

Theatre Concepts

ScreenKote Projection Screen Surface Coating

There is an unfortunate side effect of modern technology and it may seem a little counterintuitive. Every year sees home theatre projectors improve in quality, even as their prices inexorably fall. Just the other day we were looking at a home theatre projector that used DLP technology first introduced a couple of years ago at \$9999. But this projector was the same brand as that earlier one, easily performed as well as it (or even a touch better), but cost just \$2999.

Likewise, within this edition of *Best Buys* you will see a review of the BenQ PE8720 home theatre projector, which made its first appearance early this year priced at \$9999. Now the recommended retail price is just \$5999 and we have seen it advertised for \$2000 less than that.

So, the home theatre enthusiast is blessed today with wealth of high-quality projection options at very low prices. But what about the other half of the projection system?

Equipment

Spending \$5000 to \$10,000 on a projection screen seems fitting when the active part of the system, the projector, costs \$20,000 or \$30,000. But no matter how essential the screen is to a high-quality picture, something within us cringes at the thought of spending more on a passive screen than we do on an active projector.

Thankfully, there are a number of lower cost screens appearing on the market, but there is a solution which costs even less, and you may well find perfect for your needs.

This solution is ScreenKote. It is, essentially, a white paint which you can use to allow an existing surface (such as a wall, or a screen home built out of MDF) to become a high-quality projection screen.

Actually, it need not be white because there are two varieties available. One is white and the other is grey. The latter, as is the case with some famous (and expensive) projection screens, is designed to enhance the effective contrast ratio of low-cost LCD projectors by deepening black levels.

In either case, at a cost of \$299, you get a package containing three 600ml containers,



a mohair paint roller and a matching tray. It is up to you to provide the surface to which you will be applying the ScreenKote.

This could be as simple as an area of wall in your home (although you may want to add some kind of finished surround to that area, and make sure the surface is smooth before you begin).

One of the 600ml containers holds a primer undercoat to provide a suitable layer to hold the ScreenKote itself, which the other two containers hold. Between the two of them, there ought to be enough to give two coats of ScreenKote to a large, 110-inch (280cm) screen, with enough left over for a re-coat to renew the surface in a couple of years. Of course, this depends upon the technique you use to apply the coat. If you spray, you can expect to go through a lot more of the material. But if you use a smaller screen of, say, 80-inches (203cm), you will probably have sufficient ScreenKote left in the resealable plastic container to perform two surface renewals over coming years.

Do not be cynical. This is not just ceiling white paint, repackaged. We are assured by Theatre Concepts that the services of a paint chemist were employed for the better part of a year to develop the material, with an eye on neutrality of colour reproduction and finished surface robustness.

The white version of ScreenKote has a specified gain of 1.1, while the grey version is claimed to have a gain of 0.95.

Performance

We were provided with a board finished half in white, half in grey, which we could place against our reference projection screen. Using the new Sony VPL-VW50 projector, which has a full 1,920 by 1,080 pixel resolution, and a 1080i high definition movie, we felt the detail of both

the white and the grey surfaces were excellent. The colour neutrality was excellent as well, with both being only just perceptibly cooler than our regular screen, although we suspect it is more a case of that screen being a little warmer. The grey surface did deepen blacks significantly, but its best use would be with an older LCD projector with a contrast ratio of 1000:1 or so.

The viewing angle remained identical to our regular screen, with not the slightest bit of beaming or any 'hot spots'.

Conclusion

In short, the ScreenKote surface provided a high-quality projection surface for a tenth of the price of the screen with which we compared it. That makes it excellent value for money, and the solution to many front projector users' problems. **BE**

Theatre Concepts ScreenKote Projection Screen Surface Coating	
Price	\$299
Warranty	See review
+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inexpensive way to achieve a high-quality projection screen All you need in the one package Sufficient materials for renewal of surface in a year or two
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires you to be a competent painter You should add a black 'light splash' surround
Contact	Aussie Hi Fi Traders 1300 308 711 www.aussiehifitraders.com.au