



Planning Your

Home
Cardio
Theater

by Charles Miske

Planning Your Home Cardio Theater

2nd Edition with Case Study

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PREFACE

What is a Cardio Theater?

Large franchise gyms offer what they've named "Cardio Theater" - a big dark room full of cardio equipment with a very large screen at the front with gigantic deep booming speakers, so you could watch movies while riding to your aerobic contentment.

This might be awesome for some, because you get absorbed into the movie and don't realize you've been riding your machine for 90 minutes or more. You were in the dark, and no one could see your sweat-stained clothing, or your dripping hair and face and running makeup. Heck, skip the makeup, since no one can even see you.

Unfortunately, because it's dark, they can stuff the older abused machines in, packed like sardines with hardly room to get around to mount them. Everyone has their own movie preferences, and while some totally rock their cardio to a silly romantic comedy, or period piece, or social commentary, others love action thriller horror movies.

So you memorize the schedule, or hope for the best, and if you have a set workout time window each day, you're stuck with what you get. Or you move to the open cardio area with the bank of TV's overhead and watch one of 16 carefully selected generally non-offensive channels.

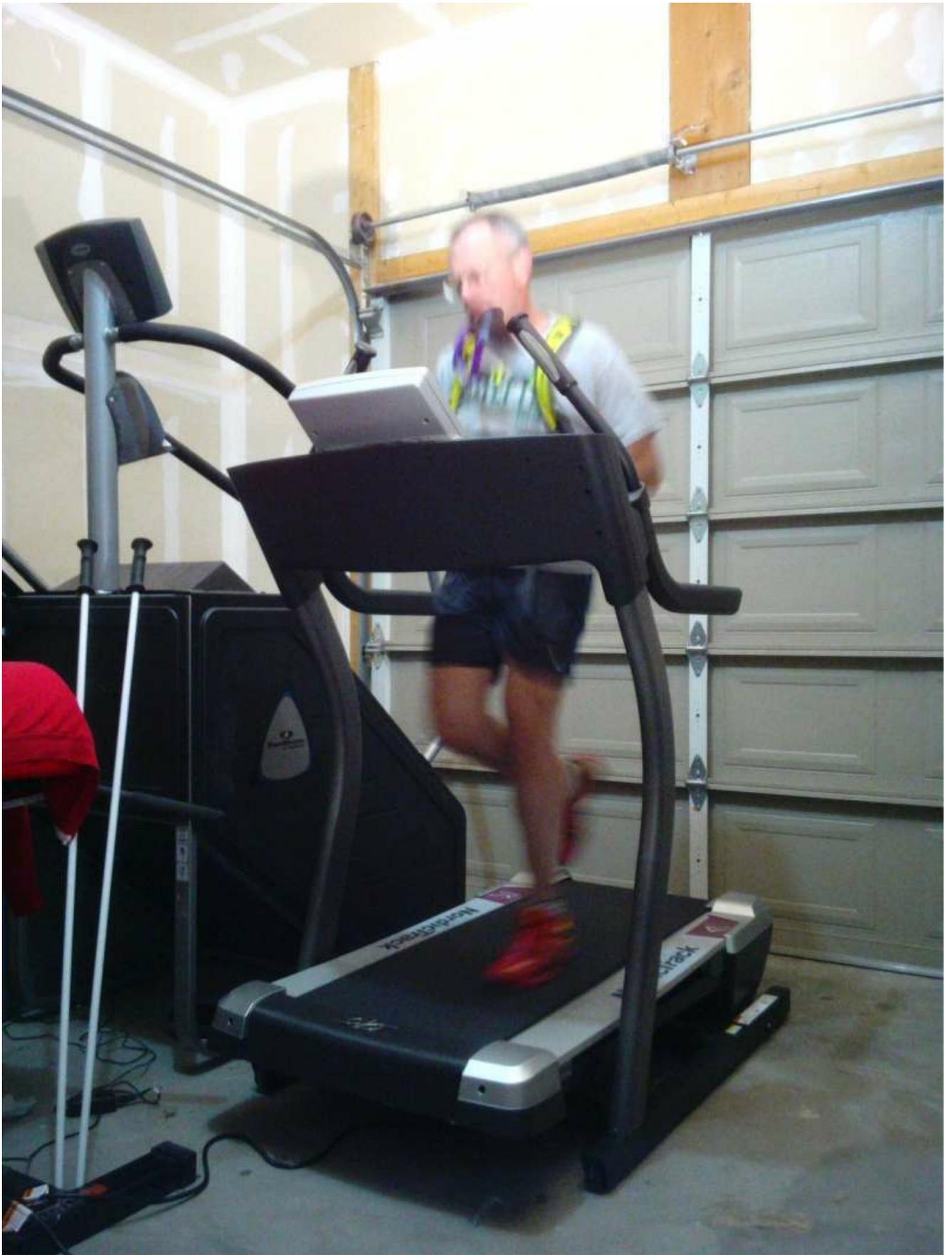
Do it yourself Cardio Theater

What if you do it yourself? Can you create a dark room, with a large screen with the cardio machine of your choice?

