Office MAX

Five displays and 7.1 surround sound make the office space sizzle in this California desert home.

by Arlen Schweiger, photography by Michael Neveux

Blockbuster action heroes might get the glamour and the girls, but villains generally have better gadgets. The James Bond series blurs that line, with our hero enjoying his share of cool stuff. But his enemies are no slouches when it comes to evilly delicious technology and futuristic hideouts, as this La Quinta, CA—homeowner points to Bond villainy in describing his own home office, whose audio/video setup could make Goldfinger yearn for a 21st century touch.

News, sports, movies—this homeowner can watch 'em all at once on the 70-inch Sony Qualia and four 32-inch Sony TVs in his home office. He can control the room's video, audio and lighting from his desk via an AMX wireless color touchpanel.

"The multiple TV setup in the office may not be as cool as Elliot Carver's in Tomorrow Never Dies, but it still has to be classified as cool and functional," says the homeowner, with a nod to Jonathan Pryce's bad-guy character in the 1997 flick. The five televisions—a 70-inch Sony Qualia rear-projection set along with four 32-inch Sony LCDs—is definitely cool. Throw in a surround-sound music system, iPod docking station, Xperinet media server, AMX wireless color touchpanel home control and network router for the space, and you've got one fully connected lair.

Mixing Work and Pleasure

Because the homeowner conducts most of his business and spends most of the day in the home office, it seemed natural that the room would serve as the signature space for Indio, CA-based RNX International's comprehensive installation approach. Aside from the office, the company installed audio/video solutions in everything from the master bath to the great room to the exercise room to the kitchen to the outdoor terrace.

As an avid golfer—virtually a prerequisite for residency in the Palm Springs area—the homeowner cites the Golf Channel as a constant on the displays, which he says are typically left on throughout the day. Other mainstays are Fox News, Bloomberg, CNN and, since the room doubles as a prime viewing space for his wife and kids as well, the Disney Channel. During the workday, television audio often gives muted way to tunes streamed from an iPod and iPort Music System from Sonance.

The audio/video preamplifier and separate power amp from Anthem fuel the 7.1-channel surround-sound system in the office. The setup includes three Genelec speakers, four Thiel in-ceiling speakers and a 200-watt Genelec subwoofer. There's plenty of thump when the homeowner wants it, whether he's on a lunch break and cranking up the iTunes or enjoying a movie with the family.

"That room serves multiple purposes. It's a very comfortable office that's also built as

a home theater," he says. "The sound system is powerful, and the fact that the 70-inch TV is complemented by four 32-inch sets really makes it a useful information center. Besides being useful during the day, it's hard to get around the killer enclave that it makes for watching movies. It's a little like having a nightclub sound system in an 800-square-foot theater."

Stepping Up

The uberpopular iPod supplies much of the office and the entire home's music content, with help from networked Apple computers that allow for easy music transfer. Other audio and video content, from sources such as CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes and a cable DVR, is either stored on or distributed by an Xperinet 1.75-terabyte hard drive server and an ADA Suite 16 system.

Sending music and video from a central location to rooms throughout the house was a priority for the homeowner and his family, and they had an easy time coordinating with RNX on their wishes. This was the third home RNX had outfitted for the owner, with a bit more technology and gear added each time. "He moved the bar up," says RNX's Jon Duncan. "The gear is a little more sophisticated. His first house was very basic, and he was single then, so he just wanted a surround system. House number two got more, but not full-house control. This house has everything, all integrated."

That includes a secondary entertainment setup in the great room that doesn't pack quite the punch of the office system but could rock many homes as a primary theater. Another 70-inch Sony display is the centerpiece, this one a Grand Wega LCD rear-projection set, with accompanying 5.1 surround sound from James Loudspeaker for the front left, right and center, and Bay Audio in-ceiling speakers for the rear. The great room is mostly used for watching sports while making dinner or to watch specific sporting events if we have guests over. It's rarely used for

A Chief dual-arm swing-out mount allows family members to watch the 23-inch Sony LCD from anywhere in the kitchen. Music streamed from numerous sources can flow through the room from a pair of rectangular Bay Audio in-wall speakers that blend into the walls—yes, that's one behind the chandelier.

The great room's 17-foot-high vaulted and beamed ceilings added to the home's Tuscan elegance but presented an acoustic challenge to installation company RNX International. The family can set the six chandeliers and nearly 20 throughout the home easily, thanks to scenes programmed into the AMX control system.

BREAKING IT DOWN

BRIGHT IDEA
Scenes programmed into the Lutron lighting system can be triggered by AMX keypads and touchpanels. Some of the scenes include wine, a more basic everyday setting when the family is home; react, for more accented illumination on areas like the outdoor terrace, front pathway and interior artwork; and entertainment to turn on all interior/exterior mood lighting, multiple fireplaces and the whole-house music system.

OFFICE OVERRULE
The entire family can use the AMX controls, but the homeowner notes, "the best thing is that the office control can override everything in the house and that it is a one-way situation. No other room or control in the house can operate the office."

