

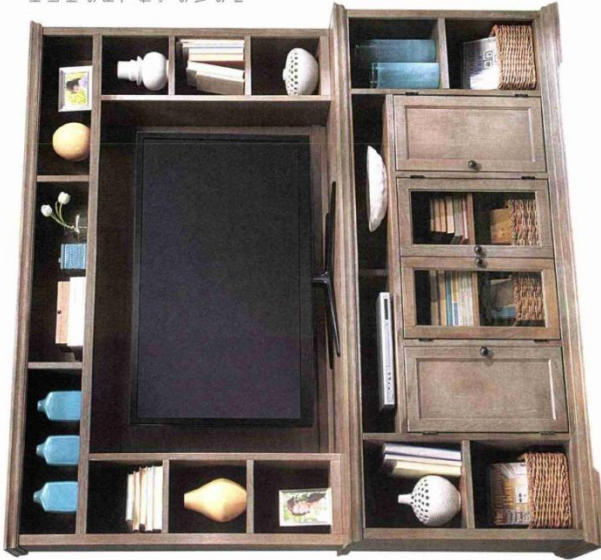
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HITTING THE MARK WITH HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Hooker Furniture's Latitude console/hutch combination sells well at Interiors Furniture & Design. The unit is "very functional" and has "mass appeal for any style category," said William Bradley, the store's merchandise manager.



BY KEN KEUFFEL

HIGH POINT — When it comes to home entertainment furniture, what's hitting the mark in terms of sales and why? And what's the best way to merchandise a best-selling item?

To gain insights into this dynamic category, Furniture Today checked in with five leading retailers — Circle Furniture, Hudson's Furniture, Interiors Furniture & Design, Art Van and American Furniture Warehouse.

Peggy Burns, co-founder and owner

of Circle Furniture, a Boston-area retailer, said that BDJ's Corridor 8177 model sells particularly well at her store. "We merchandise it in many different settings," Burns said, adding that "it looks fabulous in an open floor plan, which can serve many uses."

Corridor 8177, which retails for \$1,199 at Circle Furniture, is the most recent addition to the Corridor Home Theater collection. It sports some attractive features, particularly its lowered doors, which enable a speaker's sound

or a remote control's signal to pass through unobstructed.

Also of note are black steel legs and a black, micro-etched glass top. A media drawer pulls out to reveal a full-width soundbar shelf, which is big enough for most units, and there is plenty of space for storing DVDs and other items.

When asked why the Corridor 8177 sells well at Circle Furniture, Burns said it's "a very transitional piece that can fit into many styles and a truly versatile piece that does not look like an entertainment piece."

Corridor 8177 can "fit in most room settings," be they transitional, contemporary or traditional, Burns said.

Stephanic Birchough, a Circle Furniture merchandiser, also praised the Corridor 8177's versatility. She said it could serve as a buffet unit in a dining room or as a console for a television that is either mounted on a wall or placed on top of the Corridor 8177.

At Top 100 company Hudson's Furniture, which operates 18 stores in Florida, they're singing the praises of Parker House's modular Boston collection, which includes a popular entertainment hutch/credenza combination that retails for \$799.

Buyer Patricia Plance said that the Boston line includes a wide range of pieces for both entertainment and home office use. The line includes everything from a simple bookcase setup to a full library wall with room for a flat screen; the price tag ranges from \$599 to \$3,999, depending on what people buy.

At the end of the day, then, consumers can create their own unit for their own specific needs. This "satisfies hit-it-your-way desires," Plance said.

Plance also thinks that Boston is successful because its modular elements can accommodate room areas of any size. In addition, the pieces are finished on their sides, allowing them to be disconnected and used as stand-alone items. The pieces' transitional style enables them to work well in a range of settings.

soundbar, a storage area behind glass doors ensures dust-free storage of electronic components, and some storage areas are hidden behind wood doors. Open shelves display such items as books, pottery and framed photos.

Charles said that the Oak Canyon console/hutch is best displayed in a store department of home entertainment furniture only. Because the top priority is to communicate the console/hutch's functionality and fashion-for-the-home possibilities, the piece works well when shown with such props as a television, a soundbar, accessories and electronic components.

At Top 100 retailer American Furniture Warehouse in Englewood, Colo., Tony Mitchell, the buyer/corporate purchasing manager, spoke very highly about fireplace consoles.

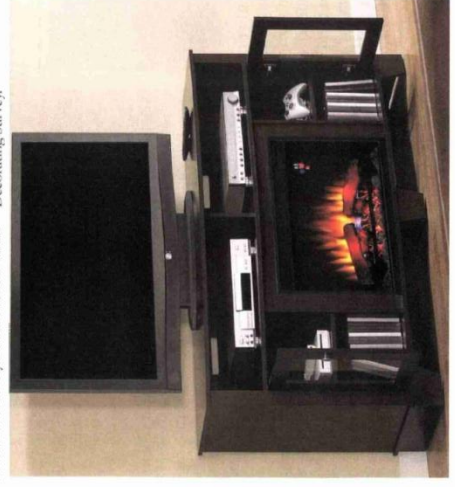
"It's been a great addition to the category," he said. "It ups the price points from your basic wood box console, which is a commodity, into something with a lot more style and function. There

are a ton of TVs going on them. I'm selling them day in and day out."

Mitchell expressed particular satisfaction with Twin-Star International's La Salle ClassicFlame console, a media fireplace that retails for \$399. Features include two glass doors for storage, two open component slots and an ability to hold 65-inch televisions easily.

"It's not exactly the most loaded with features," Miller said. "But it's got a great footprint. It's got enough features. It's got \$399 as the opening price point, which is where the sweet spot is. The (fireplace) heat you can turn off, but you can keep the light for the mood."

Going forward, the prospects for the home entertainment furniture continue to be bright, retailers agreed. Helping to fuel the category's growth is the fact that a majority of consumers across all ages see home entertainment furniture as the best way to house today's large-screen televisions, according to the Furniture Today and Apartment Therapy 2014 Decorating Survey.



Twin-Star International's La Salle ClassicFlame fireplace console sells well at American Furniture Warehouse in Colorado.