If it is possible, there could be several awesome benefits. You can wear whatever, if anything, you want. You could roll out of bed and hop on your machine without a long drive in the snow. Or you could train till you pass out and not have to drive home in your sleep. You can watch whatever you want, including TV series, and not-quite PC shows. You can watch partials and pause the show and watch them at your own pace. You can watch your own streaming content of choice.

On the other hand, it might take room out of your living quarters, and costs money to buy the equipment and set it up. You might have to duplicate your entertainment electronics if you can't find a reasonable way to multi-task them. You might have HOA, zoning or lease contract issues to deal with.

If you can work around the negatives though, I think the positives are totally worth the effort and expense for many people. I've found for myself that having the equipment just down the hall, and being able to select the shows I want to watch when I want to watch them, and keying them to my daily goals for uptempo or mellow workouts, has been a great inspiration to achieving my fitness goals. I think it can be for you too.



Selecting a Space for your Home Cardio Theater

Minimum Requirements

Most likely, the average cardio machine will need a 6' long by 4' wide floor space, with about 8' of vertical space. Depending on the size of your screen, you'll probably feel most comfortable with your viewing surface about 4-10' in front of where you are positioned on your machine. For many machines, that's probably about 4' from the rear of the machine. Allowing 2' of clearance to the rear and sides of the machine for safety, etc., at the very minimum, you should assume about 8' wide by 12' long or deep for an average optimum Home Cardio Theater.

That's an average, btw. So don't get hung up on it. There are a lot of ways to optimize your space requirements. If you want more machines without growing that space, you can "nest" or overlap them. You can accept that crawling in and out of your machine can be a bit difficult. You can take a chance on falling off the back and hitting a wall. You can mount a much smaller viewing screen much closer to your eyes.

Some machines, mostly ellipticals and skiers, have parts that stick out and move over a larger area than the base of the machine - keep that in mind when planning your space requirements. Also, don't forget to look up. If you see beams or large hanging lights or ceiling fans, be sure your equipment and most importantly probably, your head clears anything exposed. Keep in mind reaching upward to shake blood out of swollen fingers, shift your shirt sleeves, or wipe your head. In an attic or basement, is your intended space angled downward and shorter on one end than another?

Following are the three most common ways to insert a Home Cardio Theater into your life.

Home Theater Room

If you already have a home theater room and just want to stick a machine into it and make some adjustments that's fine, and probably the easiest. You most likely already have a hefty investment in electronics, and unless you have some handy spares or duplicates somewhere else, have a trick wall facing into an empty room behind your screen, or some other nifty way to multi-task, you're better off putting your cardio machinery in the same room as your theater.

Things to be alert to:

Do you have a really big sofa system that takes up the whole room?

Is it tucked into a weird corner somewhere already where it would be tough to get equipment in? Basement stairways especially.

Do you have other household members who will resent you interrupting their TV schedule to train?

Benefits:

You already own all the electronics

You're already paying for your cable/satellite/internet/dvr etc. all in one place - no need for extending or branching your services.

Spare Bedroom

If you're like a lot of people coming out of the not-so-long-ago housing boom/bust, you'll have more house than you need (drat!) and might have an empty room or two somewhere. In general, so long as you have electricity and walls, you'll be fine. Ventilation is nice too. The best is if the target for your room is remote from other people in the house, if you'll be working out at times others in your household sleep or will be watching their own TV or entertainment devices.

Things to be alert to:

Is it too close to other rooms?

Is it too hard to get equipment down the hall to, or worse, up or down stairs?

Is it packed full of stuff that you can't get rid of or store?

How hard would it be to run wires for Internet or TV service?

Does your HOA, zoning or lease allow you to devote a room solely to a cardio theater?

Does it have at least two good 15A outlets? Best if it's on two breakers.

Benefits:

You are starting from scratch, so you can do whatever you want within reason.



This is a weight and strength training room in a basement space originally intended for cold storage.

Basement or Garage

If you have a basement or garage it might be totally tempting to put your Home Cardio Theater in there. In general we're talking about a huge open space. Total ground zero. Scary, huh? If you look at the alerts/benefits above for the Spare Bedroom section, you'll get a good idea of what you're getting into. It's important enough that I'll spend a little more time on this section for you to help plan adequately.

Garages have great access for just about any cardio machine you can imagine, including taller machines like Stair mills, which require a 10' ceiling for safe use. Just wheel them off the truck and into the garage through the huge roll-up door. Basements on the other hand normally have tough access for all but the smallest machines, and while it is normally feasible to sort-of let machines slide down the stairs bumping and twisting as they go, you'll find it very hard to get them back up the stairs if you ever need to move or take them to a repair facility.

In the winter and summer garages especially will be either too hot or too cold, and electronics both for entertainment and in your cardio machines have a somewhat narrow band for safe operation. I've noticed for myself that below 50 and above 95 my setup behaves poorly, and I try not to use it outside that temperature band for fear of permanent damage. In the basement note the location of windows and vents, and any exposed lighting, beams, duct-work, wires, pipes, etc. I once had a treadmill directly under the furnace cold air intake and when the wind blew from the East it went straight down my sweaty back. Brrrr...

Upgrading to heating and cooling systems can be ridiculously expensive, and currently might not add so much value to your selling price (you won't be adding heating or cooling to a rental) to make it worthwhile. You will most likely have to have a contractor come in for a complete retrofit. In general, if you can make it work with just insulation then do it.

