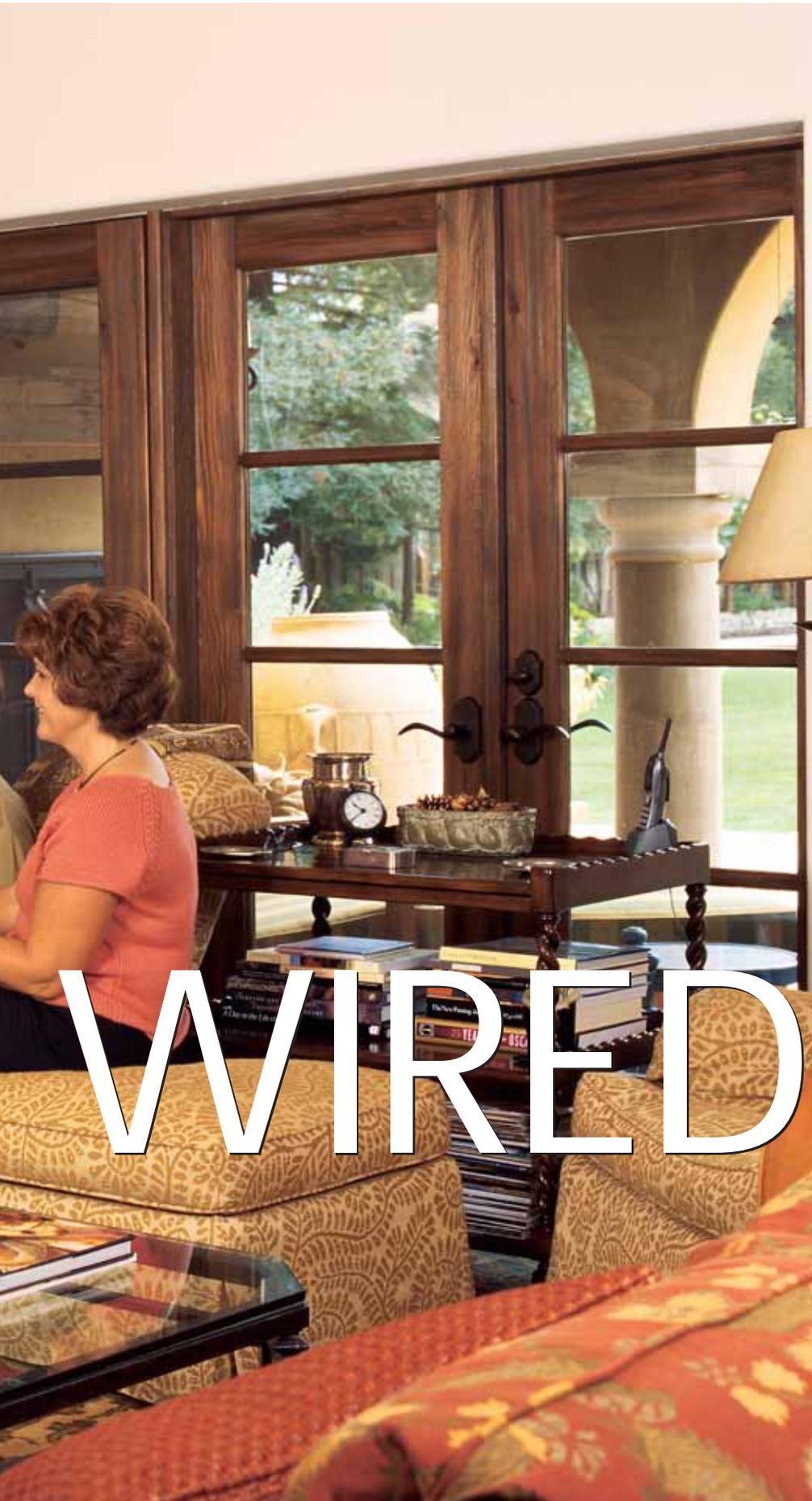


# FAMILY AT PLAY





These empty nesters enjoy pictures big and small, thanks to home networking.

