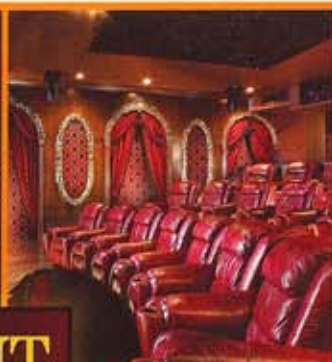
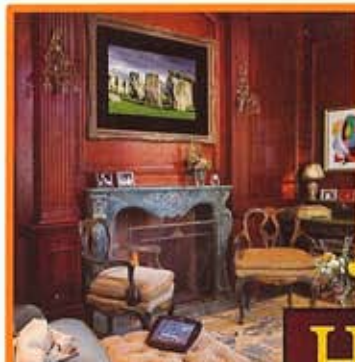


HOME ENTERTAINMENT

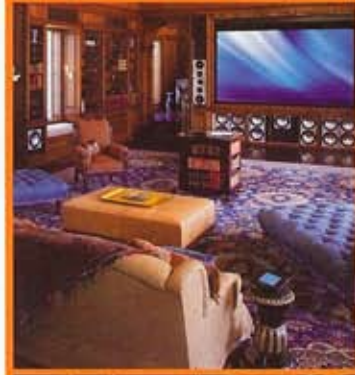
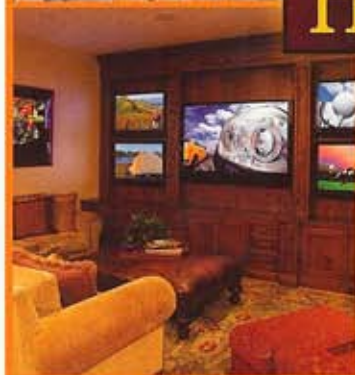
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BEST WHOLE-HOUSE INSTALLATION

Bliss Home Theaters and Automation Inc. of Westlake Village, Calif.

THE BIG SHOW

WITH THE PUSH OF ONE BUTTON, THIS HOME SHOWS OFF EVERYTHING IT CAN DO. AND IT CAN DO A LOT.

> By Charles Crowley > Photography by Ron Carell

The owners of this spectacular 16,600-square-foot home don't have to explain to guests what their whole-house audio, video and automation systems do. They just push one button. According to Robert Bliss Jr.—CEO and founder of Bliss Home Theaters and Automation Inc.—the “party” button on every Crestron touchscreen activates just about all of the home's technological features. These

include video screens, an elaborate outdoor fountain (with numerous water sources and a fire source), automated shades, and even a private bowling alley.

Bliss, who worked closely with his brother George, the company's chief technology officer, says the challenge in designing this home's systems was automating the bowling alley. “There's no such thing as a consumer-grade bowling alley,” he explains. “It's a 13-step process

to start one up. We automated all of that. All the homeowner has to do is hit ‘start bowl’ and then type in the names.”

That's not all the system does, though. The press of another button takes the client from traditional bowling to what Bliss calls “full-blown cosmic bowling,” complete with a disco-type sound system, neon lights and a fog machine. “Fog machines aren't designed to be automated,” Bliss says, “so we had to engineer a lot





of custom sensors and controls to make it controllable with the touchscreens."

The Crestron automation system can be controlled through seven touchscreens positioned in high-traffic locations. Areas that don't require extensive control functions have in-wall keypads or hard-button remotes. The client can also manage everything from a cell phone or a computer. "He travels quite a lot," Bliss says. "[From his plane], he'll start cooling the house down. And when he leaves, he can shut down the house remotely. He can also look at security camera images from anywhere in the world."

These automation features actually save the client a considerable amount of money, Bliss says. "Electrical costs here are based on usage. If your consumption is low, you're on tier one, two or three. If your house goes into tier 20, your electrical costs go way up. The client's first electric bill was \$7,800, but [by adding] the 'green mode' to the automation system we got it down to an average of \$3,700."

One of the key energy-saving features of the home is its automated shades,



Previous spread: The custom home theater chairs bear a Kravet chenille. Artist Victor Brown designed the iron sofa table. The murals are based on old-time beverage art posters. In the bowling alley, an American Leather sectional pairs with Bass Industry's Helix chairs. The custom cabinetry displays the owner's bowling ball collection. The ceiling mural by Jeff Raum depicts a night sky; the twinkling stars are fiber-optic lighting.