Neither will most likely have adequate wiring already installed, but the basement might have relatively easy access to cable or Internet. Wiring a basement is usually less expensive than wiring a garage, since most modern dwellings have the central electrical panel there, and if there's no sheet-rock it's simple to run wiring. Most modern garages are set outside the house framing, so getting electricity there can be expensive.

Dust in either can be not only a nuisance, but potentially damaging to both machines and electronics. Ventilation in a basement can be difficult, aside

from the cold air intake. Garages get very stuffy in the summer, but it might not be too hard to fit in an attic vent fan through a wall.

Things to be alert to:

Heating/Cooling issues

Electricity/Wiring issues

Exposed utilities

Difficulty in moving or installing electronics and cardio equipment

HOA/Zoning/Lease issues

Benefits:

Normally neither causes other household members any additional stress

It's possible to do whatever you want in most cases, if you can afford it

Shared Space

Last is the shared space option. A corner of a guest room. It's so tempting. But your Great Aunt comes for a funeral, likes the climate, and stays for a month. Do you just quit working out? An extended break? How about the sewing room? The kids' playroom? The walk-in closet? The laundry room? Yeah. Sure.

If you can live with a folding portable treadmill or stepper, and know you have the resolve to fold it and put it away every time. If you can live with a netbook HTPC (Home Theater Personal Computer) and playing streaming internet video. If your shared space-mates don't mind your hours. It could work. If it's all there is, you do what you have to do, right?

It might not be that bad. I just wanted to paint a way-less-than-rosy picture for you up front. The optimal arrangement could be that you have a home office space with only a desk in it. You could even figure a way to share the computer and/or monitor. I've even used a dining room after the table was taken out to replace one in a rental unit I was responsible for at the time, though I had the advantage then of having no house-mates. If you're creative and flexible you can work it out.

Things to be alert to:

Shared space with items, furniture and potentially people.

Interrupting the movement patterns in your dwelling.

Benefits:

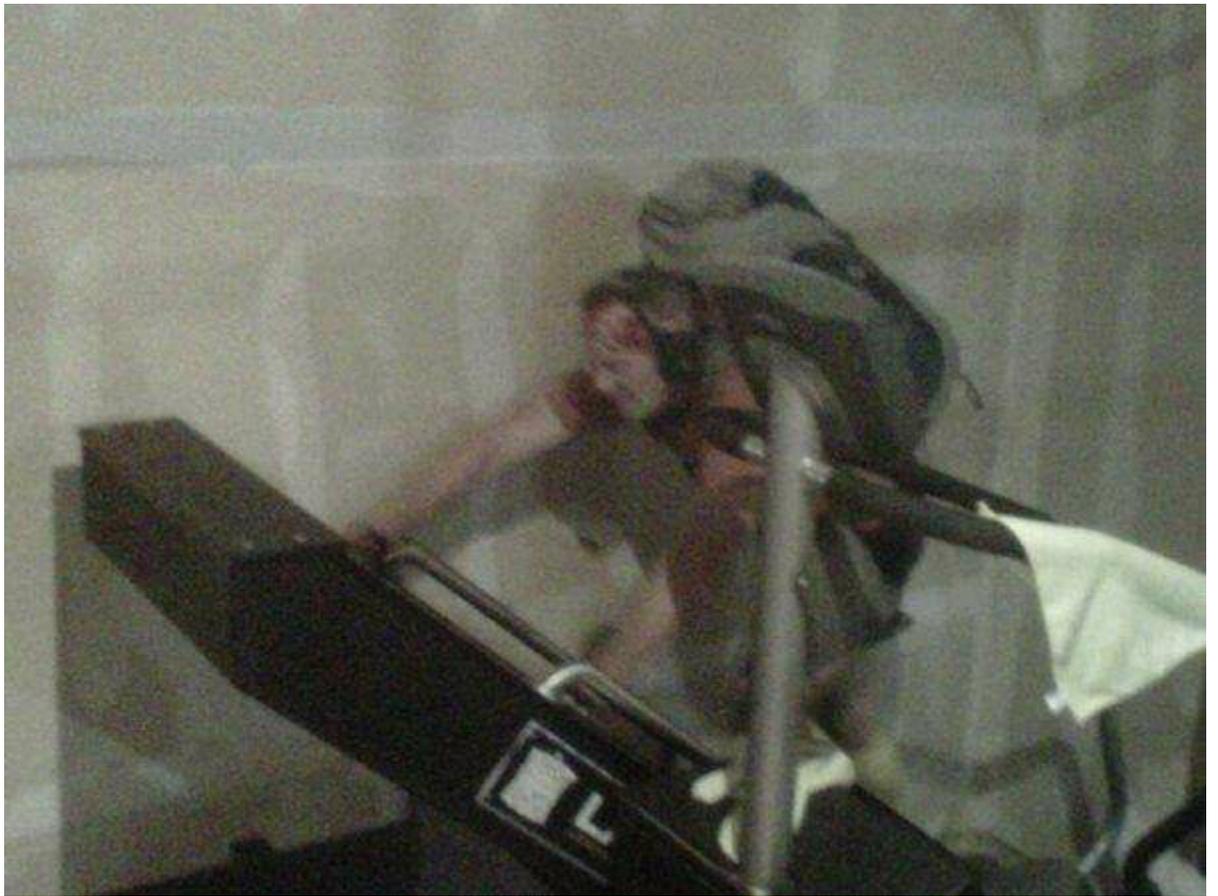
Maybe the least expensive option of all, since it's considered "temporary". Possible to multitask your electronics with whatever other use your room has.

