

THE RIGHT PRICE

Sensible Solutions

A family of five learns to share their music, computers and video all over the house. *by Lisa Montgomery, photography by Brian Leng*

Every member of the Lobart family likes music. And when it comes to watching TV, they all agree there's nothing better than being able to store their favorite shows on a digital video recorder (DVR) for viewing when it's more convenient. Computers are also important to the Lobarts, so they always have more than one PC available at all times.

■ Obviously, the integration of technology was a high priority for homeowners Ken and Kelly when they decided last year to work with De Mattei Construction of San Jose, CA, to build their 5,000-square-foot ranch in northern California. "I knew that it didn't make sense to not have any technology in this house," Ken says. Given the fact that the Lobarts are quite comfortable living with remote controls, TiVos and other high-tech touches, it would have been easy to pack the sprawling abode with multiple racks of entertainment gear.





With its elegant décor, fantastic view and cozy fireplace, the living room is a great place for the Lobarts to entertain. Being able to fill the space with music doesn't hurt either. The family uses an iPod-like remote to access AM/FM radio, XM satellite radio station and MP3 files. The music plays through the room's built-in speakers.





This solution would have given everyone their own stereo system, their own video library and their own set of computer peripherals—which would have been fine for some families, but not the Lobarts. Ken felt that having separate systems would sabotage his and Kelly’s plan for spending more time together as a family. “When we built this house, none of the kids’ bedrooms received a TV or a stereo so that they’d be forced to be with the family,” Ken explains. “We figured that networking systems would still allow the kids to enjoy their music, but as a family rather than being holed up in their rooms.” With these objectives established, the couple hired CyberManor of Los Gatos, CA, to bring their ideas to fruition.

The Lobarts’ kitchen is just as fun as the family room. A whole-house music system pipes tunes to the room’s built-in speakers, and a wireless computer network allows anyone to jump on the Internet at any time.

