

Variety Show

Living in a model home gives the owner a chance to use a wide assortment of electronic systems and devices.

by Lisa Montgomery, Photography by Oscar Sosa

MODEL HOMES ARE USUALLY PACKED WITH THE BEST THAT MONEY CAN BUY. IT'S THE HOME-BUILDER'S chance to show off, and for prospective homebuyers, it's an opportunity to see the latest materials, decorating styles, floor plans, landscaping—and in some cases the most advanced electronic equipment for state-of-the-art entertainment, conveniences and comfort. ■ The Le Maison De L'eau is no exception. It's the epitome of elegant living, appointed with a screened-in resort-style "lanai" complete with a black-bottomed swimming pool, a spa and soaring waterfalls on the outside, as well as a gourmet kitchen, a 25-foot-high fireplace and a private master suite that runs the full length of one side of the house. However, it's what resides inside the walls that makes this model a showstopper. This 5,000-square-foot beauty is equipped with as much technology as you'd find in any successful electronics boutique.

HIGHLIGHTS

- More than enough high-speed wiring gives this home lots of flexibility for future electronic additions.
- Controls in every price range provide versatility and the chance to try out a wide selection of technologies.
- Easily modifiable system adapts to the homeowner's changing needs.





■ Ken Fobes' master suite is one of his favorite escapes. Here, a portable Crestron touchpanel activates through a single finger press the room's big-screen TV, DVD player and surround-sound receiver.



■ A 15-inch Samsung monitor behaves as a computer workstation, a TV screen and a place to control the home's lights, audio/video equipment and more.

The home has all the standard fare, including a lighting control system, an HDTV, door cameras, a whole-house music system, a security system, a zoned heating and cooling system and a computer networking system.

But what makes this home truly unique is the awesome variety of controls and components that can be used to govern and enjoy these and other systems in the house. From basic, inexpensive knob-style volume controls to pricey full-color video touchpanels, from in-wall background music speakers to top-quality freestanding home theater speakers, this home has it all.

The variety of products was intentional, says Dan Fulmer, whose company, FulTech Solutions in Jacksonville, FL, handled the design and installation of the electronic systems. Through a special arrangement with the homeowner, Ken Fobes, FulTech now

uses the occupied home as a place to demonstrate home control technologies to prospective clients. In return, "Ken got model-home pricing and some of the best equipment around," Fulmer says.

Controls Galore

The arrangement works well for both the homeowner and FulTech. As a technology enthusiast, Ken loves being able to take advantage of the many different types of electronic devices that can make his life easier. And when that next new revolutionary, change-your-life-forever gadget hits the market, his home will be one of the first to get it. For FulTech, having one "homey" place to bring customers is convenient and highly effective. "We can show them everything that's possible, from the inexpensive to the exorbitant," says Fulmer. "In this home some of the rooms have absolutely no forms of technol-

ogy, others might have a pair of speakers, and others might be loaded with a touchscreen that controls every system in the house, as well as a big-screen TV and a surround-sound system.”

One device on which home owners can spend either a little or a lot is an interface to synchronize the control of a home’s security system, heating/cooling system, lights and audio/video equipment. For basic, simple, on-the-spot control of the home’s Crestron whole-house music system, for example, Ken uses a Xantech SmartPad3 keypad mounted near the back of the house. From it he can quickly adjust the volume and select the source he wants to hear, be it a satellite radio station or a tune that’s stored on the hard drive of his Audio ReQuest Fusion 80 music server. The music spills into the elegant outdoor area from six weather-hardy SpeakerCraft speakers.

The level of control gets much more comprehensive as Ken heads to any of several Crestron touchpanels located throughout the house. The most advanced, the TPS-2000, is found in the home office. From it, Ken can view the current temperature of the house, the security settings, and the status of

the lights and audio/video equipment, and make any necessary adjustments. This top-of-the-line touchpanel also displays real-time video captured by a surveillance camera mounted near the front door. That’s a lot of information to view on a five-inch screen, so Fulmer created a spread page for each system. One page, for example, displays only the status and controls for the heating and cooling system; another page shows only the buttons Ken uses to summon music to a particular room. Hit a button labeled VIDEO, and the images from the outside security cameras instantly pop onto the touchpanel.