Wrap Up

After all that, you either have each space option or not. They're ordered according to my own preference of simplicity and ultimate usefulness, or chances of success, not only in building a Home Cardio Theater, but also in your training goals. No matter how cool a theater room you build, if you don't ever use it, you won't achieve anything. Keep that in mind when planning your space.

Issues with zoning or leases can be a potential deal-breaker. Your zoning rules might require a lengthy permit/approval process, even for a basement or garage. Your lease might not allow you to change any walls or wiring, install Internet or cable/satellite service. There might be floor weight limits. Noise ordinances, with hour limits.

If you have someone above or below you, there will most likely be major issues. I once had a treadmill sharing a kid's bedroom in a condo. I had to work around the sleep, nap, and play hours of the child, and then sometimes had to go out on the deck to check the lights reflecting from downstairs to make sure the neighbors below were awake. Not awesome, but it was my only option.



Training on a Jacob's Ladder is hard enough without the 35 pound backpack
YMMV

Cardio Equipment

Minimum Requirements

At the very least, you'll need at least one cardio machine. In case you're one of the few people who don't know what that means, it's a machine you get on, either sitting or standing, on which you perform a regular, repetitive motion, like walking, running, rowing, cycling, etc. for a period of time with the intent of raising your heart rate. Pretty simple, right?

Note that vibrating platforms are not cardio machines, but are meant for rehab. If you have one and want to stand on it while watching TV that's fine, squeeze it in, just don't consider it a cardio machine.

Following are some ideas for how to select the right machine for your Home Cardio Theater.

What you already have

If you already own some cardio equipment, and it's working out fine for you, then this is easy, unless you're using this project as an excuse to buy new machinery.

New machines are fine, but what you have in the house is "cheap" for acquisition expenses, and if you've used it several hours, you might already know how to use the controls in the dark with one hand behind your back - which sounds funny, but in a Home Cardio Theater environment, it might actually be a deal-breaker.

Things to be alert to:

Can you move it to where it will need to be without breaking anything?

Can you build around it?

Will it last long enough to make it worthwhile?

Benefits:

Cost

Familiarity

If you're building around it, no moving involved.

What machines work best?

Most commercial gyms have a variety of treadmills, steppers, ellipticals,

and recumbent bikes in their Cardio Theaters. These are good choices for a variety of reasons, being reasonably economical for space and price, and putting you in a position to watch the movie without being a distraction or obstacle to others. Occasionally you'll find rowers, bike trainers and spin bikes, but some people have problems adjusting them so they can watch the show without their necks becoming stiff.

Some machines not common in Cardio Theaters are stair mills and ski machines (very large), ladder mills (poor position to watch the movie without the machine blocking your view, and possibly missing the rungs and getting hurt if you get into the show too vigorously), and various arm ergometers (wall-mount models generally preclude watching a movie).

There are some oddball and specialty machines that I probably have only seen in catalogs or on the Internet, and if you know of any that you think would work, leave a comment on the blog for inclusion in later editions. Otherwise, check each of the items on the above list and get an idea of prices and sizes and availability.

What you normally do

If you currently have, or have had, a gym membership, you probably already have an idea what types of cardio you normally do, and what machines are available for that activity. You probably have some preferences for size or color or controls. You might have fallen in love with a particular type of machine, which also makes it easy.

If not, what sports do you do or are interested in doing? Runners will most likely prefer a treadmill and elliptical. Cyclists will most likely prefer a trainer (resistance stand for a bike) and the elliptical. What do you do for fun or training? What do others doing the same sport or activity train on when inside? That should be your guide.

What will fit your space

If you've selected your space first, you'll have a good idea how much of it there is. Vertical space is something many people forget about when planning. If you are in a room with a 6' ceiling, your choice of equipment might be limited to a cycle of some sort, or a rowing machine, since the average treadmill would add at least 4' to your height, assuming you don't rise up on your toes or bounce much when running, which could add another 4' or more to your effective height. You'll find that an average 5'9" male would require at least 6' 6" of ceiling for a treadmill - which allows for

occasionally brushing the ceiling during a particularly vigorous workout (or reaching over your head to scratch). An elliptical or stepper adds from 6-12" to your height. A stair mill could add as much as 3' to your height, and normally won't work even with an 8' ceiling. I top out at 8'4" when I stand on one. A ladder mill looks like it would add to your height, but the position the most common one puts you in keeps you below the 8' mark by a comfortable margin.

On the floor you have to consider front to back and side to side dimensions first, and then add space around each machine for mounting and dismounting - especially in the event of an emergency. If you ever trip on a treadmill moving at a fair clip you'll find that you need a good 3' or so behind the treadmill to catch yourself before slamming into stuff. Go check out epic treadmill fails on youtube and you'll see what I mean. Over the past 30 years or so I've been working out, I've jumped off stair mills, over the sides of ellipticals, fallen off the back of rowing machines. You name it. Just keep that emergency area clear.

