

The Homes Of Tomorrow

Tracking the growing importance of hi-tech home installation to the AV industry, JAKE STOW takes a look at what the apartments of the Hacienda have to offer...

If by some minor miracle you've been oblivious to the meteoric rise in prominence of technology in the home, then the work carried out by Crosby Homes, in conjunction with D&T Electronics, will well and truly open your eyes as to how far things have come, and how fast they continue to progress. The purpose of the aforementioned partnership was to create the ultimate lifestyle package and, in the resulting Hacienda Lifestyle Systems, it's fair to say that they've achieved what they set out to do.

The idea of the all-encompassing smart home is currently opening up countless possible avenues for the AV industry to exploit, whilst simultaneously offering the consumer a greater degree of choice and control than they've ever had before. Bringing together all aspects of home entertainment and marrying them with other systems, such as lighting or security, is the logical end for anyone concerned with being at the cutting edge of audio and visual technology, and consequently installations, such as that carried out for the Hacienda, are too important for anyone with even a passing interest in the AV industry to ignore.

The scope and potential of home installation is perfectly demonstrated by the Hacienda, whose apartments all feature some impressive AV technology. Entertainment such as digital TV and multi-room audio come as standard in many of the apartments,



along with additional features, such as customisable mood lighting systems, all of which will be looked at in greater detail later. Another major feature is the impressive distribution and control system supplied courtesy of some of QED's finest technology to date. So, without further ado, let's take a look exactly what's gone into the Hacienda...

entertain me

First, consider what the owner of one of the Hacienda's apartments has available to them. Entertainment is supplied via an in-built aerial system, which aside from permitting access to the standard BBC and ITV terrestrial channels and analogue radio, also picks up DAB radio and IF satellite signals. Thanks to the distribution system installed in the Hacienda (more on which later), all TV channels, including those available on Sky Digital, may be viewed in any room in which there is a screen. There is also the option for the pictures from the door entry system or CCTV cameras that are featured to be displayed via the TV using the same technology.

Multi-room audio is one of the principle benefits of this kind of installation and the Hacienda certainly doesn't disappoint. As with the video feeds, audio is handled by the centrally located distribution system, which also contains audio sources, such as a CD player (the Hacienda employs a stunning 300 disc changer) and AM/FM and DAB tuners. If required, alternative Hi-Fi equipment can be plugged into the central system, allowing the user full access to that equipment, wherever they might be in the apartment. Sound, from whatever source, can be transmitted through concealed speakers, mounted either in the ceiling or walls, providing quality audio without the requirement for intrusive and space-hungry loudspeakers. A typical apartment in the Hacienda has been supplied with eight of California-based company SpeakerCraft's 6.1 CRS (Custom Round Series) in-ceiling speakers and three 6.0 DT (Dual Tweeter) in-ceiling speakers. The latter fulfill the role of two speakers, making them ideal for locations where space is at a premium, whilst the former incorporate a one-inch silk dome tweeter, for incredibly smooth, high frequency performance.

In addition to the home entertainment facilitating kit described above, the Hacienda has a host of other features. With the CAT5e based cable network that has been included, connection points are linked to a central distribution point, which permits the user to





choose between ISDN, ADSL, LAN, voice or data connections. Switching connections (if, for example, the use of a given room is changed) is a simple matter of reconnecting a cable to the service that is required.

The central distribution point also opens up a number of other options. For example, a telephone PABX system can be hooked up. This system will handle incoming calls and will put them through to a location where the user is most likely to be - the bedroom if it's late at night or early in the morning, for instance. A paging system permits families to communicate quickly and efficiently between each other's rooms and will send calls to specific locations depending on who they are directed toward. If no one is in, calls can be redirected to a mobile phone, virtually ensuring that a call won't be missed. Most cleverly in this area, international calls can be routed through different carriers in order that the user has access to the cheapest service available, dependent on their location and the time of day it is.

