

SPECIAL ISSUE OVER **33** WINNERS FEATURED

ELECTRONICHOUSE

FAST TRACK TO THE CONNECTED LIFESTYLE

MAY 2006

BEST

HOMES OF THE YEAR

Home Theater | Family Room | Master Suite

KILLER SOUND

BIG SCREEN

HIP RETREAT

The Whole House

EASY CONTROL

BEST WOW FACTOR GOLD





The great room and the adjoining dining area share access to a 45-inch LCD TV that can display video from a variety of sources, including DVD players, high-definition satellite receivers and media servers. The smaller screen on the table can juggle many things as well. It presents controls for operating more than 120 lighting circuits, 12 thermostats, three surveillance cameras, more than 40 zones of security and a huge whole-house audio and video system.

A *Life* of Its *Own*

The original plans called for just a couple of systems, but this house ended up getting it all. *Photography by Ed Asmus*

It's hard to believe that the only features the owners of this elaborate high-tech home had originally wanted were a safe, secure computer network and modest whole-house audio and video systems. "Their exact words were 'balanced' lighting, 'nice' music and 'good' video," recalls Scott McAllister, president of MediaWorks NW, the Sacramento, CA, based home systems firm hired to integrate the handful of electronic systems into Thomas and Cathy Van Berkem's mountain home.

VITAL STATS

SYSTEMS DESIGN & INSTALLATION

MediaWorks NW
Sacramento, CA
916-498-8500
www.mediaworksnw.net

BUILDER

Meng Construction
Truckee, CA

ARCHITECTS

MWA Architecture Engineering
Truckee, CA
530-587-6257
www.mwa-truckee.com

CRESTRON PROGRAMMING

Rolling Thunder Software
Henderson, NV
702-564-2968
www.rollingthundersoftware.com



The 15-inch TV in the kitchen is attached to an arm that enables the homeowners to move the set so it is visible from anywhere in the room. The round in-ceiling speakers fill the area with music or TV audio. The speaker grilles were painted to complement the room's recessed light fixtures.

But that wish list soon grew to include much, much more, including such extraordinary amenities as an automated wine cellar, a huge back-up generator, two home theaters and terabytes' worth of digital storage space to hold the owners' massive collection of CDs. These features are impressive enough on their own. But the Van Berkems took the electronic design a step further by tying every system in the house to one central control system.

What compelled the homeowners to take

such a giant leap into technology never-never land? "A clear understanding of what was possible with technology really got them thinking about other items that would make sense for their home," says McAllister. For example, after learning that all of their music and movies could be stored on one device and accessed from any room, the intrepid couple knew they just had to have the sophisticated server and switching system that would make it work. Today, the homeowners can choose



from as many as 12 media sources to view on any of six flat-panel TVs or to listen to on dozens of built-in speakers around the abode. Even the Dell Multimedia PC in the home office can tap into the entertainment sources, which include common components like DVD players and changers, high-definition satellite receivers and an XM satellite tuner, as well as more advanced equipment like media servers. "He can keep his programs open and still use the PC's 24-inch monitor to watch a

ball game, for instance," says McAllister.

Six wireless Crestron Isys touchpanels are also privy to lots of information. From any of the touchpanels, as well as from the PC monitor, the homeowners can peruse a list of the current inventory in their wine cellar that's continually tabulated by the eSommelier management system or view the weather readings compiled by the WeatherHawk weather station perched on the roof of their house. The touchpanels can also display the cover art and

The inventory of the homeowners' well-stocked wine cellar is constantly tabulated by an eSommelier wine management system. A bar code scanner (not shown) reads the vintage information printed on any new bottles the homeowners bring home and adds wine to the inventory. The information is accessible from any touchpanel in the residence.



The bonus room was designed for a multimedia experience. The computer monitor can be used for traditional computing tasks, for playing games or for viewing data compiled by a weather station mounted to the roof of the home. The wall-mounted LCD TV can display TV programs or movies. The room is fitted with a Dolby surround-sound system so no matter which screen is used, the action sounds realistic.

song titles of the music stored on the ReQuest Multimedia ARQ Tera Zone media server, as well as give access to web sites and email, the temperature reading of each of the home's 12 independent radiant heating zones, and a slew of controls that enable the homeowners to monitor and manage everything in their house from any of several portable touchpanels. More than 120 lighting circuits, 12 thermostats, three surveillance cameras, more than 40 zones of security, and the huge whole-house audio and video system are all controllable from any of the wireless touchpanels. This extreme level of control could have left

the homeowners completely and utterly confused, but thanks to some sensational software engineering, the portable controllers couldn't be easier to understand and operate. All the commands are neatly organized by system. For example, all of the commands used to engage lighting scenes are grouped together on a single page on the touchpanels. From there, the homeowners can select a scene that sets the lights for watching a movie in a particular room or a scene that turns off all but a few night-lights when the couple is ready for bed. Popping onto the music page, they can select an audio source, pick out a piece



of music and tell the tune exactly where to play, be it in the kitchen, out on the deck, in the living room or throughout the entire house. Speakers occupy nearly every space, so there's no area that misses out.

Considering the vast number of electronic devices occupying the 5,700-square-foot home, you might expect it to look like the *Starship Enterprise*. But the systems have been so seamlessly integrated that the rooms look surprisingly low tech. "Aesthetics were a huge consideration," McAllister relates. "Cathy made it clear that she didn't want to see anything except the TVs." And even the TVs blend in nicely with the decor. There's no big, bulky set in this residence. Flat-panel plasma and LCD TVs are used throughout, recessed into the walls so that they look like a natural part of the home.