These “macro” buttons simplify routine tasks for Ken by commanding several systems at once. “Because Ken considers his home to be the ideal place to relax and unwind, we created a macro called RESORT,” Fulmer says. This single command engages the music system, tunes to his selections, and plays soft music throughout the entire house and the outside area. At the same time, it commands the home’s Lightolier Compose PLC system to arrange the lights so that the house looks its absolute best.

The home’s other touchpanels, found at the foyer



■ The outside of Ken Fobes’ home is just as smart as the inside. Using a portable touchpanel, Ken can put the back yard into spa mode, which activates the jets and the heater of the hot tub and turns off the waterfall that ordinarily spills into it.

BREAKING IT DOWN

LIGHTING THE WAY

A Compose PLC lighting control system manages nearly every light fixture in Ken Fobes’ home. The system is particularly appealing to Ken because the settings of the lights can be modified easily through the home’s many wall-mounted Compose keypads.

KITCHEN UTENSIL

A 15-inch Samsung monitor that resides in Ken’s kitchen functions as a computer monitor, a TV, and an interface for operating the home’s security system, lighting system, heating/cooling system, audio/video equipment and more.

MUSIC ALFRESCO

The Xantech SmartPad3 keypad near the lanai entrance activates a whole-house music system. Outdoor SpeakerCraft speakers distribute the tunes around the pool and hot tub.

CONTROL ON THE GO

Ken enjoys access to every system in his house from anywhere in the world. Crestron e-Control software, which resides on the home’s Crestron home management system, links Ken’s laptop to the house systems.



■ The robust wiring infrastructure that resides inside the walls of Ken Fobes' home enables the two PCs of his home office (as well as PCs in other rooms of the house) to share a single high-speed Internet connection, exchange files and access one set of office peripherals.

and the master bedroom, may not show camera video or cost as much, but they're just as capable of controlling the entire house. "The mix of touchpanels in the house proves how easy it is to mix and match controls based on your needs or budget," Fulmer explains. For example, the 4-inch screen of the CT-1000 mounted in the foyer is the first thing Ken touches as he walks through the front door, so having quick access to all of the systems is important. From one convenient tool he can disarm the security system, activate the lights and turn on the music.

Finally, there are the two ST-1700 wireless portable touchpanels that are ideal companions for Ken's family-room home theater and his master suite. All the same macros and control pages that appear on the TPS-2000 and CT-1000 touchpanels are there, but with a bit more audio/video muscle. Pages dedicated to the control of the family room theater and the master suite theater can be accessed for one-

button activation of a surround-sound receiver, a DVD player and a big-screen TV. The touchpanels also provide a quick and easy way to set up music, lights and the waterfalls for outdoor entertaining.

Control from the Road

In all, four Crestron touchpanels help manage the residence, but there's plenty of room for more. That's because the house is wired to the hilt with Fulmer's own patent-pending structured cabling system. Every room is outfitted with an Ethernet jack, which connects to a central networking hub. Any computer, desktop or laptop that plugs into a jack can act as a control panel—through mouse clicks rather than finger presses. That's a reality already in Ken's home office, where multiple PCs juggle home control and business duties. This also occurs in the kitchen, where a 15-inch Samsung monitor acts not only as a networked control panel, but also

PLANNING

2 days over the course of a month

During this phase of the home building project, homeowner Ken Fobes met several times with the homebuilder and the home systems installer, Dan Fulmer of Fulltech Solutions in Jacksonville, FL, to discuss what types of electronic systems he wanted in his new home. Cabinet makers, the interior designer and other tradespeople were also involved in the discussions.

PREWIRE

5 days

Wiring was installed to deliver music to dozens of speakers, web content to more than a half-dozen computers, images from security cameras to TV screens, and commands to lights, security devices and audio/video gear.