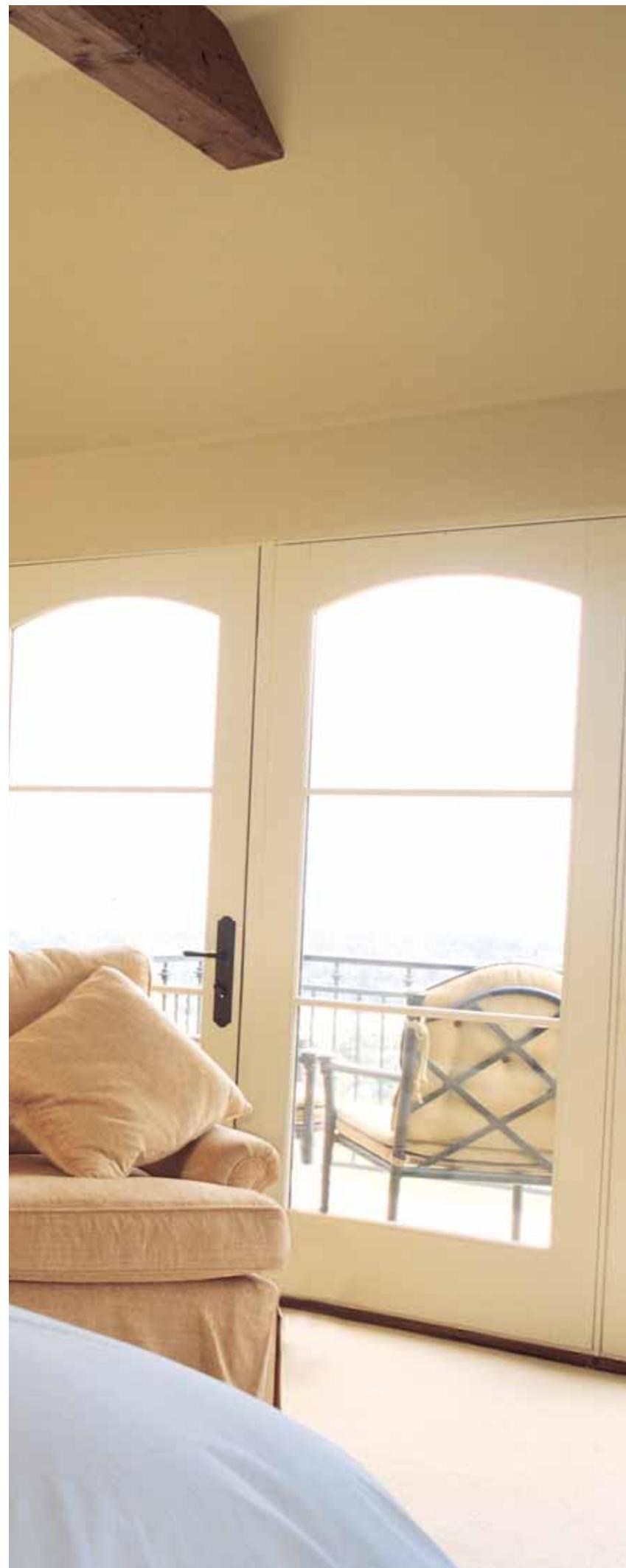
Better than a Video Store

At the top of the Lobarts’ list was being able to watch programs recorded on a DVR on any TV in the house. The simple solution would have been to give each of the home’s five TVs its own DVR. But rather than pack the residence with a slew of black boxes, CyberManor president Gordon van Zuiden placed two DVRs (Ken and Kelly designated one for the kids and one for the adults) in an equipment closet. Each unit was modulated to an unused channel on the home’s cable TV service. Channel 55 gives the family access to programs stored on DVR 1, for example. “DVR networking is an awesome feature,” Ken enthuses. “When we’re entertaining, the kids and their friends can go to the den and pull up a program to watch while the adults access the other DVR to watch something completely different. Or, of course, we can always listen to music.”

Music Palm Reader

Finding that perfect piece of music is a cinch. No matter how many hip-hop tunes the Lobart kids, ages 9, 11 and 14, have stored on the family’s whole-house music system, it takes only a second for Ken and Kelly to get to their favorites. Russound keypads give them access to XM satellite radio stations, AM/FM radio and a growing library of MP3 files stored on a Media





The Lobarts loved the thought of being able to record programs to a digital video recorder (DVR), but they didn't want to disrupt the decor by putting a DVR unit in every room. To minimize the number of black boxes, their home systems installer created a network that lets the family access programs stored on two hidden DVRs from any TV in the house.

Center PC. Even easier to navigate is the handheld Sonos remote. Similar in style to an iPod, the device displays the album covers of all the Media Center's MP3s. The remote works anywhere on the property, which lets the Lobarts control their music while relaxing out by the pool. It's such a powerful tool that Ken's friends often refer to it as "the guypod."

Something for Everyone

The Lobart men (Ken and his 14-year-old son) may try to keep the Sonos controller to themselves, but there's one piece technology that's available to anyone at any time: A wireless computer network grants each of the home's five computers simultaneous access to the Internet and to a combination printer/scanner/fax machine that sits in the home's library. Four of the five machines are laptops, which gives the Lobarts the freedom to use the computers anywhere, even outside. There's just one place the computers can't go: into the kids' rooms. "We'd rather have the kids sit in the family room with everyone else and instant message their friends," Ken says. Like the TV and stereo restrictions, the "no computers upstairs" rule is Ken and Kelly's way of keeping the family together. And their whole-house music system, DVR network and computer network have made it easier to do just that. **EH**

EQUIPMENT LIST

Computer/Phone Networking
USpec structured wiring system
Apple Airport wireless access points
Apple iMAC and iBOOKs
HP network printer
Panasonic phone system

Whole-House Music
Russound whole-house audio system
Denon receivers
Sonos player
RBH speakers
Microsoft XP Media Center

Whole-House Video
Samsung DLP TVs
Comcast digital video recorders
Home Theater Master remotes

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