

HOME AUTOMATION

A complete guide to buying, owning
and enjoying a home automation system

INSIDE ...

- ◆ 10 must-have features of every automation system
- ◆ The practical benefits of smart home systems
- ◆ How to save money on installation costs
- ◆ Awesomely automated homes of all shapes and sizes



"FEEL" THE MUSIC

in This NY Brownstone

Audio enthusiast goes beyond hi-fi to incorporate a complete automation system into his downtown digs.

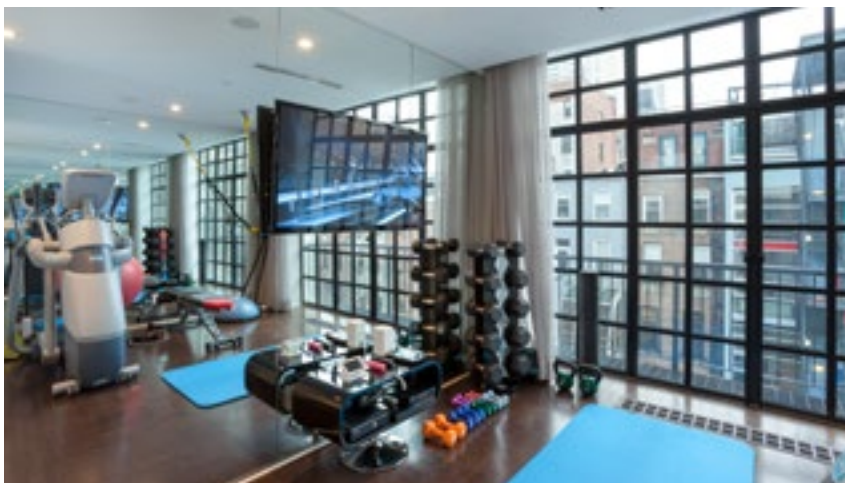


Systems design and installation by theSourceHomeTheater

LIKE MANY AUTOMATION PROJECTS, the plan for this New York City brownstone started with one specific and fairly simple request: hi-fi audio throughout the entire five-story, 3,500-square-foot residence. "Music is what inspires him, it's what he listens to when watching his downhill skiing videos," says Todd Anthony Puma of The Source Home Theater, New York, N.Y. "So installing a high-quality whole-house audio system was our initial plan of attack."

He and his team, which included system programmer Rich Fregosa, ensured that music from components including a Mirage media server and AppleTV would sound crisp, clean and inspiring by combining high-end matrix switchers from Crestron with in-ceiling speakers from Paradigm's audiophile collection and a pair of invisible in-ceiling dining room speakers from Amina. With audio traveling to so many places (18 independent zones), having a way to easily access and direct the music to chosen destinations was another key factor in the homeowner's enjoyment of music. This could have been accomplished with a basic audio distribution system, but as Puma relates, after conversations with the homeowner, the project went quickly from simple to "haywire." "He ended up wanting so much technology that we had to modify our original plan and go with something with heavy processing power and speed." For the homeowner, this would mean a full-blown Crestron automation system, complete with iPads and touchpanels for on-the-spot control of numerous electronic components, that would extend way beyond audio.

Perfectly capable of also handing the distribution of high-def video, the Crestron switchers took



A whole-house entertainment system delivers video and audio to the flat-panel TV and in-ceiling speakers in the home gym. The same Crestron system that automates the home's lighting and motorized window treatments handles the distribution of audio and video signals.

charge of Blu-ray players, cable boxes, Nintendo Wii and Mac Minis. Video from these components can be fed, per commands issued via a touchpanel or iPad, to any or all of five TVs (four Samsung plasmas and one SunBrite outdoor TV)—located in the media room, living room, gym, master bedroom sitting area, and roof deck.

Pushing the capabilities of the Crestron automation system even further, Puma integrated a Crestron lighting system (which replaced the home's traditional lighting scheme), several Crestron motorized window shades, and Siedle electronic door locks, which feature built-in surveillance cameras. Just as the homeowner pulls up a Crestron iPad app to orchestrate the delivery of music and video, he can do the same to operate these additional pieces of technology.

Through the Crestron mobile app on his iPad or an identical screen layout on one of two 7-inch wall-mounted Crestron touchpanels, the homeowner can control lights, thermostats and shades individually, in groups or by area, view real-time images captured by the Siedle surveillance cameras, and lock and unlock the doors. And while Puma could have programmed into the Crestron system preset macro commands (one touch of a button launches a string of commands to several different devices), he designed the screen-based interfaces so that the homeowner could create his own dynamic settings.

Puma explains: "If the homeowner wants to create a Party macro, for example, he uses his finger to drag icons of certain lights and shades to an area on the page labeled Party." The next time he hosts a party, he can choose an entirely different set of lights and shades to react to the macro command.

From a basic request for whole-house music to being able to program some of the settings of his home's automation system himself, the owner of this renovated brownstone has the power of technology right at his fingertips. It's an evolution that introduced him to new ways of looking at automation, where the technology adapts to the needs of its users, not the other way around.