OUTDOOR IN FULL
The outdoor terrace acts as an all-encompassing entertainment area, with a full kitchen and living room. The family and guests can watch videos on a 40-inch Sony TV and listen to tunes through six Bay Audio in-ceiling speakers. Sonance rock speakers are also planted outside.

Bay Audio in-ceiling speakers and a 40-inch Sony TV add an entertaining element to the frequently used great room terrace, which is essentially an outdoor living room. Music and video can be selected from an AMX touchpanel that controls the Xperinet hard-drive media server and cable boxes stored in a built-in equipment rack.

movies, as we prefer the office theater system," the homeowner says. "Sometimes it has a little too much Food Network on it; from Chef on a 70-inch TV is a little aggressive. But my wife is a phenomenal chef, so maybe it's a small price to pay."

Around the Home

Cooking, dining and entertaining are common activities the homeowners often share with guests, so convenience in accessing and employing automation, lighting and distributed

audio/video control was high on the priority list. An AMX system provides the brains and backbone of the control, with its reach extending to the family's fingertips through keypads and touchpanels throughout the residence. When the entertainment or everyday activities spill into the outdoor space or great room terrace, the homeowners and guests can listen to music, watch TV, set the lighting and even control the swimming pool settings through an AMX portable touchpanel or a keypad. "The weather is so pleasant in our area that it allows us to open the large sliding doors and expand our entertaining space. The outdoor room is really no different than the inside of the house, minus the final perimeter wall," the homeowner explains. "We have a full kitchen and living room outside, so it made sense to add the A/V there as well."

At the press of a button on one of the many keypads and touchpanels, the homeowners can trigger numerous activities within the automation system, including music selection, volume and settings for the Lutron lighting system, thanks to scenes programmed into the AMX control. For a large home designed with Persian rugs, antiques, beamed cathedral ceilings, bold furniture, a half-dozen fireplaces and loads of decorative lighting, it was essential that the homeowners have an easy time controlling mood and environmental enhancements.

"The lighting system is a must. Nothing kills the look of a wall like 15 switches in a row [where] no one remembers which switch works what," the homeowner says. "There are a few entertainment settings for the lighting system, and they all offer a varied look to the zones, as well as to the outside. With nearly 20 chandeliers, it would be easy to let the lighting get away from you and feel like we're living in an airport."

Instead, these desert dwellers can tap one button and instantly fire up some songs, a movie or some mood lighting in virtually any room of the house. They're conveniences that could make even a Bond villain jealous. EH

EQUIPMENT LIST

DISPLAYS
Panasonic PV-DF2035 20-inch PureFlat Stereo TV with built-in DVD/VCR
Sony KDS-70Q006 70-inch Qualia LCD TV
Sony KDF-70XBR950 70-inch Grand Wega LCD TV
Sony KD-34XS955 34-inch TV
Sony KDL-40V2500 40-inch TV
Sony KV-32FS120 32-inch TV
Sony KV-32HS420 32-inch TV
Sony KLV-S40A2325000 40-inch LCD (4)
Sony KLV-S32A10/SG 23-inch LCD TH/2)
LG 23LX2R 23-inch LCD TV

A/V COMPONENTS
ADA Suite 16 12-channel/six-zone power amplifier
ADA Suite 16 audio input card
ADA Suite 16 preamplifier card
ADA Suite 16 video switcher card
Anthem AVM30 preamplifier
Anthem PVA5 power amplifier
Integra DTR5.6 A/V receiver
Scientific Atlanta Explorer cable box (3)
Sonance iPort Music System (2)
Sony ARL/FM tuner
Xperinet M-2117 1.75-TB hard drive
Xperinet NC-2147 network client

SPEAKERS
Bay Audio 460 in-wall speakers (6)
Bay Audio 560 in-wall speakers (4)
Bay Audio 565 in-ceiling speakers (4)
Bay Audio 580 in-ceiling speakers (2)
Bay Audio 585 in-ceiling speakers (6)
Genelec HT206 subwoofer
Genelec HT208 subwoofer (3)
Genelec HT538 subwoofer
James Loudspeaker surround-sound speakers
Thiel in-ceiling speakers (4)

CONTROL
AMX Mio-DMS keypads (7)
AMX MVP-7500 touchpanels (2)
AMX Modero touchpanel and system with NI-3000
integrated master/NXI controller
Sonance VCS-65 slider volume control

ACCESSORIES
APC S15BR battery backup/voltage regulator
Active Thermal Management cooling system kit
Middle Atlantic equipment racks (2)
Richard Gray's Power Company PowerBridge UPS
Richard Gray's Power Company 600S power conditioner
Chief dual-arm swing-out mount
Chief flatwall mounts (2)
Progressive Marketing TV wall mount
Cisco Ethernet network router

SYSTEM DESIGN AND INSTALLATION
RNX International
Indio, CA
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