



Touch-sensitive lifestyle

For the owners of this home, automated systems ensure the security, comfort and convenience of many aspects of their daily lives

When you wake in the morning to find your favourite radio station tuned in to the news, the lights on, the bathroom floor already warm and the curtains pulled open, you could be forgiven for thinking the maid has been up since dawn.

But, with the automation technology available today, you are likely to be wrong. The house featured on these pages has all these facilities – and more – but without the maid. Home automation specialist The Listening Post took what was initially a fairly simple brief to automate a few key



Facing page: A sophisticated home automation system, designed by The Listening Post, controls many of the day-to-day functions in this house. In the bar and billiard room, curtains, lighting and the semi-professional stereo system are operated via a single touch panel. Scenes are preset for games of billiards, listening to music or chatting at the bar, and a karaoke system is also built in.

Above: A selection of preset scenes makes a visit to the home theatre a relaxing experience.

Left: Touch screens, such as this one in the home theatre, are designed to be intuitive to use.



features when this new home was being built, and finished by designing a system which comprehensively controls the house through intuitive settings.

From the front gate to the back garden, most functions of the house are operated via simple, touch-sensitive control panels.

Designer Romesh Anandaraja of The Listening Post says as the project progressed the owners became increasingly excited by the home automation concept, and saw the benefits of incorporating more features than they had initially planned.

“We had three key considerations. The home had to be safe and secure, both when the owners were in it and when they were away. They wanted the system to be simple to use, and it had to have functions that made living there as convenient as possible,” says Anandaraja.

Security is addressed in several ways. Cameras at the front gate are connected to touch panels in the house, so an image of visitors to the house appears on the screen. Garage doors open in response to sensors on the owners’ cars, and the driveway and

garage light up when their cars approach the house. For additional safety, as soon as the owners arm the alarm, the system checks all doors and windows are closed, alerts them if any have been left open, and indicates exactly which ones.

Another useful feature is the holiday mode. This mimics the previous week’s occupancy pattern, turning lights on and off and opening and closing curtains to create a lived-in look. To save energy, non-critical features such as heating and air conditioning are left switched off.

To ensure the system is user-friendly, the house contains a combination of wireless touch screens and wall-mounted control panels in every room. Gate cameras, lighting, air conditioning, curtains and music can be operated from any of these points, and the owners can also access the internet from the screens.

So the system is easy to operate, it incorporates a variety of preset scenes for each room. For example, in the home theatre, stepping in the door activates the lights to a preset level. Once the DVD is



Facing page: Pressure sensors in the floor approaching the staircase ensure it lights up before you even reach the first step. The lights switch off again after you reach the landing.

Above: In the bedroom, after the alarm clock rings, lights gradually come on and music plays. Before this, the heating or air conditioning begins bringing the communal areas to a comfortable temperature.

Left: The bathroom is preset with different modes depending on who is using it. Preferred choices of music and appropriate vanity lights come on.



loaded, the curtains automatically close, and the lights dim to a preset level. Pressing play causes the lights to dim until they go off; press pause or stand up, and the lights slowly come back on.

"This whole system, with its preset options, is designed to anticipate the needs of the owners," says Anandaraja.

Convenient features such as pressure sensors turn lights on and off as the owners move through their home, and individual routines can be preset.

For example, half an hour before the

alarm clock rings in the morning, the heating (or air conditioning) comes on, bringing the house to a comfortable temperature, lights gradually brighten and preselected music or the radio comes on. If there's a need to get up in the night, low-level lighting illuminates the way, then turns off again when back in bed.

Pressure sensors in the hall floor approaching the staircase activate hidden stair lights, then turn them off again after the landing is reached.

In this home, the theatre is the

pièce de résistance, containing a highly sophisticated collection of audiovisual and projection equipment. For a bit of extra fun, the same technology that's used in amusement park rides and for military simulators is located under the seating plinths, causing the floor and seats to shake during appropriate scenes in movies, such as major explosions or car chases.

All equipment needed to operate the security, audiovisual and other features is kept in a small, easily accessed, 3m x 3m data room adjacent to the home theatre.



Audiovisual designer/supplier:

The Listening Post (Hamilton)

Televisions: Pioneer

Screen: Screen Technics

Projector: Barco

Home automation, electronic control: Vantage Controls

Music server: Audio Request

DVD player: Toshiba HD-DVD

Processor, amplifier: Adcom

Multiroom audio speakers: Bose

Home theatre speaker system: Jamo 7.2THX

Facing page: In the loggia, all the same features, and more are available via a wireless touch pad. For example, if the gate rings, the music mutes automatically. The wall-mounted HD TV is fully weatherproof and speakers are in the ceiling.

Above: Water features and outdoor lighting are all operated via preset scenes.

Left: Indicate the car on the touch pad in the garage and the appropriate garage door opens.

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