The network of cables installed in the Hacienda apartments also allows data to be easily transmitted around an apartment. This, amongst other things, enables a PC LAN to be set up, incorporating all of the computers in the home. In turn, this means that a single hard drive can be accessed from any location, whilst Internet is universally available through the central server.

Another area in which a lot of effort has been directed within



heavily upon the décor of a room. The Hacienda dispenses with these in favour of simple and attractive keypads, once again linked to a central controller. In practice, this means that the user can gain access to any lighting circuit from any keypad in the property. In this way, specified lighting effects can be created throughout an apartment with just a single button push. Lighting experts Lutron have contributed the Grafik Eye 3106, a device capable of exerting control over six independent lighting zones, to make this all possible.

taking control

It's all very well to enthuse about what the apartments in the Hacienda offer the user, but it's too easy to take this kind of thing for granted. A large amount of high-end technology has gone into creating the options open to the Hacienda apartments, and much of this comes from QED. This company, a familiar name to any regular readers of this magazine, has contributed both distribution and control technology. At the heart of the entire set-up is their impressive Systemline S4.3 controller. Providing inputs for four source components, this device is capable of delivering incredible sound to four (in the case of the Hacienda) separate zones, in which



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different audio can be enjoyed at independently controlled volumes. Though incorporating amplification technology, the S4.3 can also be linked to additional power amps if that's required. Making use of advanced microprocessors, this device is compatible with the vast majority of popular source components, be they video or audio and, thanks to a DMS infrared Display/Eye, can be accessed from any room in an apartment.

Control is as vital a consideration in a property of this nature and again QED have the equipment to make the system work. A KMS-3A control module allows the user to choose between the four sources linked to S4.3 and is able to turn these on and off; instruct them to play and select a volume setting, whilst the similar CMS-4A [accessible via infrared remote] has been included too. Also present is a DMS-4A display module. This dual-purpose device is able to receive infrared commands (for example from an RHS-4 remote) and will also display information about the currently selected source - for example, the volume level. Secondary functions of the DMS-4A include an alarm, which can initiate the CD, Tuners or an alternative source in individual zones, and control of a zone splitter device. The latter is the ZSB-3, a device that allows for a single zone to be split

into two sub-zones. This means that separate sources can be directed, for instance, to a bedroom and its accompanying en suite, affording the user an even wider degree of choice.

Elsewhere, three WM-14 speaker volume controls have been included. Permitting the user to access a series of volume settings between 'fully off' and 'fully on', these discreet wall-mounted devices provide even greater flexibility. Completing their contribution, two QED SL-WE window emitters have also been employed, along with a DAP-WHT double faceplate and three SAP-WHT single faceplates.

what's in store?

Designed to offer unprecedented flexibility, all of the apartments in the Hacienda have been wired in order to cater for both existing technologies and those, particularly in the sphere of home entertainment and information, which the future promises to deliver. Even the control of domestic equipment, such as refrigerators, and other electrical systems, such as heating or air conditioning, can be centralised if required. Continuing the trend of upgradability, QED's S4.3 Systemline distribution kit can be easily upgraded to the most recent S4.4 version, allowing for even greater performance as technology progresses.

This then, is just a brief overview of what the apartments located in the Hacienda are all about. Thanks to the quite incredible degree of control supplied by central distribution systems, such as QED's S4.3, and the array of infrared control devices, which allow the user to interact efficiently with the abundance of technology involved, true smart houses are becoming more achievable all the time. Of course the audio and video home entertainment staples of the AV world are also playing a major part - there would be, after all, no call for a distribution device if there was nothing worth distributing. Source technology is key to installations like the Hacienda, providing quality entertainment for their equally vital peripheral screens and speakers, and a setting in which their capabilities can be shown off to the fullest extent. Home entertainment, and homes in general, are evolving, and there can be no doubt that the AV world, along with companies like Crosby Homes and D&T Electronics, is one of the principal driving forces behind the change.



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