

smart life

THE LUXURY LIFESTYLE BIBLE

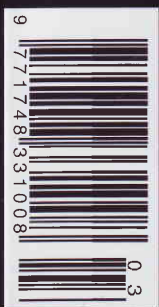
INTERNATIONAL

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THE CONNOISSEUR'S GUIDE TO GIN • BRITISH AIRWAYS FIRST • A \$4.7-MILLION WRISTWATCH PLANETARIUM
• TOURING THAILAND'S TRANG PROVINCE • PORSCHE 918 SPYDER AND ALL THE FINEST THINGS KNOWN TO MAN...



Disembodied music the house-over. Like being haunted by a ghostly piper... or not.

It's Scot the lot

With rumours of technological magic tricks afoot, MARK TRENT headed to Scotland to be amazed by Hometech's latest AV art of illusion. Now you see it...

When travelling through unfamiliar climes, it's wise to remember that the most interesting sights often lie well off the beaten path. And although you may need to work a bit harder to find them, the end reward will usually more than justify the effort and energy expended. Sometimes, however, it doesn't matter how hard you look...

When commissioning a family home to nestle in a quiet corner of Scotland, the head of the household had very clear views on the importance of the audio-visual system... and one specific criterion that needed to be met without exception: not one single loudspeaker in the property should be visible to the eye. Which was no small requirement given that the initial sketches included 40 separate areas where sound and vision would feature.

As the family's principal residence, this house would be a home of extraordinary detail and design, with every small touch meticulously calculated and considered. The entertainment system would also therefore need to subscribe to this ethos and blend simple yet comprehensive control with first-class performance.

This challenging and exciting brief was given to Edinburgh-based integration specialists, Hometech, who were handed a difficult dilemma

by both the client and the architect: how do you ensure that the latest entertainment and control technology would keep everyone in the family happy, whilst not dominating or conflicting with the décor of the large, classically-styled home? The answer lay in thorough planning, innovative thinking, many kilometres of cabling and the latest in cutting-edge loudspeaker design.

System addict

Hometech worked with the client over a number of weeks to better understand the family's lifestyle and to drill down into specific requirements that would help them create a system worthy of such a sumptuous home. Several key points emerged over the course of these meetings. Firstly, there was a clear feeling that all media should be available in High Definition throughout the home to give the family freedom to move around the property while still enjoying the same content. Furthermore, control had to be simple and straightforward so that it could be operated by any family member, with parental control issues kept firmly in mind, of course. Finally, there would indeed be around 40 separate zones within the home where audio-visual content should be accessible – a sum total of 80 loudspeakers.

First on the equipment list was a Kaleidescape server, to enable both movies and music to be distributed throughout the property. And in order to address the issue of source distribution, 2x 16x16 Crestron Digital Matrices were designed to ensure that the family's appetite for concurrent media and content could be satisfied by a system that would have the bandwidth muscle to match. With a generous helping of iPods, DVD-players and Sky boxes then added to the mix, this was a system that was shaping up to be something very special indeed. And then came the all important loudspeakers,

for which Hometech's choice of partner was an easy one: they turned to invisibility experts Amina.

Heard but not seen

Amina has been manufacturing invisible loudspeakers since 1999 and has a range of products that are designed to be fitted into walls and ceilings, finished with a final skim of plaster and decorated as normal, leaving them completely invisible. Based on cutting-edge acoustic research and featuring the latest in lightweight composite materials, Amina loudspeakers deliver powerful and engaging performance regardless of the listener's position within the room. With fuss-free installation and bullet-proof reliability, they seemed to be the perfect choice for the job at hand. However, given the scale of the client's mandate, Hometech set up some listening tests with competitive offerings just to make sure that the client would be completely satisfied. Unsurprisingly, Amina quickly emerged as the preferred choice, and work started on the system in earnest.

Once built and installed, the system set a number of precedents. In the media room, over 1km of cabling was used to connect three bespoke storage racks that cradle one of the

largest systems of its kind in the UK. A choice of 16 High Definition video sources and 16 audio sources can be distributed to any of 29 displays and 40 pairs of loudspeakers throughout the property. Access to these sources is gained through 19 wireless and six wall-mounted touch-screen control panels that provide user-specific control dependent upon predetermined access rights. A personal identification number given to each user has allowed parental control to be set on the children's access to the main media server, as well as giving each individual tailored access to their own iPod, Sky HD box and DVD-player from anywhere in the premises. And just to make sure that nobody loses touch with the world immediately outside the window, the touch-screen controllers also offer access to a weather station, which provides information on temperature, rainfall, humidity and barometric pressure – truly a remarkable system for a remarkable property.

Kit and kin

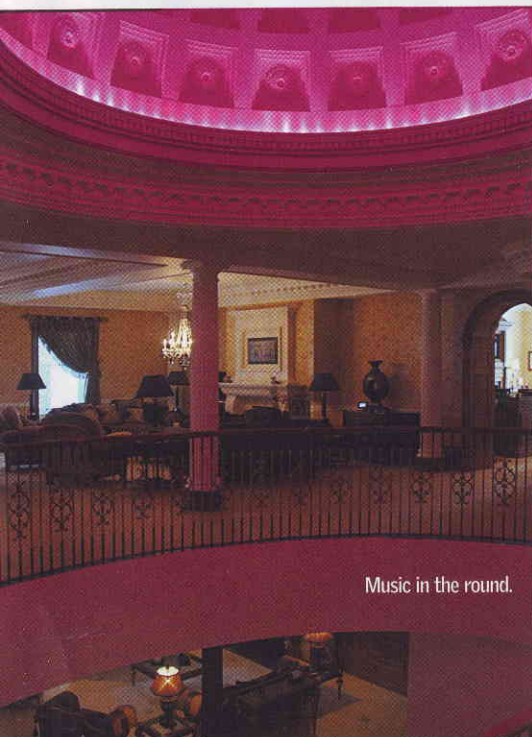
With the last critical item – the family – safely installed, the job was complete and the system could be officially handed over. The client, unsurprisingly, was delighted: "Hometech appreciated my requirements and by using invisible speakers they were very sympathetic to the traditional aesthetic design, as the decorative ceilings and walls were left unblemished."

Fraser Campbell, meanwhile, the Commercial Director of Hometech Integration Ltd, was in turn full of praise for Amina: "Amina Speakers allowed us to deliver the audio performance we were striving for from a system of this calibre, while maintaining the clean aesthetic the client required."

So, with most of the household listening to their media through Amina's award-winning loudspeakers, this is a system that genuinely is out of sight.

KIT LIST

- 11x Amina Technologies AIW3X Plaster In-wall Speakers
- 51x Amina Technologies AIW5X Plaster In-wall Speakers
- 1x Apple TV
- 2x 16x16 Crestron Digital Media Matrix
- 26x Samsung Screens (various sizes)
- 21x Crestron Touch Panels
- 2x Denon AVR10
- 5x Kaleidescape Player System
- 5x Sky HD



Music in the round.



Hometech and Amina: more than fit for purpose.