With the exception of several small Vantage keypads, which the homeowners use to fine-tune the lighting levels, the walls carry no signs of technology. The wireless Crestron touchpanels are largely responsible for the clean, uncluttered appearance. Because they control the home's temperature, music and

The master bathroom is no stranger to technology, either. A dual-tweeter speaker in the ceiling provides music from media servers and an XM satellite receiver located in a special equipment room elsewhere in the house, while a 15-inch LCD TV in a cabinet offers access to DVD changers, satellite receivers and cable TV.

other systems, there was no need to mar the walls with music control keypads and traditional lights switches.

Of course, it takes a lot of processing power to fuel this house with music, video, information and one-touch control. And that means lots and lots of black boxes. Most of that equipment is stashed inside a room in the basement built specially for this purpose. All of the music and video sources, as well as several amplifiers and surround-sound receivers, are also hidden there, making even rooms like the two home theaters virtually void of technology. The great room, which doubles as a listening room, features a 45-inch Sharp Aquos LCD TV and two premium Bohlender Graebener loudspeakers. Although the speakers stand 84 inches tall, they are

Crestron AV2 control processor
 Crestron TPMC-10 Isys I/O 10.4-inch
 WiFi wireless touchpanels (6)
 Crestron TPS-2000L Isys 5-inch
 wall-mounted touchpanels (3)
 Crestron WPR-48 remote controls (2)
 Runco CW-61 61-inch high-def plasma TV
 Sharp Aquos 45-inch LCD HDTVs (2)
 Sharp LC-15S4U-S 15-inch LCD TVs (2)
 Sharp LC-37DSU Aquos 37-inch LCD HDTV
 Lumagen Vision Pro HDP video processor
 Antex XM-3000 Triple Play XM
 satellite tuner
 Audio Control line audio transmitter
 Audio Control BLR-16 audio receiver
 B&K Reference 200.w Series 2 stereo
 power amplifier
 B&K AVR-505 Series 2 5.1 receivers (2)
 Crestron CNX-PVID8x4 video switcher
 Crestron audio distribution processor
 Crestron 16x60 1000-watt amplifier
 DirectTV HR-1025 high-def satellite
 receivers with DVR (4)
 Request Multimedia ARQ Tera Zone 750
 digital audio server
 Request Multimedia S777 Sony 400-disc
 DVD changers (2)
 Request Multimedia VRQ Video Request
 DVD information management systems (2)
 OWI Ovalisque outdoor speakers (2)
 Parasound Zamp stereo amplifier
 Triad rack-mount sub amplifiers (5)
 Triad IC Omni Round in-ceiling
 speakers (2)
 Triad IW Bronze/10 subwoofers (3)
 Triad IW Bronze/6 in-wall subwoofer
 Triad OW Bronze home theater speaker
 Triad IW Bronze surround in-wall and in-
 ceiling speakers (2)
 Triad IW Bronze in-wall home theater
 speakers (2)
 Triad IC Omni Round in-ceiling
 speakers (2)
 Triad in-ceiling Gold/6 Omni speakers (2)
 Triad IW Gold Surround Premium in-wall or
 in-ceiling dipole speakers (2)
 Bohlender Graebener R75 speakers (2)
 Bohlender Graebener R400C
 center-channel speaker
 Bohlender Graebener R40i speakers (2)
 SpeakerCraft 6.1 DT speaker
 SpeakerCraft outdoor speakers (4)
 Vantage Controls controllers (2)
 Vantage BriteTouch keypads (50+)
 Vantage remote light sensors (6)
 Crestron thermostats (12)
 HAI Omni Pro II home automation/
 security system
 Speco CVC-860DN/24 color surveillance
 cameras (2)

EQUIPMENT LIST

Continued from p.100

UStec multimedia outlets
 UStec cable TV and HDTV
 distribution modules
 UStec residential network server
 Ixos high-speed network wiring
 Crestron Cresnet wiring
 Linksys wireless access points (4)
 Panasonic KXTAW848 digital PBX/KSU
 phone system
 Panasonic voice mail system
 APC UPC AC line conditioner
 and back up systems (4)
 ETA Systems power-conditioning system
 WeatherHawk 240 weather station
 eSommelier wine management system
 HoloSound HoloVision Model 200
 entry system
 Dirt Devil 1099 Platinum Force
 central vacuum system
 Middle Atlantic equipment racks

EQUIPMENT LIST

completely invisible, having been built into cabinetry.

Oh, and what about the “simple” computer networking system the homeowners wanted from the start? They not only have a system that gives every computer in the house simultaneous access to a single Internet connection and the ability to access hard drives in other rooms, they also have one that lets them monitor and control their home from anywhere in the world. “From a computer in their other home in Los Angeles, the couple can visually monitor and control everything remotely,” McAllister says. “[The homeowners] can check the weather conditions, view real-time images of both the inside and outside of the house and, of course, transfer files between

the country and city homes. Cross-country networking, hundreds of electronic devices, specialty systems that track the wine and the weather, succinct control of multiple systems and seamless integration with the decor: They all add up to one extremely smart, stylish and sensational home. **EH**

Premium Bohlender Graebener in-wall speakers set the tone for the media room, which features one of the biggest plasma TVs on the planet: a 61 incher from Runco. A wireless Crestron touch-panel can be used to set up the entertainment systems as well as to view web sites and email correspondence.