*by Rebecca Day, Photography by Kenneth Rice*

It all began when the 25-year-old microwave oven went on the fritz. Cindie and Terry McMahon decided that while they were rebuilding cabinets for the new oven, it was a good time to overhaul the kitchen of their Monte Sereno, CA, home. Well, one room led to another, and now the couple boasts a reconstructed networked home complete with lighting control, a home theater, six HDTVs, distributed audio and video and a PC network. ■ “We decided to go ahead and do what we wanted,” Cindie says, “and a big part of that was to make our house more electronically up-to-date.”

# WIRED

# for LIFE

Cindie and Terry McMahon can browse their extensive DVD library from the comfort of their house. Using a remote control, they simply highlight the movie they want to get the show started.





“There were lots of things I had been reading about that were going into new homes, Cindie goes on to explain.” If we were going to tear down walls, we were going to put in wire.”

The McMahons aren't Gen Xers fresh off a stock option windfall. The fiftysomething couple has two grown children, both aspiring actors who have left the nest and are working on their careers in London and L.A. But the newly wired couple has discovered how electronics can take their life passions to the next level.

Terry grew up on Hollywood sets where his father, a character actor in the 1950s, worked in films including *Rebel Without a Cause*. Movies are in his blood. He and Cindie have always spent nights and weekends in front of the screen enjoying everything from action thrillers to Shakespeare.

Cindie's passion is photography, and in digital form, she's able to do much more than just make prints. She's put her digital images on the office computer for viewing on any PC in the house. She also scanned childhood pictures of her sister and ran a CD slideshow as background when she threw her sister a birthday party.

The McMahons credit electronic installation firm cyberManor in nearby Los Gatos for their upload to the electronics age. Owner Gordon van Zuiden showed them how they could make the most of their love for pictures—both moving and still—using the latest technology. Van Zuiden was involved from the beginning of the remodel and worked with the builder and contractors on decisions about the placement of the electronics and wiring before the walls went up.

## Movies and More

CyberManor threaded Cat 5e data cable throughout the house to serve as the infrastructure for several technologies: a Russound distributed audio system, a Kaleidescape video server and a PC network. Kaleidescape takes advantage of the PC network,

An LCD TV in the kitchen pulls recipes from the Internet as well as from Cindie's cookbook that is stored on a PC located in another room. Meanwhile, a 61-inch TV in the family room can display her favorite digital pictures.



too, dialing out to the Internet for movie cover art along with actor, director and genre information. The wire is “home run” with cables running to and from main controllers that are stored out of the way in a remote section of the attic. “CyberManor did such a good job with wiring that we didn’t have an issue with doing add-ons,” Cindie says.

The Kaleidescape video server was a late addition to the project, because it only became available after initial planning for the redesign. Van Zuiden was able to plug it into the multi-room audio/video system, because the McMahons had prewired for whatever might come along. “We had the place plumbed for electronics,” Terry says. “Gordon convinced us to put extra wire everywhere for the next thing that comes along. HDMI is the next thing in cable, so we’re wired for that, too.”

“The best thing we have, and it was a real afterthought, is Kaleidescape,” says Cindie. “We have 800 movies, and once you load them into the server, you never touch the DVD again.” For Cindie, that means never having to hunt for a DVD, and for Terry, it means not having to put on glasses to read the fine print on the spine of DVD cases. “We had DVDs we hadn’t watched because we didn’t know we had them,” he says. Even better, with the networking in place, they can stream the DVD content stored on the Kaleidescape server to any TV in the house.

The couple gives two thumbs up to Kaleidescape’s search capability. “We can look up movies by title, actor, genre, even the date it was produced,” Terry says. “That’s really helpful when you’re sorting through 800 movies,” Cindie adds. “If you’ve just been to see a DeNiro movie and you come home and want to see another, you just look him up.” You can even filter a search by movie length, which came in handy a few weeks ago when a friend came over and only had an hour and a half to spend in the theater for a movie.

Because the movies are digitized on the server, the family can watch them in any room that has a Kaleidescape player. Cindie can begin watching a movie in the theater with Terry and then watch the rest downstairs in the kitchen on the Sharp LCD TV while cooking. If she gets a phone call, she can

put the movie on hold and resume later—without interrupting Terry’s viewing upstairs.

