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THE BIG PICTURE

A growing number of upscale hotels are adding state-of-the-art screening rooms to cater to movie buffs and tech-savvy guests.

LUXURY TRAVEL IS ALL THE rage, and leading that trend are countless luxury hotels, all of which are vying for your attention with temptations that include welcome gifts of French bubbly and fine Belgian chocolate, Frette linens and bathrobes, plasma TVs equipped with surround sound and beautifully designed bathrooms that are larger and far

BY LOUISE FARR

THE BIG PICTURE

more than extravagant than your favorite neighborhood day spa.

The newest amenity to arrive on the luxury hotel scene is the private screening room—orchestrated to offer well-heeled travelers something to keep them coming back for more. Guests can rent out the private cinema for their own special event, or arrive with some of their favorite DVDs in tow in case they get the urge to watch them on a big screen in solitude. And you never know, the hotel may be hosting a movie screening or an actor/director Q&A while you're in town, so be sure to ask.

From Los Angeles to New York and beyond, we've traveled the globe in search of the most beautiful hotel screening rooms. Here, we present seven of our favorites. So send this story to your travel agent and book your own tour of some of the hottest screening rooms around the world.



THE WHISKEY AT W NEW YORK—New York City When nightclub entrepreneur Rande Gerber and his Midnight Oil Co. were designing The Whiskey in the basement of the W New York hotel, he envisioned a performance area. "I wanted this space to be adaptable to any event: movie and video premieres, live music or just psychedelic images for dancing," Gerber says.

So as an adjunct to a sleek bar and a colorful dance floor fashioned from tiles filled with brightly colored oil, interior designers George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg, of Toronto- and New York-based Yabu Pushelberg, built a screening room that can be curtained off. When it's not in use, the space opens up to the rest of the bar.

Opened in December 2001 while New York was still reeling from the September 11 terrorist attacks, The Whiskey—with its high-tech yet '70s retro vibe—caught on quickly, as Gerber's clubs tend to do. Since then, the screening room, with its black carpeting, white leather scoop chairs by Cappellini, and blue glass-and-metal tables, has appeared in *The Cell* and *8 Mile*.

For the audio, Gerber hired Ted Rothstein of Manhattan's TR Technologies. Rothstein, who worked previously for Gerber and his wife, model Cindy Crawford, has designed studios for the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd and Eddie Van Halen, and has created systems for 10 W hotels and more than 140 theme restaurants.

At the ultrahip Whiskey, a nightclub and screening room housed on the bottom floor of the boutique hotel W, video revs up the club mood and serves as living art. It took a team of 12 men to deliver the custom-made 16-foot-by-9-foot video screen. The screen, as seen below, is essentially positioned one floor below street level.

PHOTOS BY GROSS & DALEY



Because Rothstein feels architects and interior designers do not always respect technology in the way a custom installer does, he considers it a coup that his 1,600 square feet of fabric-wrapped fiberglass wall panels survived the design process. His audio system, similar to those he has crafted for producers and musicians, alternates between different modes to suit different types of sound: two modes for music, one for movies and one for VHS or DVD formats. The surround sound is integrated into separate systems for the bar and lounge area, which boasts a full DJ booth for spinning vinyl and playing CDs.

“Sometimes the DJ will break into a song with a video, or there may be a really cool classic film [playing] to the sounds of the DJ,” Gerber says. Or the Whiskey staff can use Rothstein’s own DJ system—a computer loaded with hundreds of store-bought CD music that’s similar to the one he installed for a loft scene in *Spider-Man*. The room’s custom-designed, 16-foot-by-9-foot rear-projection, high-definition projection screen is the largest screen Rothstein has produced to date. “It looks like a huge television sunk in the wall,” he says.

At first, the designers worried about a design that combined a club and screening room. “It took numerous tries in because we were mixing functions. But I think it was a smart thing to do,” Pushelberg says. “Rande drove it. He’s a smart guy.”

Says Gerber, “The only way I would do it was to do it right. It was expensive and totally worth it.” *The Whiskey*: 212.903.7444 or www.mocbars.com.