TRIM OUT

2 weeks

Multimedia outlets that networked the home's electronic devices together were mounted to the walls, speakers were planted in the walls and ceilings, keypads and the phone system were installed.

HOOKUP/SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

3 weeks

The home management system was installed, the speakers were connected to amplifiers, the components of the family room home theater system were hooked up, and programming of the system commenced.

as a traditional computer workstation and a TV screen.

The robust wiring infrastructure behind the walls also enables the PCs to share a single high-speed Internet connection, exchange files, and access every office peripheral. Because the network extends beyond the office and into the outside world, Ken can access documents, printers and other equipment from anywhere his laptop is plugged in via his own Internet site. That includes the airport, a client's office, or even a hotel room half a world away. Ken's Crestron CNMSX Pro2 control system features e-Control, a software that enables any web-connected computer to monitor and manage his entire home from afar. The capability is particularly useful to this homeowner, who logs more than 100,000 miles in air travel a year. "And when he's finally headed for home, he can use his PDA to put on some music and start the hot tub for his arrival," Fulmer adds.

Home at Last

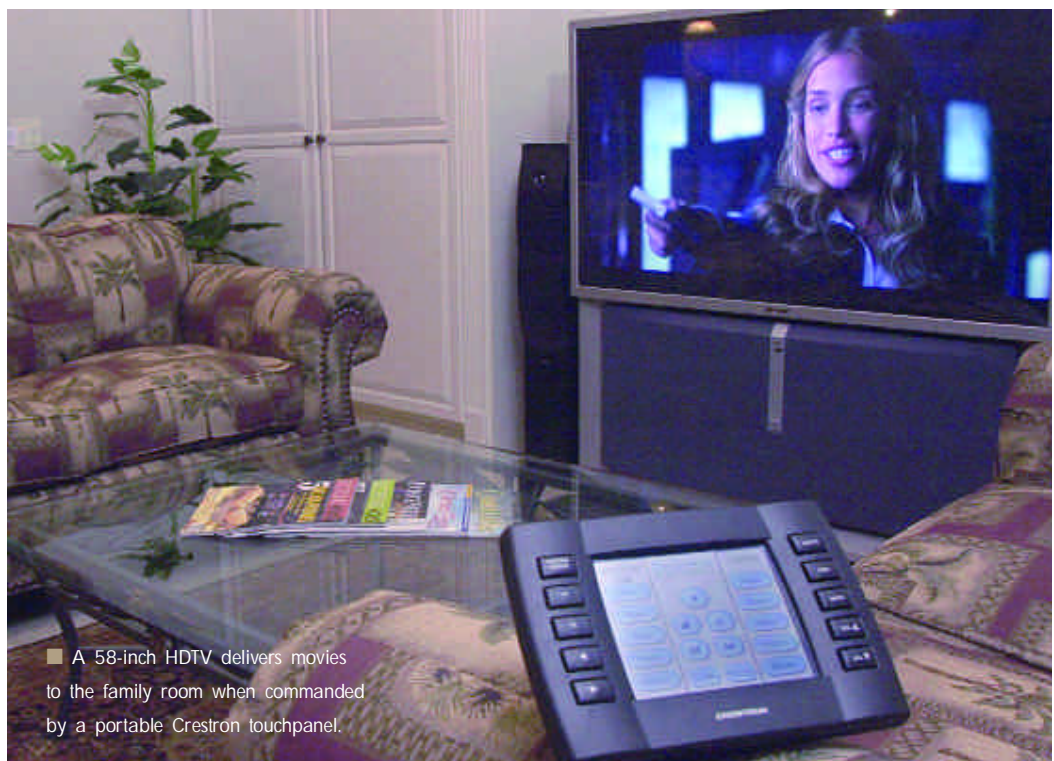
As the PDA puts the house into RESORT mode, Ken might slip outside for a much-needed breath of fresh air. On the way he might grab a portable touchpanel and hit SPA. This command activates the jets and

the heater of the hot tub, and shuts off the waterfall that usually spills cold water into it.

