



## Home Entertainment: Central Intelligence

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If it is not the valedictorian of the latest class of smart phones, then Apple's iPhone is at least the most popular, and, accordingly, its capabilities are well publicized and well documented. Essentially, with its Internet and e-mail functions, the device enables you to remain connected to the world when you are away from your office or home.

And now, because of recent advances in home-automation technology, the iPhone can also keep you connected to your home from just about anywhere in the world.

In the last few months, nearly every major home-automation provider has integrated its products with the iPhone and iPod Touch. Now, with either device, a homeowner can remotely control smart-home functions normally managed through touchpanels located throughout the house. "The advantage is presence," says Jim Carroll, president and cofounder of the Osterville, Mass., home-automation company Savant Systems. "I can carry the iPhone with me wherever I go in the house. Using this device, I can control everything in my media room. I can also use it to access my music collection from my pool area."



Distributing music throughout a home has been possible for decades, but the latest systems make their predecessors seem primitive. One of the most advanced multiroom audio systems is SpeakerCraft's MODE, or Music on Demand Experience. The MODE system features one or more in-wall control pads, each of which includes a display panel and an illuminated click wheel. When you place an iPod in a dock, each MODE control pad throughout the home will display the iPod's contents, listing album titles, artists, and songs. The system can access as many as six docked iPods simultaneously, as well as control AM/FM radio tuners, satellite radio tuners, CD players, and practically any other sound source.

Most iPhone/iPod Touch home automation operates through a house-based Wi-Fi network. However, systems from companies such as Crestron Electronics, of Rockleigh, N.J., can also

work through a cell-phone network, allowing you to control your home's automated functions from any place with cellular service. For instance, with an iPhone and the appropriate Crestron lighting system, you could use your phone to turn on lights before you arrive home from work or while you are away on vacation. Or you could just spare yourself the inconvenience of having to walk from one room to the next, flicking switches or sliding dimmers.

The larger the house, the more convenient lighting control can be, whether it is facilitated through a smart phone or a touchpanel. Steve, a real estate developer and residential contractor in Memphis, Tenn., is thrilled that he can control all of the lights in his house through any one of several touchpanels located throughout the residence. "If we're going to have a few guests over, we can turn on a welcome scene where the lights over the front door come on, along with the chandelier in the foyer and certain lights in the main living area and kitchen," he explains. "If it's a larger party, we have other lights that come on." Audio Video Artistry, a home-systems integration company in Memphis, installed the system and included a special feature for Steve's peace of mind. "If you hit the emergency button," he says, "every light inside and outside the house comes on, and it notifies security."

Steve acquired the home in 2000 and soon discovered that it was not as smart as it was supposed to be, in part because its electronic systems had been assembled piecemeal over the course of several years since 1995. "What little of it worked didn't work well," he says. But he was hesitant to embark on a major renovation—until Mother Nature forced his hand.

During a storm, a bolt of lightning struck near the house and disabled most of the home's electrical systems. "The only things that survived were some of the speakers, the Runco video projector, and the screen," Steve says. Audio Video Artistry's renovation demonstrated how much smart-home technology has matured and improved in the last decade. "I wasn't looking for an automation system to make coffee and toast for me in the morning," Steve says. "I just wanted something that works the way it's supposed to."

Current systems cannot make your breakfast, but they can open the drapes before you get out of bed. These systems do not control lighting as much as they control how much sunlight streams in through the windows. For example, in a home in Aspen, Colo., with west-facing floor-to-ceiling windows, the shades can be set to retract fully in the morning so that the homeowners can enjoy the view, and to roll down at scheduled times throughout the day to block the sun. According to Phil Scheetz, a marketing manager for the Coopersburg, Pa.-based Lutron Electronics, which specializes in commercial and residential lighting, these systems serve very practical purposes. "Automated shades and drapes can protect wood floors and fine carpets from damage due to heat and direct sunlight," Scheetz says. "They also can provide privacy, and make your home look occupied when you're away."

For the times when Steve is away from home, he had numerous night-vision security cameras installed around his property. The images from the cameras are projected onto the touchpanels that control them. This is just one of the many security features that are now available in home-automation systems. Control4, a manufacturer of home-automation products in Salt Lake City, offers an e-mail function that can be programmed to send a message to your BlackBerry if, for instance, an outside door is opened after 10 pm—perhaps indicating that your teenager has snuck

out after curfew. Control4 can also key e-mail alerts to a motion detector, fire alarm, or practically any device that is controlled by the automation system.

Panasonic is among the companies offering automated cameras that can allow you to monitor your home remotely. Many of these cameras can be connected to the Internet so that you can view the images they record—and, in some cases, even pan and tilt the cameras themselves. With such a system and a laptop or an iPhone, you could search the grounds for a possible intruder or simply keep tabs on your pet schnauzers from halfway around the world.

*Audio Video Artistry*, [www.avartistry.com](http://www.avartistry.com); *Control4*, [www.control4.com](http://www.control4.com); *Crestron Electronics*, [www.crestron.com](http://www.crestron.com); *Lutron Electronics*, [www.lutron.com](http://www.lutron.com); *Panasonic*, [www.panasonic.com](http://www.panasonic.com); *Savant Systems*, [www.savantav.com](http://www.savantav.com); *SpeakerCraft*, [www.speakercraft.com](http://www.speakercraft.com)

— Brent Butterworth