

Title:

What is Surround Sound and Why Do You Want It?

Word Count:

386

Summary:

Home theater component manufacturers and salesmen are always talking about 'surround sound this' and 'surround sound that', but do you really know what they mean?

Keywords:

surround sound, speaker positioning

Article Body:

Whether you are an audio novice or an experienced technophile, this article is for you. Let's take a few minutes to review the basics of surround sound, and the principles behind it. If you are new to surround sound, this will help you to understand the concept. It will also refresh the memory of those already in the know. These are the basics of sound.

Monophonic sound is single channel and unidirectional. Basically, this means that your audio is all filtered down into a flat single channel. All elements of the recording are mixed down into one source, thereby seeming to originate from the same source no matter where you are standing in the room. This is old school, kids.

Stereophonic sound is reproduced through two channels and is considered superior to monophonic sound. You can tell stereophonic sound, because different sounds originate from either speaker. This type of sound gives one the sense of being there during the recording. The best example of this is listening to a recording of the symphony, where different band members are located in different parts of the room. The strings are over here, and the horns are over there.

Surround sound was first pioneered by Dolby in the early 1970's, and first used in movies such as "Tommy" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". The Dolby process encapsulates four channels of audio; left, right, rear, and phantom center. The reason it is called phantom center is because it is essentially a mix of the left and right front channels. This gives the listener the impression of being surrounded by sound, hence the name surround sound.

Dolby surround sound has evolved considerably in recent years. Dolby 5.1 is bar

far the most common. Dolby 5.1 is similar to traditional surround sound, but it is further broken down and processed into more distinct channels. Dolby 5.1 increases the range of sound by adding stereo rear sound as well as a dedicated subwoofer channel. This results in a far superior surround sound experience. You not only hear surround sound, but you feel it, too!

Technology is ever changing, and the marketplace offers many surround sound options. This article is not complete by any means, and only serves as a primer on the basics. Check out your local electronics superstore for the latest technology.