Also be aware of any parts that go beyond the floor standing area of the machine. Rowers, ski machines, and ellipticals in particular normally have parts that cycle outside this area.

Back to mounting or getting on - you'll want to make sure there is a clear pathway to the rider portion of the machine. If you have to scrunch up and crawl through a gap under or around furniture or other machines to use it, you'll start to come up with excuses not to - it's human nature after all. Many machines mount from the back, and this makes the commercial gym designers pack them in along a row, with a large path along the backs - to allow for falling off, as well as some larger or less coordinated users. Since you have some freedom, depending on your space, put the machine where you can easily get on and off, and not hurt yourself if you need to get off in a hurry.

Also, if you have more than one machine, or are planning on fitting your equipment around furniture, consider other movements you might do. Some people swing around kettle bells or hand weights on treadmills. Ellipticals sometimes have moving handles. The seat on a rower goes back and forth while your elbows cycle in and out. You might have to scratch an itch or adjust your shorts or wipe sweat with a towel. Think about the space this will take. It would hurt to bash your elbow on a shelf while wiping your eyes (I know).

What will fit your budget

Some machines cost many thousands of dollars. Stair mills and cyclical arc machines are among the most expensive. Your local low cost leader sells treadmills and ellipticals.

When planning your purchase, assuming you don't already have something you can use, you need to consider what your actual use would be. It's rare for a machine to come with a duty cycle, like a printer (the average number pages you can print per month without undue maintenance). But many machines are available as consumer or commercial versions. The implication is that the commercial version will stand up to a max-weight user for 18 hours a day or more. This is not really true, but again, is based on average cycles between maintenance. If you are a max-weight user, or you will be using a machine for 6 or more hours a week, you might seriously consider the commercial grade equipment, and carefully compare specs.

Beware meaningless specs and silly things. Playing Angry Birds on the console is probably not high on your list of "workout necessities" - especially if you're going to build a Home Cardio Theater for your entertainment. Lots of scrolling graphs, and computer plugins probably aren't useful. My own opinion is that for myself, I prefer to set a speed and inclination or level, and just go for my time. You might enjoy having pre-programmed courses, or automagic level adjustments based on heart rate. If you don't already know that, I suggest you skip them. Some machines have little bots you can race or compete with - but in a theater setup, I doubt you'd be staring at the little rowing or running avatar much.

Don't get too hung up about maximums or minimums or other not very useful numbers. Odds are you'll never do a 5 minute mile on a treadmill. Or 50 mph on a spinning bike. Or 160 steps per minute on a stair mill. Especially while watching a movie.

You're on your own for deciding about a warranty - which most places that sell these machines would happily help you buy. I have nothing more to say about that. Except that if you can get someone else to come to your home and fix your machine for free, go for it. If you really use it for 90 minutes a day 6 days a week, you're probably doing about 4x what the average home version of a machine was designed for.

Size, weight (especially if you have to haul it up or down stairs, or use it in a loft area), durability and ease of controls are probably the most

important considerations. Then optimally, price. If price is your main consideration then compare specs carefully within your price range. By all means, please don't get one of those little \$30 steppers all the stores carry.

Electronic Equipment

Minimum Requirements

Typically, a Home Cardio Theater consists of a large screen, some form of media source, and either large speakers, or headphones.

What you already have

You might already have a complete Home Theater. You might already have a 60" flat screen, a DVR or cable/satellite box, a surround sound system, an Internet or PC streaming or file media player. Awesome. Maybe it's all in the same room and there's plenty of room for your cardio machine. Even more awesome. But maybe not.

Thinking outside the box a little, do you have an old 30" glass tube television laying around that you put on a shelf because it won't do digital broadcast? An old DVD player you haven't touched since you got Blu-ray? How about an old laptop that you put away when you updated to Windows 7? You can make about anything work if you put your mind to it and think about it long enough.

If you already have a large monitor on a decent computer you should consider moving your computer to a place where you can also set your cardio machines up and multitask your sweet gaming or video editing rig.

A projector is possible, but you'll have to consider how to mount it in such a way that you can control it, plug your equipment into it, and have an unobstructed path to your viewing screen that is long enough for the proper beam focus. This is not always easy enough to pull off when you have cardio equipment in the middle of the room, and putting all your electronics behind you makes it hard to target your remotes, especially while in motion on your machines.

What is your favorite entertainment mode

You might be spending an hour or more a day, 5 or more days a week, enjoying entertainment while working out or training. This is a serious commitment. Think of it - if you enjoy serial television, you will finish a single season of an hour long show in 3 weeks or less. If you watch movies, and watch a half a movie per session, you could watch 100 or more movies each year. This could be very expensive. Streaming services with a large variety of programs, or cable/satellite boxes with a DVR could both fill your

working out hours with plenty of entertainment, but paying for individual DVD's or pay-per-view shows could become very expensive very quickly. Consider your favorite entertainment carefully, then see what it takes to provide it in your space.

If you already have cable or satellite, you might have to get another receiver, and run more cable. If you're going to use Internet, you'll have to have a player or television that can connect to the service you'll be using, and make sure you have Internet cable or wireless available to your Home Theater setup.

