

Automation & Control



When Audio Video Artistry was asked to undertake a substantial retrofit/upgrade on a Spanish-style family home on 10 acres in East Memphis, Tennessee, they knew that their client wanted nothing less than global control of lighting, security, HVAC, and music systems.

by karen mitchell Memphis Mojo

Audio Video Artistry Uses a Little Magic To Retrofit a Spanish-Style Home in Memphis

Sometimes you have to know how to take total control before you can give it back to your client.

When Brad Parsley and Chris Rogers were asked to undertake a substantial retrofit/upgrade on a Spanish-style family home on 10 acres in East Memphis, Tennessee, they knew that their client wanted nothing less than global control of lighting, security, HVAC, and music systems.

Parsley and Rogers, co-owners of Audio Video Artistry, an eight-year-old integrator focusing on high-end residential projects in Memphis and surrounding areas, also knew that the client and his family would be living in the home during the extensive project.

"This house is about 12,000 square feet; 9,500 square feet on the main level, and a family media room upstairs," Rogers said. "Two

other integrators had worked on it previously, and it had aging home automation/lighting and music system, all of which had to be replaced. We retrofitted everything in six weeks and turned it around. We cleaned up a mess. We spent a week gutting the house, taking out existing wiring."

AVA presented a selection of three Crestron-based engineered designs, and the client selected the biggest system in terms of control, Rogers said. "Most people don't put 30 touch screens in a house, but this home has one in every bathroom, in the kids' rooms, the guest room, and the computer and exercise rooms, in addition to the main rooms. They range from 25 Crestron CT1000s to two 15-inch Isys i/O panels, and three TPMC-10s."

Controlled by a Crestron AV2 processor, the

project features more than 95 control devices, including 65 lighting keypads. There are 215 lighting circuits, 22 thermostats with remote temperature sensors, and 30 zones of music played over 30 pairs of speakers. New Crestron technology was brought online as it became available, such as the TPMC-10s, and continues to be added as available. Dimming modules were placed directly into existing LightComm cans.

Most of the existing speakers in the house were kept, Rogers said. "We used three Crestron PAD8-As for audio switching, and six Audio Design Associates PTM-1225 12-channel amplifiers. We're one of ADA's top dealers, and we believe they make the finest amplifiers."

Outside, AVA installed Sonance Rock Speakers controlled by a touch screen in the pool house. Touch screens for the system also were located at each exterior door in the house. The kitchen has a 15-inch Isys panel, a CT-1000, and a 26-inch Samsung LCD panel.

For the upstairs family media room, AVA

worked around the client's existing equipment, such as a 65-inch Toshiba, but replaced electronics with an Onkyo Integra DVD player and receiver. The equipment room is located behind the media room.

The project served as a test tube for Meda Systems Bravo 4 Media Server, as AVA worked out many of the kinks in the beta module. Other gear includes three Marantz multi-disc CD players for the kids, two Marantz AM/FM tuners, and 10 localized Sony satellite receivers.

AVA, Rogers said, rewrote the book for controlling the Radionics on-site alarm security system through Crestron. "The client now has 100-percent control over the alarm, heating and humidity, music, and lighting from every panel in the house," he said. "That's what automation is; he can monitor anything with any touch screen. If one of the kids leaves the music on, he can turn it off. We labeled the system in terms of 'wings,' so when he hits 'west wing' it

Since completion, AVA frequently has returned to the house to add touch screens, lighting keypads, and a kitchen LCD panel.



has all the icons for that area.”

AVA, which recently completed another Crestron-controlled project—this one on a new 25,000-square-foot home in Memphis—bids every retrofit job on a plus-cost basis. “You never know what you’ll find on these retrofits,” Rogers said. “You may have to work through attics with air con units and other people’s installation work.”

For the Spanish-style home, challenges included a direct lightning strike, low rooflines, and a large family that chose to remain in the house during the installation process. Valuable possessions, such as paintings and glass sculptures, necessitated particular care and caution in terms of dust control and work areas. To accommodate the family, AVA disabled each of the six lighting panels one at a time, leaving the music system operating until the end of the project.

“We were able to retrofit by cutting only six holes in their custom-painted walls,” Rogers said. “The big surprise was trying to get from one side of the house to the other; getting 340 feet across, through an attic that consists of several chopped up spaces.”

“For the Spanish-style home, challenges included a direct lightning strike, low roof lines, and a large family that chose to remain in the house during the installation process”

Since completion, AVA frequently has returned to the house to add touch screens, lighting keypads, and a kitchen LCD panel. “Anytime you get into a job this large you know the client wants the newest of everything,” he said.

Parsley says that having real-time communication with a client is essential when that client lives in the home during a retrofit or remodel. “It’s all in getting the details right. Clients don’t fully understand the power of home automation until they live with it. In a new house, you can finish the system and hand over the keys, and the clients learn

how to use it. Here, they lived with it and changed preferences, sometimes before we’d get to the next step.”

AVA, focusing on the upper end of its market, is selective in its design and installation projects, he said, preferring to stay small and render personalized service.

“This market has always lagged behind the major markets, and getting builders and owners to think about home automation is a big step for us,” Parsley said, “It’s just now getting going. It has to do with the expectation of the consumer. Our market never has had a dealer focused on home automation. Now there are quite a few more CEDIA dealers here, and we’ve seen a lot of changes.”

Memphis-area clients are starting to realize that automation is a viable option, Parsley said. “They’re spending much more on custom electronics than they would have even five years ago. The most fun is the learning process, for us and for our clients. We realized that we had great capability from this retrofit project.”

Karen Mitchell is a writer in Boulder, Colorado.