

vent free fireplaces

New designs for new spaces BY TOM HEALY



Vent free fireplaces have been with us since the 1960's and today represent the fastest growing segment of the fireplace industry. This is due to their flexibility of installation (no need for a chimney) and their exceptional safety record. In the early years, and even until recently, vent free gas fireplaces were mostly installed as a way to heat a room or space, reducing central furnace settings and heating bills. By not sending all their heat up a chimney, vent free units are able to transfer more than 90 per cent of their heat into the surrounding room, heating areas where and when people wanted heat without having to heat rooms they were not using.

While energy conservation and reducing waste are more important than ever, vent free fireplaces are now winning over designers and consumers for other reasons. Recently modern vent free fireplaces have entered the marketplace with very clean burning technology and super high efficiencies. The beauty of open flame designs and the addition of media tray and media tray options (fire objects) have fueled a renaissance in this category. Without flue considerations and restrictions architects and designers are more empowered than ever to create captivating, warm

spaces with a focus on stunning fireplaces that are safe, efficient and affordable.

Spark Modern Fires' new Vent Free Vu Thru model is a prime example of this renaissance. Unencumbered by a vent stack, Spark's new Vu Thru can go into any room larger than 240 square feet except a bedroom. The new unit creates a flame that is visible from both sides; the first gas vent free fireplace to do so. And in another first, the new unit has a media tray for aesthetic fire objects. In keeping with modern technology, the new unit is also ultra-safe, featuring a custom engineered, ultra-clean burner which yields emissions about three times cleaner than a typical gas stove. It also contains a sensor which automatically turns the gas off if the oxygen level in the room approaches a defined minimum set by American National Standard (ANSI) Z21.11.2.

Aesthetics are a prime factor in the design of these new models. The newest units can have a media tray around the burner to contain various approved fire objects like basalt stones, coloured tempered glass, lava stone and more. Media choice options are easily changed. These new vent free fireplaces often feature very clean lines. There are no jarring vents or access doors or clunky metal features. Design-

ers and architect love the way they look and the ease of integration into rooms. The high heating efficiency of the newer units (28,000 btus capable of heating 1000 square feet!) is almost an afterthought for most designers, as they utilize the fireplace for its beauty as a focal point, anchoring any room that it's in.

Vent free fireplaces have come a long way since the original 'fake log' units. With the newest units featuring two viewing sides, remote control, clean lines, media tray options, and unlimited surround possibilities, vent free fireplaces have moved to a new level; meaning more rooms and environments than ever can enjoy the many benefits of having gas fireplaces. More vent free designs are expected to enter the North American marketplace this winter with possibly larger sizes and additional features. □

Tom Healy is co-founder and president of Spark Modern Fires. A former custom home builder, he set out in 2003 to develop a product line and a company that made it easier to use a gas fireplace as a design element. The company introduced its innovative fire ribbon gas fireplace in 2005. More information on Spark Modern Fires can be found at www.sparkfires.com or call 866.938.3846.