap. And our grilles are long pieces, six feet high, with pre-designed columns."

#### Partnering with CINEAK

TK Living's Theobald, who has worked with Kalomirakis since 1996, boasts a design background that serves him well in his capacity as TK Living's vice president (Hellemans is president), and, in fact, personally designed CINEAK's Bruges chair.

"I thought about launching a collection on my own, but it became apparent that the requirements were too great," Theobald recalled. "Rather than a joint venture, TK Living is a 100-percent new company with partners from both TK Theaters and CINEAK."

Kalomirakis and Theobald are based in New York and have always been service driven, offering architecture, interior design, and engineering. "We're not set up to be a product delivery business even though we often spec products into our drawings," Theobald said. "I had a strong relationship with Alvin and I liked the way CINEAK did business; they had an established network of dealers and reps and that was a big part of the puzzle. I didn't even consider anyone else."

#### Fabrication is the Hard Part

The partnership itself was the easiest part, according to Theobald. The biggest challenges came because TK Living's products are unique, have specific engineering features, and would be needed in relatively small quantities.

"We had to go and see vendors, often revisiting them, and discovering some in small-town America," Theobald said. "We needed vendors willing to spend the time with us to help develop the products that often require sending things back and forth dozens of times for testing and engineering."

In a harsher financial climate, it

## Former Navy SEAL Partners with TK Living



TK Living founder Theo Kalomirakis (left) with SEAL Solutions founder Chris Wylie, during SEAL's grand opening in Islandia, New York, last month.

The April 8 grand opening of Long Island's SEAL Solutions featured an exclusive sneak preview of the new TK Living line of architectural detailing products, acoustical fabrics, seating, lighting and other accessories created by Theo Kalomirakis.

SEAL Solutions was founded by former Navy SEAL Chris Wylie, to offer complete custom installation services, including architectural design, construction, systems

integration, and more to the New York metro area. Wylie has had a life-long passion for electronics. He graduated from the U.S. Navy's Advanced Electronics School and has a CEDIA Level One Installer certification.

"I wanted to instill our business with the pride and professionalism I learned in the Navy," Wylie said. "In today's challenging economic times, a business has to provide customers with the highest levels of quality, service, and value. Our affiliation with Theo Kalomirakis and with top-level manufacturers, and the opening of our new showroom reflect SEAL's commitment."

—Jeremy J. Glowacki

can be redundant for many companies, including builders and architects, to hire a design firm, but with TK Living, they can rely on their established home theater design history and perhaps win some projects that would otherwise be on hold or be lost, Theobald says. "This suite of products allows us to let others design theaters on their own, knowing that we've taken the R&D responsibility out of it for them. For example, our acoustical fabric line has been rigorously tested."

#### GETTING THE WORD OUT

Theobald says that TK Living will eventually advertise its collection, but will market through its rep and dealer network first. "I was getting tremendous feedback from dealers back in September when all we had was column grilles and fabrics along with the concept," he remembered. "We've come a long way since then. A lot of dealers were running into technical problems with designers, builder, and architects already hired by clients. TK Living gives dealers unique designer-grade engineered materials without affecting AV performance."

The collection, Kalomirakis says, does not compete with the high-end clientele needs of TK The-

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## Expanding the Market for Home Theater



SEAL Solutions' showroom features an exclusive sneak preview of the new TK Living line of architectural detailing products, acoustical fabrics, seating, lighting, and other accessories.

TK Living is an effort, in part, to reach out to consumers who have the perception that it is prohibitively expensive to do a custom theater because of the design fees, Theo Kalomirakis says. In addition, it makes available exceptional elements to those clients who have the desire and resources to create their own theaters.

"At one time, designers were intimidated about undertaking home theaters on their own," he said. "It's a specialty to make sure that the acoustics worked properly, etc. Everybody doing home theaters went to CEDIA, and CEDIA professionals referred them to companies that specialized in theaters. If the project was high-end, they called us."

In the current economic climate designers think twice before inviting a third party to design a client's theater, so they often try to do it themselves, creating competition for the CEDIA market, Kalomirakis says. "What's disappointing is not that CEDIA and TK Theaters lose ground, but that designers don't know much about the engineering aspects and how finishes may negatively impact the performance of the room. For example, they look for nice expensive fabrics to put in front of speakers, thereby hindering acoustics and negating the technology."

Eventually, Kalomirakis says, designers will catch up. "But right now it's a challenge. Consumers lose that edge that CEDIA brings to the table. We decided to create a line that appeals to designers, so designers will want to work with CEDIA, not exclude it."

—Karen Mitchell

aters. "The tradeoff with TK Living is that you don't get a grille that nobody else has," he said. "We don't bastardize our custom pieces; we just make available the elements that have made our theaters look attractive, without the design fee. This brings to CEDIA well-thought-out and well-designed pieces that the average consumer finds in good stores for the rest of the house." Karen Mitchell is a freelance writer based in Boulder, Colorado.

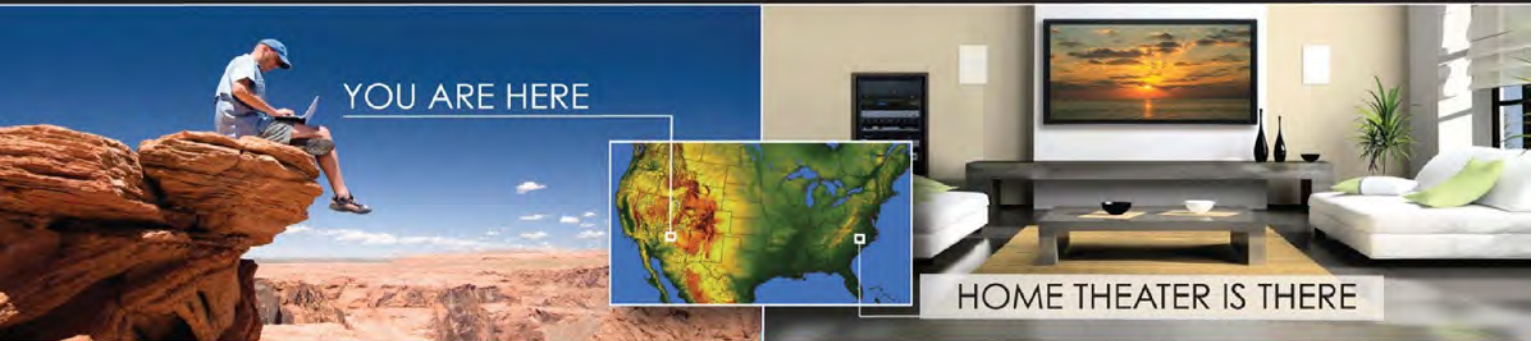
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