Some people already have the ultimate collection of whatever it is they already love. 20 years of soaps on VHS. 9 seasons of that one show that they can watch over and over and over till they die.

Some people don't really care and can put a news or education channel on the box and just cruise away. Some love the music or reality or sports or games or whatever is on at the moment. Amazing. But easy.

Installation considerations

Same as for the cardio machines, you'll need to consider access to push buttons or turn knobs or insert media like DVD's or USB sticks, etc.

You should keep in mind flying sweat globs, or any loose machine parts that could flip into your expensive entertainment hardware. Dust from vents. Heat or cold. Drips of condensation off windows and pipes.

Next is the remotes. Make sure they have a clear path from most machine positions. You might consider the little window hanging cup holders for cars, and zip-tie them to the rails on your machines for remote storage. You hate to drop your remote on the treadmill and trip over it.

I myself prefer wireless headphones, so I have to keep in mind replacing them on the charging stand between workouts, and making sure no static-causing machines are between the transmitter and me.

Make sure you have power, and cable or Internet jacks handy, and that if you're using wireless, you have a good enough signal bandwidth where you plan to mount your electronics.

If you're using wired headphones make sure you have a path to your electronics that is simple enough for the wire, without moving parts that can tangle or cut the cord, and that your cable is long enough (you can get very long cords, like 12' or so, if you look hard, or use extensions). You will

sweat some under the ear cup, so in my experience over-the-ear foam pads work a bit better, though I also have the traditional around-the-ear vinyl pads, and just live with the sweating.



View from the top of the Jacob's Ladder

Special Considerations

I've touched on some of these previously, and some don't really fit anywhere else, so here are a few special thoughts before you get started.

Rent vs. Own

If you own a house, you might have to deal with zoning rules, and possibly the Home Owners Association, or HOA. Generally, if you're adding a finished space, adding wiring or plumbing, you'll probably have to get building permits, and have a contractor and possibly inspector sign off on it. Some people just "guerrilla" it on the sly.

If you own a Condo, you might not own it as much as you think, and the HOA will be your nemesis. Some are more open than others, YMMV. In a condo, you'll probably have neighbors sharing a wall, floor or ceiling that you should think about. A treadmill is probably the noisiest single piece of equipment you would own - especially if you run on it.

As a renter, you're in a house, condo, or apartment most likely. You'll have a lease or contract that spells out what you can and can't do. Noise will probably be an issue unless you're in a house or duplex and you can avoid the middle area.

Wireless vs. Wired

Cable and Satellite require wiring to work. You can get wireless box or monitor extenders, and those seem a bit clunky, but if it's the only way to get a signal to your Home Cardio Theater, by all means, look into it.

Internet via wires is a bit more consistent and generally faster than wireless, and isn't subject to hijacking (meaning a car can't sit along the curb with a hacker in it who steals your Internet for nefarious purposes - this can't be as easily done on your cable). Running Internet cable can be expensive or even impossible, whereas wireless can be relatively inexpensive and simple to set up. Be sure you read your instructions for security and use decent passcodes, especially if you might ever use your PC with it, and do any kind of banking.

Modern electronics are normally easy enough to use with wireless, though some are advertised as "wireless ready" - this normally means you buy an additional USB device to connect to your wireless.

If you are using a streaming service, or sharing from your PC, make sure

your equipment will work with that service over the wire or wireless Internet you are installing or have installed.

While in the wireless section, I should also point out that there are several ways of controlling your electronics using wireless devices including Bluetooth® or your smartphone. You can connect wireless speakers which is really quite convenient if you can do it.

Insulation

If you are going to build your Home Cardio Theater in a basement or garage, you probably have to consider insulation. Most modern houses come without insulation in either.

Basements will be cool in the summer, but might be cold in the winter depending on your climate. They might be drafty, especially if your furnace area is not enclosed.

A garage will be drafty around the doors, and you can easily install weatherstripping sold in 8' long strips to cover the gaps. Some garage door manufacturers sell packages to insulate their doors according to the size, or it's not too hard to insulate with Reflectix® or foam or fiberglass sheets.

Normally blown-in insulation is used for the ceiling, and for an average garage this won't be too expensive. The walls on the other hand can be horrible to deal with for the average person who will try to do it themselves. You could cover the walls with foam, or build a false wall and use fiberglass. At an extreme you can cut holes and blow insulation in, but these all can be major projects. Consider carefully.

Also under the topic of insulation I want to bring sound insulation to your attention. In addition to protecting your family and neighbors from your really loud sound system, if you're an audiophile, you'll probably be opinionated about reflected sound. If that's the case you already know what you need to do.

Otherwise, you can use drapes, foam, egg cartons, pillows or just about any soft absorbent things to block the bouncing sound and slow and quiet it down.

Ventilation

If you're in the basement, and you can put your equipment near the cold air intake of your furnace, otherwise getting air in there can be tough.

Anywhere you can put one, a ceiling fan can help move air around, which can feel better when you're hot and into it, but be extra careful if you have only 8' or less ceiling clearance. You don't want to reach up and grab a fan blade while riding a treadmill.

If you're in a garage, you can mount an attic fan through a wall fairly simply if you can figure how to run wiring to it.

