

# WEIRD,

# WONDERFUL, AND

# WIRED

Project installation by James Paul  
of James Paul AV in the UK.

A home automation system keeps up with an art collector's ever-changing bachelor pad



Mark Christophers, who co-founded the West Cornwall Pasty Co. in the United Kingdom, had an incredible vision for a tired terrace Victorian house in west London, *left*. The ground-floor living room doubles as an art gallery, *opposite*.



There are more than a few odd and unexpected guests staying at Mark Christophers' residence in London, England. There's William Shakespeare, wearing bold and runny eyeliner. (Or would you call that mascara?) A skeletal Sid Vicious pouts above the fireplace, completely exposed—skull and all. A disruptively bright-blue dog-like creature with vanilla ice cream cones, in place of what might normally be ears, stands

patiently by the stairs to greet visitors on the ground floor. What is this (to borrow a line from the original Willy Wonka movie)—a freak out? To some, perhaps. But to Mark, an avid collector of "street art," it's very much home sweet home.

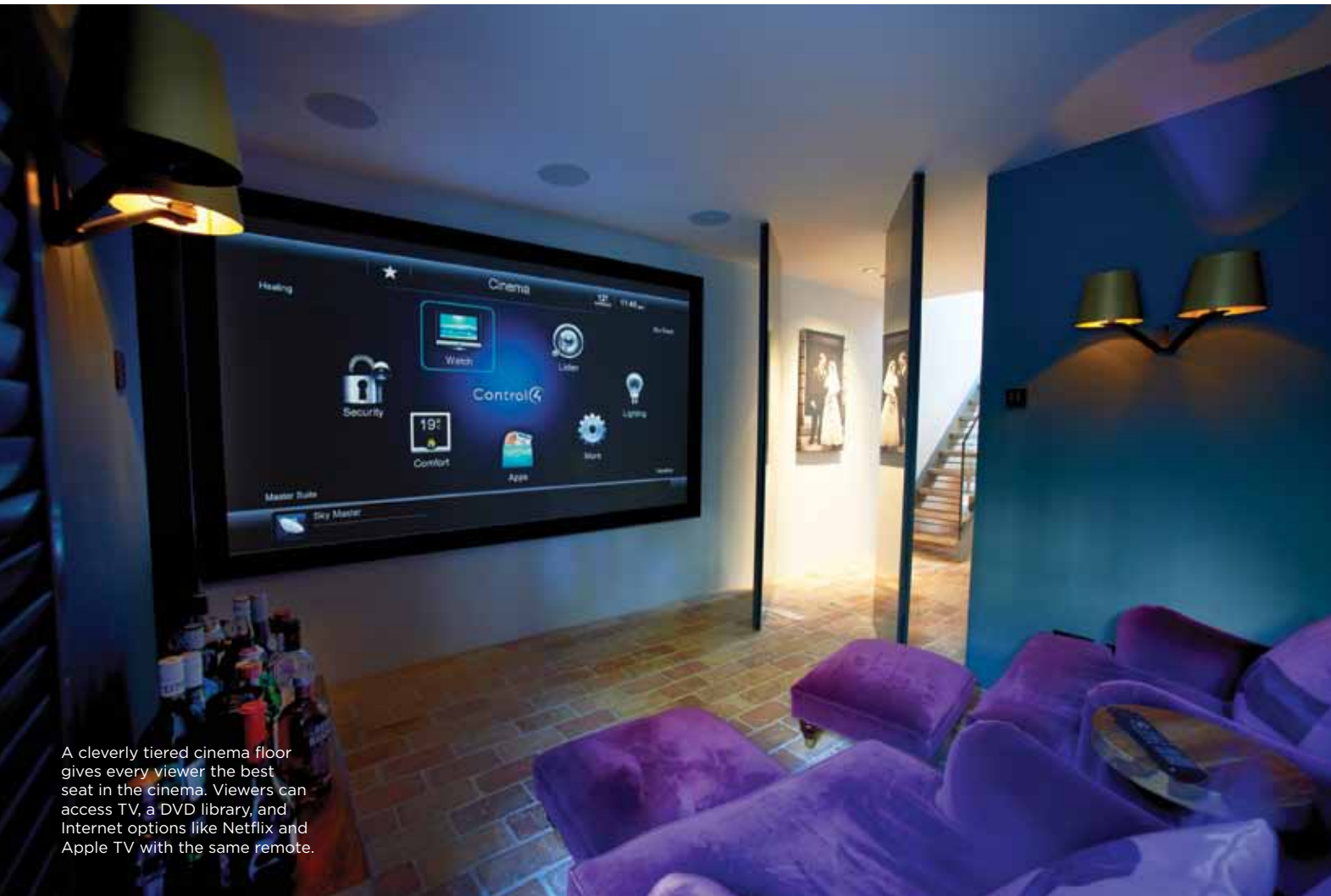
And quite a home it is. In the Eighties, the property had been divided into separate flats. Now, after three years of complete deconstruction and reconstruction, it is now restored to a single-family townhouse with a uniquely modern makeover. On the lower-ground floor,

