



Personal Space

What kind of system does industry legend Sam Runco have installed in his own home?

Custom installation pioneer Sam Runco, founder and CEO of Runco International, Inc., discusses designing and programming an automation system for his personal home.

Integration at Home: Why did you choose Crestron for your home?

Sam Runco: Well it was really a no-brainer for me to choose Crestron. We have had a long relationship working with them and they have an excellent reputation as the leader in their product category. And although I'm no expert on system control, our dealers are, and they tell me that Crestron is the go-to brand.

Did you specify individual Crestron products, or just the Crestron brand?

I had asked a good friend and one of our dealers, Anthony June of All Around Sound, to lead this project, and they are very big on Crestron and know the products and programming inside out. So while the general decision was to go with a Crestron system, I left it to them to determine the specific products that would be the most suitable for my system because they are the pros at that. They assured me that the Crestron products they specified would handle my personal idiosyncrasies, and they were right! I'm glad we went in the direction we did because we all became friends and achieved our goals, with tremendous support from Crestron.

What is controlled by Crestron in your home?

That's easy — everything! I've got stuff all over the place, some is very elaborate, and a lot of it we custom designed specifically for my home, so, most of the system is engineered in a unique way. For example, I've got a complete theater downstairs with an elaborate masking screen and the projector hidden in a specially made Range Hood that houses exhaust fans for the kitchen stove. It automatically opens when the video system turns on, and that whole mechanism was custom made by our engineers based on my concept. Crestron control was customized to operate an array of LCD monitors in my living room, which are concealed behind a special framed 8' x 10' two-way mirror. Then there's the lighting all over the place.

What were your integration/control objectives?

Well Runco has always had the lion's share of dedicated home theaters. But I also wanted to focus on the family room. I believe that there are 1,000 family rooms for every possible dedicated room. First and foremost we had to win over the women if this was to work. What

appeared to be "most important" going into this turned out not to be. For example, one would think the screen, projector, amplifiers, and speakers should be visible. Quite the contrary, eliminating this equipment totally from sight, "that's what's important." A woman can buy into that and that's what we did. We created a great deal of unusual approaches. It's all very customized to meet my specific requirements and that's the beauty of using products like Crestron — they've been designed from the ground up to be custom integrated and the end result for us has really been customized totally to my needs and requirements, and also bullet proof, and that's major because what good is all this stuff if it isn't reliable or you need a scientist to figure out how to use it?

You seem to have a unique or creative approach to system programming. How was your system programmed differently than others?

I wanted it to be as easy to use as turning on a light switch. That's why I involved myself so heavily in the programming aspect. Some of the programmers are like computer guys. They are extremely knowledgeable and they understand the fantastic capabilities of the system, so they are inclined to employ all the "wow" factor element sometimes without putting themselves in the position of a user who has to actually use the stuff. So I worked long and hard with these guys to create a programming regimen that was simple, straightforward, and logical from a novice user standpoint. It has been a long and experimental process to get it the way I want it, but the results will be fantastic. You will be able to grab anybody off the street and bring them into my house, hand them a touchpanel, and they will be able to operate the system. ■