## Home Master

The house has a fast track to the Internet, served by a wired home network in most rooms and wireless access in remote locations. Cindie likes to log on to the Net while she’s out by the pool, using her laptop to email the kids or shop online. “How cool is that?” she says.

A Roku media player also piggybacks onto the network, serving Cindie’s digital photos to the 61-inch Samsung DLP (digital light processing) TV in the family room. Not only can she run a slide show of her favorite digital pics on the TV, she can do it without booting up a PC. “When we came back from our weekend trip, I pulled the memory card out of my camera, put it into a slot on the Roku player and viewed a slide show right away.” Even better, she didn’t have to figure out the Roku remote. CyberManor programmed the familiar Theater Master MX-800 RF remote that operates the music and video throughout the home to handle the Roku as well.

The McMahons enjoy their entertainment systems during leisure time, but it’s lighting control that has transformed their daily life. They use the Lutron HomeWorks system to set lighting scenes for parties, light a dim path to the kitchen at night and provide peace of mind when they go out of town. “When we went away for the weekend, we pushed one button that said VACATION, and all the lights in the house simulated our typical usage so that it looked like we were home,” Cindie says. That sure beats the old days. “Terry used to go around plugging in timers, and he’d program individual lights that would come on at exactly the same time every night.”

Buttons on Lutron keypads at the front and back doors light a path to the master bedroom so the McMahons don’t have to flip on the lights in each room when they walk through the house. At night, one button next to the bed turns out all the lights. Terry’s still getting used to that one. “I have to remind him that he doesn’t have to go around the house turning off the lights,” Cindie says.

The lighting control system also handles motor-

TVs and PCs in the McMahon home share digital photography, movies and more thanks to a home networking system.

Home systems installer Gordon Van Zuiden of cyberManor in Los Gatos, CA, stored Cindie and Terry McMahon's entertainment gear in one convenient location. A networking system gives every TV and PC access to the components.

ized drapes on the east and west sides of the house. The astrological clock built into the Lutron system raises and lowers the drapes every day according to the position of the sun. "After sunrise it lowers the shades where sun could stream in and damage the rugs and furniture," Terry says. "In the back of the house, it does the same thing in the afternoon. It's very, very smart."



## Tech Gets a Workout

CyberManor took a solutions approach to the McMahon's smart house. "I don't think there was anything we wanted to do that Gordon said could not be done," Cindie recalls. For instance, she wanted to access recipes—either from her recipe folder on the library PC or from allrecipes.com over the Internet—but she didn't want to live with a keyboard in the kitchen. Van Zuiden's guys took the video output from the Dell laptop next to the kitchen and ran it into a Sharp LCD monitor that hangs under the counter. She can view cooking shows or recipes without a keyboard in sight.

And in the exercise room, the couple wanted to be sure to have a view of the wall-mounted Samsung plasma TV from any location. The crew put in a swiveling TV mount that points the 50-inch TV toward any spot.

The whole-house audio system features music from CD, satellite and off-air radio. The couple's CDs are all loaded onto Quantum hard drives and can be selected from each room via Russound Duo keypads. Because the music is in digital files, Cindie can pick an Andrea Bocelli ballad from the kitchen, and Terry can pick the same tune a minute later out by the garden. With their collection of 2,000 CDs organized by genre on the Quantum drives, the couple has discovered music they didn't know they had.

The McMahons prefer not to disclose the price of their electronic wonderland. "We were willing to put money into the house, but we wanted to get a lot of bang for our buck in return," Cindie says. "So we tried to put the money into things that would really matter." They're perfectly happy with the \$13,000 Marantz VP12S3 DLP projector "that costs a fraction of more expensive models," according to Terry. Kaleidescape systems start at \$27,000 for a 180-disc system, but the couple says the luxury was worth every penny.

After living on the electronic edge for a year, the McMahons say the products haven't changed how they live. "We looked at the lifestyle we had, and we were already watching movies and we were already listening to music all over the house," Cindie says. "But now we don't have to go turn on a player here and there. It just made it easier." **EH**