



Field Tested: Crestron DigitalMedia™

The only solution for the digital age

There's no question that the digital age is here today. The products you're using now won't work for much longer. Crestron DigitalMedia is the only solution that answers the challenges of tomorrow – today.



A real-world review by Scott Laird, Owner, Enjoyable Home Systems

The 17 acre estate in the Seattle, WA area includes a 6,000 square foot main house and two guest houses. The client wanted to move the theater to one of the guest houses, while keeping the equipment rack in the main house about 150 feet away. So, Enjoyable Home Systems needed a way to transmit true HD long distance.

The headend in the main house contains a variety of legacy sources, resolutions and output signals including four 1080i HDMI TiVo units, two 1080i, component/SPDIF media servers and two DirecTV 1080p HDMI DVRs. All rooms in the main house are wired to accommodate stereo audio and the theater in the guest house is wired for surround sound.

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Scott Laird, Owner of Enjoyable Home Systems, knew from the outset that Crestron DigitalMedia™ (DM) was perfect for this project. It is the only solution that can support long distance multi-room distribution of full HD video with simultaneous 2-channel and surround sound audio over twisted pair or fiber. Laird rebuilt the headend and prewired the system for DM even before the products were available.

This Seattle home installation was the first DM deployment on the west coast. "I downloaded software that hadn't been beta tested yet!" said Laird. "With all that, it was a wonderful experience. The support was fantastic. At times, I had five engineers from Crestron on the phone at once."

Comparing the installation of a DM system to a PVID system, Laird said, "The programming is actually quite similar, and once the system is configured, DM is even easier. I was totally

blown away when I first opened up DM Tools [built-in setup and diagnostics software]. You hook up the sources and displays to the DM switcher, and DM Tools just starts spitting out information, like source and device resolution, HDCP compliancy, all that stuff."

"There are just so many new things that go with HDMI," Laird continued. "I didn't know about the whole [HDCP] "key" business, which dictates how many displays can be used. HDMI is scary, because it's very hard to troubleshoot, and to follow the pathways when there's a breakdown. For example, suppose you can't get HDMI from point A to point B. You don't know if it's because of the source, the TV or the switch in-between. DM Tools displays how all the data is flowing, so you can pinpoint a bottleneck; having DM Tools as a resource is just phenomenal."

Consumers are not generally well informed about HDMI and its complexities. Laird concluded, "Clients may not know what HDMI is about, but they know the buzzword." He recalled a client who's a big sports fan, and wanted two 65" plasmas side-by-side so that he could watch two games at once. "At the time, I used a generic HDMI switch. It took as much as 15 seconds to switch between sources, and changing channels on one plasma sent the other plasma to black until the switch was completed. The owner couldn't stand it, and made us pull it out and go back to component video. But with HDMI taking over, that won't be an option much longer." Crestron DM resolves the delays and dropped signals associated with HDMI switching. Exclusive built-in QuickSwitch HD™ technology pre-authorizes devices and maintains a constant HDCP connection for fast, uninterrupted HD switching.

"I don't always have to explain what HDMI is," said Laird. "But I do have to point out that there is a huge problem distributing it, and Crestron has the only solution. That's really a powerful statement: being able to offer flawless, instantaneous HDMI and HD switching gets the attention of anyone in the know very quickly. DM is huge for our industry." ■

Scott Laird, Owner

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