Left, top: The "aquarium bar" outside the bowling alley is wrapped in distressed alder-wood cabinetry. Chenille-covered bar stools surround the frosted-glass countertop. Middle: The stained-glass doors by artist Ron Vogt shine into the TV room, which boasts five flat-screen TVs. Bottom: The loggia, just outside the aquarium bar, is anchored with a 50-inch plasma TV that swivels so pool- and hot tub-goers can watch the movie at hand.



Opposite page, top: The master suite's 42-inch Fujitsu TV pops up from the custom alder-wood cabinet. The fireplace mantle, a fallen log that was distressed and chiseled, is in keeping with the pine- and fir-plank ceiling. Turquoise accents in the chocolate Italian-silk damask linens add a touch of whimsy. Bottom: The family room opens up to the great outdoors. The custom leather sofa with red chenille seat and back cushions pairs with the chairs, all in a saddle leather.



“In the high-end world of automation it’s all about the last one percent. If you only complete 99 percent, you fail.”

—Robert Bliss, custom installer

which help keep the house cool and prevent sunlight from fading the furniture or floors. The timing of the shades’ movement varies to suit the longer days of summer and the shorter days of winter.

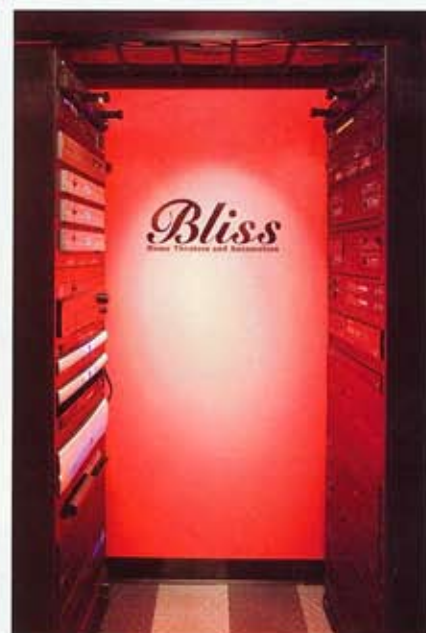
Other challenges the Bliss team faced include numerous specialty lighting fixtures: The Crestron system controls 272 different lighting loads. The fire source in the outdoor fountain also presented difficulties. Not only did the Bliss team automate the pit so it can be lit or extinguished from any Crestron touchscreen, they also had to add a safety feature: a sensor that reads wind speed and snuffs out the fire under gusty conditions.

The key to the success of the project is a 100-square-foot technology room outside the theater, which wasn’t part of the original house plan. “We caught it just in time,” Bliss says. “The original theater was the wrong shape. We reworked it to create a properly ventilated tech room.

“The tech room is crucial,” Bliss continues. “It’s an environmentally controlled room, maintained at 70 degrees. Temperature is a gear-killer. That’s why there’s no gear installed in the [individual] rooms. Everything’s in the tech room.”

Five of the equipment room’s residents are DVRs, one for each family member. Content from the DVRs can be viewed on any television. “You can watch a movie from the family room DVR, then pick it up in the bathroom,” Bliss






Both the indoor and outdoor kitchens are equipped with televisions, as well as the garage. The home's elaborate automation system controls the audio everywhere, which includes two full surround-sound systems with a total of 24 speakers, and 56 additional speakers scattered throughout. The automation system also controls 26 different video sources.

says. The system also includes a Kaleidescape movie/music server with separate players for the parents and the kids—both of which can be viewed on any TV in the house. (The server currently contains about 1,300 movies and 5,000 albums.)

The theater is the only room with dedicated video sources, including a satellite receiver, Blu-ray player and Kaleidescape player. The cinema's projector, a projectiondesign PD-101 OPI, pairs with a D-Box motion-simulation system and Cinepro audio electronics and speakers. The Crestron system provides 24 zones of sound, mostly through Sonance Visual Performance in-walls.

With such a complex system, it is comforting to know that one button can activate everything. Indeed, the client's delight has inspired Bliss to make the "party" button a standard feature in all of the company's future installations. 

CUSTOM INSTALLER:

Bliss Home Theaters and Automation Inc. of Westlake Village, Calif. (blissha.com, 818.706.2794)

ARCHITECT:

Arc Design Group Inc. of Camarillo, Calif. (805.484.4277, arcdesigngroup.net)

INTERIOR DESIGN:

Maraya Droney Design of Ojai, Calif. (805.646.6673)

➤ For more images of this home and a full equipment list, please visit our website at HEmagazine.com.