On the other hand, he might rejuvenate with a movie. Again, there are a couple of choices: the 58-inch HDTV in the family room or the larger 60-inch standard TV in the master suite.

Handy to both entertainment areas is a TiVo digital video recorder that records and stores on its internal hard drive all of Ken's favorite shows he misses while he's on the road. Fulmer "modulated" the TiVo unit so that the recorded shows can be viewed on any TV in the house. Modulation also enables Ken to view his entire music collection from the screen of any TV.

And that's the real beauty of the Le Maison De Leau. Although it's brimming with technology and serves as a showcase home for a successful home systems installation company, its owner feels right at home. As for the amazing variety of controls and equipment that come and go (see "If These Walls Could Talk, page 69"), they satisfy Ken's appetite for cutting-edge electronics while providing a home that's as relaxing and as simple to enjoy as a weekend at a four-star resort. **EH**



■ A 58-inch HDTV delivers movies to the family room when commanded by a portable Crestron touchpanel.

If These Walls Could Talk

A whole lot happens behind the walls of Ken Fobes' 5,000-square-foot, technology-laden house. The wire that resides behind the drywall reaches every corner of the estate, delivering music to dozens of speakers; web information to more than a half-dozen computers; images from security cameras to the screens of TVs, computers and touchpanels; and commands to heating/cooling and security systems ... in short, every single electronic component in the house.

And that's only brushing the surface, says Dan Fulmer of FulTech Solutions in Jacksonville, FL, the company that handled the design and installation of the home's electronic systems. Fulmer's philosophy is that there's no such thing as too much wire. In Ken's home he ran wire to all the usual places, as well as to places where no TV, computer, telephone, stereo component or other piece of technology resides. It's a move both Fulmer and Ken feel is smart, given Ken's desire to keep his home on the cutting edge. Right now, a 58-inch HDTV delivers movies to the family room, but who knows when Ken might trade up to a plasma TV. To ensure that his family room could support the addition, Fulmer ran all the necessary wire, including electrical wiring behind the wall where the TV is housed. The wire is completely hidden behind the wall now, but it's ready to terminate to that new TV when Ken approves the switch.

The plasma TV is just one example of how an abundant wiring infrastructure can support new systems and features anywhere at any time. "Since we finished the job, we have gone from cable TV to satellite to TiVo, which requires more cables, then to HD satellite and then added the HDTV, which needed even more cables," says Fulmer. The house was ready for every upgrade. This wire-to-where-it-ain't philosophy may seem like overkill, but for a homeowner who wants his or her home to easily accommodate new electronic additions, it makes perfect sense. "If you wire right, you can add, change out, upgrade, expand, even use different systems over time and at any time, which frees you and your budget to buy the quality products that work well," Fulmer says.



■ Versatility is alive and well in Ken Fobes' home. He uses a variety of controls to manage and operate his home, including a wall-mounted touchpanel and a PDA.

EQUIPMENT LIST

HOME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Crestron CNMSX Pro2 System
Enet2 Card
Crestron TPS2000 In-Wall Touchscreen
Crestron CT1000 In-Wall Touchscreen
Crestron ST1700C Wireless Touchscreens (2)

HOME NETWORK

FulTech Universal Cabling System (patent-pending)

WHOLE-HOUSE MUSIC SYSTEM

Audio ReQuest ARX Fusion Audio Server
Crestron Pad8A Audio Switcher
Crestron CNAMPX 16x60 AMPX
Xantech Audio Control Keypad
Xantech Volume Control

HOME THEATER SYSTEM

Sony 57-inch HD-Ready TV
TiVo Digital Video Recorder
Sony HD Satellite Receiver
Sony Surround-Sound Receiver
Sony VCR
Sony DVD Player
Nakamichi Tuner
Nakamichi CD Player

LIGHTING CONTROL & SECURITY

Lightolier Compose PLC
DSC Security System

Builder: Castle Builders, Ponte Vedra, FL



WHERE TO FIND IT! ■ CHECK OUT PAGE 88 FOR RESOURCES