If you're in a standard room, you might be able to open a window without causing problems, or arrange a diverter on an air conditioning vent.

These are all good things to think about before you begin.

Wrapping Up:

Final Considerations

Now that you've had some time to consider and reconsider this project, to decide if this is what you want to do, you should play around with the idea some.

Make a few lists of what you have already. Look around your dwelling, see what there is to work with for space. Check the access to your intended space to verify how it will feel hauling your equipment into it.

Supplementary materials, including pictures and video clips to help you see some of the ideas presented in this book will appear on my blog at <http://charlesmiske.com/> - look for the link to Home Cardio Theater and to my Home Cardio Theater Facebook page.

By no means is this a comprehensive or all-inclusive list. I would like to use my blog and Facebook pages to allow my readers to add to the collection of ideas and thoughts and perhaps interact and share so we can all learn and grow from it.

Disclaimer:

Be aware that I do not intend for you to become injured or to wreck your house or break your lease or HOA agreements. Everything in this guide is intended to help you think of ideas that might help you in your quest for home fitness, and is merely a jumping off point. It's up to you to be legal, careful, and considerate in whatever you choose to do based on what you read here.

Enjoy.

Author Note:

I've been training in and out of gyms, basements, garages, back yards, bedrooms, and any spare space I can find for about 30 years on and (sadly) off. My greatest success came when I finally set up a treadmill and elliptical where I could watch a TV/DVD. From there the idea grew to use a larger TV based on my experiences at a gym that had a Cardio Theater.

Case Study

A Garage Home Cardio Theater

I blogged about this as I worked on it, and if you want to read and see more go to my author blog [HERE](#) where I go into a bit more detail with a few more photos.

I have a garage with a small one-car addition that isn't really large enough to fit anything much larger than a Smartcar. I measured it and figured I could get in my treadmill, elliptical, Stairmaster and Jacob's Ladder in a row against the door. Behind them is a two foot space, which is barely big enough to get on and off of the machines wearing a large backpack. I do this frequently enough, as my sport of choice is mountaineering.

Ahead of them I would have a five foot space for other types of working out. Then I have an older/smaller TV on a rolling metal shelf unit. I can put the TV on the top shelf, so it's easy to see over the top of the tallest cardio machine – the Stepmill. Unfortunately I had only a 32" LCD TV. This isn't optimal with an "eyeball-to-TV" distance of about ten feet. If I watch a foreign show with subtitles I have to concentrate to see them. But it's what I have to work with. Compromise is the name of the game if you don't have a bottomless budget.

Last year I had a contractor come out and blow a bunch of insulation in the whole attic including the garage. This was funded primarily by a rebate program from two of the local utilities so it was essentially free. This year I need to get this section of the garage insulated and separated out from the rest of the garage with a wall and door.

I've used the garage in the past for cardio, but generally would have to stop for a few months in the middle of the coldest part of Winter, since my machines warn that temperatures below 45 degrees (F) could cause damage to the electronics. This year I want to train year round.

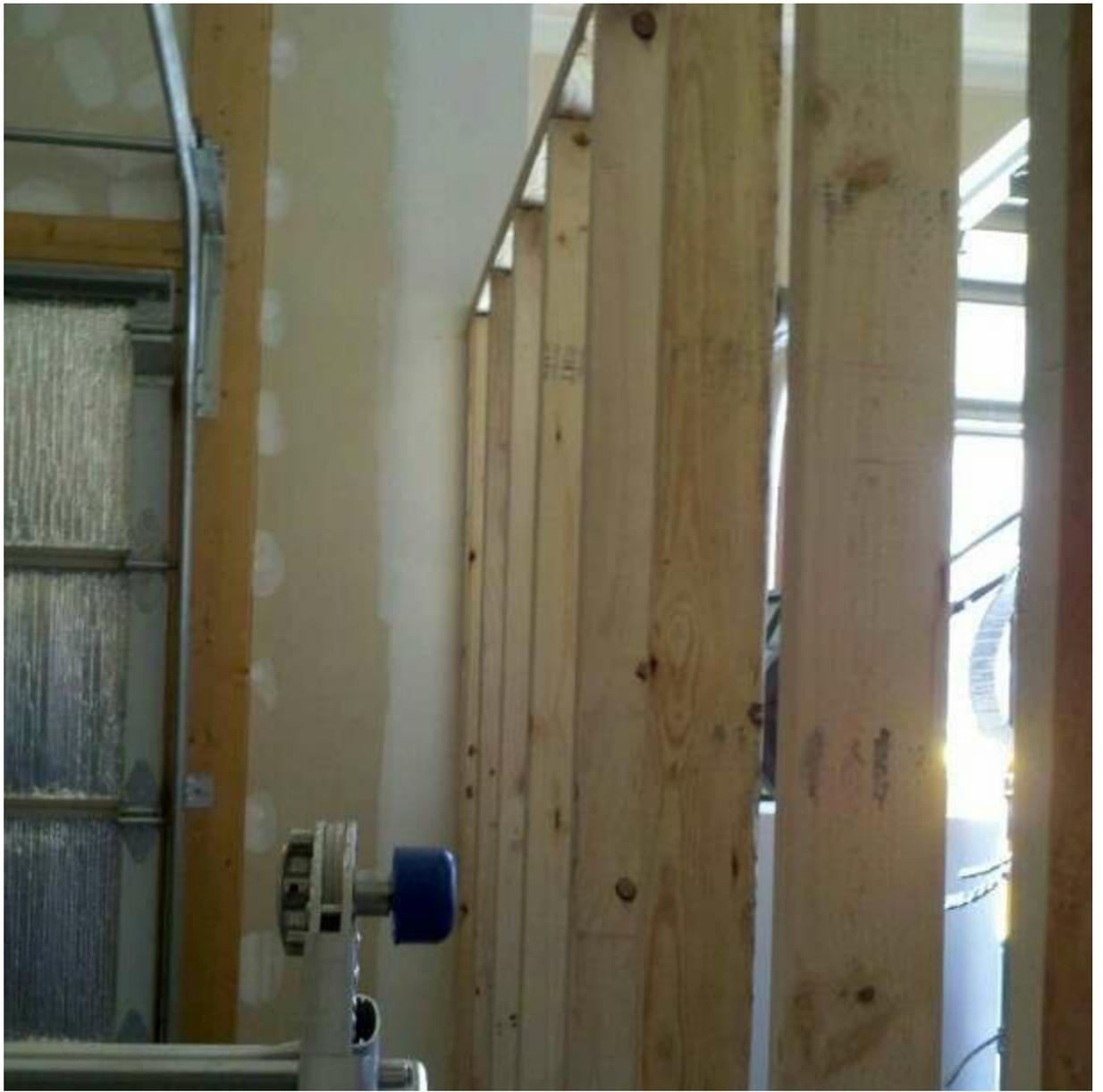
To begin this project, I insulated the garage door with Reflectix foil-backed bubble-wrap insulation. It's the easiest most effective insulation I could find. I cut the rolls into the right size sheets and glued them to the inside of the metal garage door panels with interior-exterior adhesive.



