



HOT HOUSE, COOL HOME

This London looker keeps its residents comfy at any temperature

Project installation by Grahams in the UK

London's chilly reputation is no secret—"pity the poor fool who leaves home without an umbrella and layered clothing," writes one online travel guide—but just as the fog may roll, the sun can indeed shine, too. For one lucky London home, the family members stay happy year-round while the home itself does all its adjusting automatically.

"This property had a major remodeling about two

years ago," explains David Graham, whose company Grahams, based in London, UK, installed the Control4® automation system. "It's a great opportunity for us to come in and deal with all the technology that needs to go into the house when the home is being completely remodeled." Graham and his team seized that opportunity by loading the residence with smart-home essentials like lighting control, entertainment, data networking, shades,



This sleek and modern gas fireplace has been incorporated into the automation system. Turn it on from anywhere in the house, and walk into a pre-lit, pre-cozy living room.



PHOTOS: HOWARD BARTROP

security, and remote access control, for starters. But this system also boasts features specifically added to keep the climate as comfortable as possible, no matter how cold—or hot—it may be outside.

Naturally, the home's heating and cooling systems are integrated into the automation system. But a few fancy flourishes go beyond the basics when it comes to keeping comfortable. In the main living space, a modern fireplace sits in a partial wall between the living room and a family room. Any time the weather gets a bit chilly, any family member can crank up the gas fireplace using their Control4 system. Instant inferno. And what if that center star of the solar system decides to make an appearance? On the back patio, a large mechanical awning expands and retracts on command, adding a Shangri-la of shade at a moment's notice. Very cool, indeed.

MORE HOT STUFF

Every room in this four-level dwelling holds its own extra goodies. The master bedroom, for instance, has its own designated audio zone, as does the adjoining master bathroom and dressing room. Another system specialty? The heated towel racks, which kick on every day at a set time to reward all early risers with a perfectly warmed towel as soon as they step out of the shower. "This client travels quite a lot, so he regularly gets up early," explains David. When the husband wakes up, the under-floor heating also turns on.

Another clever feature in the

The large-screen TV can be adjusted for whether you're cooking dinner in the kitchen or lounging in the den, *above*. Pre-set morning settings cue the master bathroom with heated towels and "His & Hers" customized music, *bottom right*.



bathroom: “His and Hers” audio settings. “Before 8 o’clock, the system is set to his radio tuner. After 8 o’clock in the morning and you go into the bathroom, it will put on her tuner,” notes David. It’s a small but not-so-subtle setting for a couple whose listening tastes are unique.

Everywhere you turn in this house, another hi-tech detail is waiting to be used. By the front door, an ALL OFF button offers one-touch convenience to turn the entire house off as residents leave for the day. The television between the lounge and the kitchen can swivel, depending on which room the viewer is in. Just outside in the backyard sits a separate studio, currently a chillout area for the homeowner’s teenaged sons. “And if they leave it all on, which they tend to do,” explains the homeowner, “we just turn it all off from the house, which is great.”

Another feature the owners love is the built-in alert systems. “If the front door’s left open for more than five minutes, it will alert the homeowner,” says David. If either of his sons come home late one evening and leave the front gate open (not uncommon, these are teenagers we’re talking about...), the parents get an alert after the gate remains open for 10 minutes.

WHY CONTROL4?

David cites many reasons for using Control4® solutions to power the project. “One of the nice things about using Control4 in a house like this is, we can add many interfaces as we go on,” he says. It was relatively easy to add additional security cameras, remote sensors for temperature monitoring, and exterior landscape lighting, for example. The ability to do real-time debugging and programming is also a time-saver for David’s team, which turns into cost-



An outside patio shade can be opened or closed using the touch screens, a tablet, or a smart phone.



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A perfectly positioned touch screen makes it easy to monitor the whole home from one location, and control the fireplace, adjust the lights, and so on.

effectiveness for the homeowner.

Speaking of effectiveness, one of the features that saves a bunch of time, says David, is shockingly simple: The ability to monitor battery levels in the remote controls. “I can’t tell you how many calls we get from busy clients who say, ‘My remote control’s not working, can you come out and fix it?’” In this house, and projects like it, David’s team receives a message when any of the remote control batteries fall below 25% so they can let the owners know it might be a good time to switch out the

“I like things to work and we’re happy with the system. It works perfectly; it does what it should do.”

batteries—before they stop working.

And, despite all the super-intelligent systems that keep this hot-and-cool home humming, its owners are far from technology enthusiasts. “They just want something that’s simple and going to work well,” notes

David. The homeowner agrees. “I like things to work,” she says, “and we’re happy with the system. It works perfectly; it does what it should do.”

A hefty hi-tech system that runs without a hitch? That may be the coolest feature of them all. ■