you'll find a kitchen-diner, utility room, home theater/cinema and bathroom. The living room greets you on the ground level, and on the first floor, you'll find two guest bedrooms and a bathroom. The top level has a master bedroom suite, with an office area and roof terrace on the mezzanine, a flight above, but before we make our way up, up, and... let's meet the king of this castle.

"I love twisted art. People like it or they hate it," says Mark, a successful entrepreneur whose artful

acquisitions include a majestically crowned and cloaked toad under a museum-quality covering, and a bulldog that happens to be a lamp. To first-time visitors of this big-and-bold bachelor pad, it's the hardly subtle art that catches the eye. But then you realize that the interior is quite beautiful and very intentional. "For me, it was about making every room usable and having a different atmosphere," Mark notes. The multi-floored home hosts many design microcosms, from a nearly all-white beautiful master bedroom suite to the deep-

PHOTOS: HOWARD BARTROP



A cleverly tiered cinema floor gives every viewer the best seat in the cinema. Viewers can access TV, a DVD library, and Internet options like Netflix and Apple TV with the same remote.

purple velvet voluptuousness of a screening room. It's a design scheme reminiscent of a boutique hotel, a distinct, eclectic style Mark draws inspiration from. It truly is a feast for the eyes. But one detail you may not immediately detect is this: The larger-than-life living space is fully automated.

### THE ART OF CONTROL

"I always tell my girlfriend that this is my dream house," says James Shorter, the installer whose company, James Paul AV, designed

**“**I wanted a home system that would add to my lifestyle, not take away ... to make it easier.**”**

and maintains Mark's automation system. Televisions and audio throughout the house are on a

Control4® system, as are the lights, the blinds, a CCTV/security system, and heating and cooling. "Mark's got great input on the aesthetics. He kind of left the technical and how-to bit to me."

"I love technology, but I haven't got a clue about it," Mark admits. "I wanted a home system that would add to my lifestyle, not take away—to make it easier." Mark did an initial install with another company, but frustrated by their limitations, turned to Control4 to take the system where he wanted it to go. "Control4 fit with my lifestyle. It

## What does TruAudio bring to the table for Control4 Dealers?

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### What does TruAudio like about working with Control4?

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***"What's not to like when Control4 thinks you're one of the best"***

- Chris Ivie: Sales Manager



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was iPad-ready, it was on the go, it was Internet-accessible. The other thing I love about it is the fact that the installer can change things remotely, without having to actually come to the site every time, which was a big issue with some of the other providers." Or perhaps the project simply proved to be too daunting for some installers. Let's have a closer look at the home's highlights. Shall we?

### TIP-TOP TOWER

The master suite is an all-white, two-story glory at the top of the house. A helical staircase leads from the bedroom up to an office area and deck with big views of a coveted borough of London. Large overhead blinds specially made in Germany are automated and, at the touch of a button, can open on command to let in the natural light through a skylight. Even the doors to the outdoor deck are mechanically automated, and can be opened or closed from anywhere in the house. You'll also find here—a very nice touch in a house with so many stairs—a handy "Good Night" feature: "I just press one button, the blinds come down, and the lights will go down," says Mark. "It just makes everything easy."