Garage door partially insulated with the sheet insulation glued in place.

The garage has a central support beam that I had to work around as well as a little concrete foundation wall that extends around the outside walls. The rest of the garage is a bit larger than this section, so it's like a very large "L" shape. None of these corners lined up, so I spent a few hours staring and sketching plans. I finally decided to let the support post sit mostly outside the longer wall I would be building. The shorter wall, with the door, would be completely outside the beam (outside from the perspective of being inside the cardio theater room) and angle slightly toward the corner of the "L".

The larger wall is about 10' wide and 11' tall. The smaller wall is about 4' by 11'. I drew several versions of the plan out on a whiteboard, then went to get the studs. The lower part of the wall was pretty simple to build. The top part was a bit harder because at this point I discovered that the floor sloped downward for drainage. This left one end of the top with longer studs than the other. Minor, but required a lot of measuring to make it right.



Half wall with studs up to separate out my cardio theater room from the useful part of the garage.

After putting up the long wall I started work on the narrow wall. This was a bit more difficult since there is a cutout for the door, it angles slightly toward the corner of the garage wall, the floor angles down and out, and nothing lined up anywhere. I spent a few days working on it to get it right, but in hindsight think a few more days would have made it even better.

I spaced the studs at 16" on center so that I could use standard 3-1/2" skinned batting. It's in a plastic sleeve to make it less itchy and dangerous to install. Cutting it was easy with a box knife and scissors. I did wear gloves though to handle it, just to be extra safe. Fiberglass slivers really hurt.



Done with phase one. Wall up and insulated.

That completed phase one of the project. It began to snow and freeze outside before I could do any more on it. Left to do includes putting in the weatherstripping around the garage door and the inside door. Putting up the sheet-rock on both sides of the wall.

As it is though I've been able to train every day this winter, and keeping it above 45 has been pretty simple, even during the coldest days of the year (and it's been an unusually cold winter here in Utah 2012-2013) with just a few hours here and there with a small space heater.

Right now I'm using some wireless headphones for sound, but I have an older set of 5.1 surround sound PC speakers I've been wanting to install. I might do some sound-proofing of the walls later and put those into the system.

The bad:

The TV at 6' up is really hard to see on the Jacob's Ladder. It would be better down at about 4' so I don't have to bend my neck so far to see it. For now I just listen to music on it. It's fine for everything else though.

The floor is really cold some mornings. This doesn't affect too much except the metal parts touching it also get cold. Much colder than the rest of the room. I might add in a phase three to put in a rubber flooring material.

About the Author:



Charles Miske enjoys fitness and training, climbing, hiking, running, and writing in his home states of Utah and Colorado. For several years he's been a partner in a successful online marketing company, being directly involved in Information Technology, Community Management, and Social Marketing.

He's chronicling the Seven Summits Quest adventure he's been living for the past six years. Volume one is his journal from an unsuccessful attempt at climbing Elbrus in Russia during September 1-11, 2012 - "Elbrus, My Waterloo". Volume two is a book compiling blog posts from a 2008 attempt on the highest volcano in North America - "Orizaba, My Almost Free Mexico Adventure". Volume three is the successful climb of one of the most difficult of the Seven Summits, "Carstensch, Stone Age to Iron Age".

Check out all the latest at CharlesMiske.com for books, SevenSummitsBody.com for training.