The living room (home to Sid Vicious and William Shakespeare, by the way) boasts its own technical gems. "It's probably my favorite room," says installer James. There's a custom TV stand and built-in speakers flush to the wall so you barely notice them. And by the front door is another version of the system's most useful features—the "All Off" button. Similar to upstairs, with one touch, explains James, "it will basically shut the whole house down: dim all the lights, bring all the blinds down,



A helical staircase in the bedroom leads to a galleried office and roof terrace, where the skylight is controlled by the push of a button.



turn the TVs off, everything."

Tucked behind a simply stunning kitchen, where the brick slips for the floor create continuity between the indoors and garden patio, is a viewing room, plush with plenty of

purple décor, including dachshund-dog throw pillows that line a couch. A cleverly-tiered cinema floor gives every viewer the best seat in the house with the ability to access television, a DVD library,



The bathroom seems a spectacular place not just to have a soak, but to immerse yourself in some great entertainment. You'll find the Control4® remote tucked into the medicine cabinet.

and Internet options like Netflix and Apple TV. In fact, despite the pillows, it's a favorite spot for one regular guest: Tommy, the neighbor's cat. "He spends more time here than next door," James notes. "He meows outside, loudly and persistently, until he's let in. I'd probably do the same if I was next door," he laughs.

### TRAVELING MAN

A successful entrepreneur, Mark travels extensively, and his automation system provides extra

peace of mind whenever he's on the road. "When he's away he can fire up his computer, sign in to my.control4.com, check the security cameras, turn the lights on and off, anything he's forgotten," says James. "So that works well." Mark agrees. "Having the ability to set a vacation mode so that when I'm away, the house looks lived in, that's a very big issue for me."

### FUN FOR ALL

When Mark is home, however, he doesn't seem to get much

rest anyway. He loves to host gatherings at home, even if it's a last-minute decision to do so. "I love being able to email the house," explains Mark. "If you're out, you can email if you're coming back for a bit of a party. You can get it set up in the party mode: The lights will turn on, the music will already be playing..." And, once the party is going, Mark can have any of his musically-inclined friends guest DJ by popping their own iPod or music source into a Control4® dock. "My love of entertaining and making sure people have a good



James Shorter, the installer whose company, James Paul AV, designed and maintains Mark's automation system, below. The "loo" just off the cinema features a faux bookshelf. Scratch that—it's actually just wallpaper, left.



time is paramount," says Mark. "I've never wanted my home to be just about style."

Overnight guests can select their own television, movies, or music from each guest room, or even from the TV in the guest bathroom, equipped with its own remote right by the tub or perhaps it's hiding in the medicine cabinet. "I want technology that people staying here could access easily and understand," says Mark. "The icons on the Control4® screen are very obvious, so if you want to watch something or listen to something, or you want to change the lights, it's just very obvious what you can do."

So far, this house has been an incredible automation success story. "The project's been fantastic," says James. "It's a really modern, cool, funky place and it quite nicely mixes

modern and comfortable, and that's worked well with the Control4® products. They fit in seamlessly, they don't stand out, they're not frightening to look at, and it works well." But with a client like Mark, you never know what creative surprise might wait around the corner.

"Every time I come here there's a new bit of artwork or a new statue or a new something that we're trying to squeeze in and get the lighting to work around. It keeps me on my toes," jokes James. So far, he's been able to keep up. "Control4 is very modular, so when Mark wants to add a room or an area, we can add bits and pieces on. It all fits in quite nicely together, which is great."

"I know how quickly technology changes," explains Mark. "I didn't want to install technology that in

two years' time would be outdated. And, I'm always changing my mind, so I need something that can work with my different moods."

Mark's funky, fashion-forward home may not be everyone's cup of tea. But it's a great example of how home automation can blend seamlessly with any lifestyle—even one as unusual and in constant flux as Mark's. And the best part is, a smart system can work behind the scenes and allow the homeowner to do more of what they love to do, whether it's hosting impromptu all-night parties fueled by Ibiza dance tracks, or revamping the house layout to incorporate a giant aubergine-colored frog. Or whatever Mark may be setting his insatiable and inspired mind on next... we hope he keeps us apprised. ■