

“As usual this newsletter is based on topics that are tied closely to what I have been experimenting with or using at home. I still think it qualifies as work... Really! As I've said before, it's hard to keep up, even for someone like me who reads every periodical available, and works day to day in this industry.”
– Dallas

Internet Radio

A few weeks ago my brother called from his cabin in Lake of the Woods (way, way up north!) to indicate he has been listening to a great jazz station from San Diego. Of course, actual over the air reception from San Diego to Lake of the Woods is virtually impossible. In Jim's location, Manitoba is a much more likely source of radio.

What he had done, of course, was connect his computer to an audio system and tuned in KSDS through the internet. As many of you may already know, many, many stations are "streaming" their signals over the internet. I soon found a great web site <http://www.radio-locator.com/>. It allows you to locate (hence the name) radio stations from all over the world. Many of these stations are in English, most without commercials. It certainly makes the local radio selection look pretty boring.

If you have a computer; preferably hooked to a high-speed internet connection, you are ready to go! Connecting your computer to your home audio system is easy (call for details), although many times these systems may be in distant locations of your home making it impractical to accomplish this simple form of "convergence".

A solution might be a product from Turtle Beach called "Audiotron". This product is capable of receiving many of the internet stations and easily connects to an audio system independently from a computer. In addition, it is capable of accessing music files(MP3s) stored on your computer.

Recently, we hooked one up to a whole house automation system. One button push and you are listening to traffic reports from Los Angeles, which just might make you feel a little better about inhabiting Minnesota in January.....or perhaps not.

Hey, as usual, if anyone is interested in knowing more about "Internet Radio" or Audiotron, feel free to call.

All those CD's, "Where's my music"?

Over the years, I have collected a few hundred CD's and DVD's. It seems many of our clients have similar collections. The question is, "How do you access or organize all this software?" 400 disc DVD and CD players are readily available, but once in the player, it becomes difficult to remember which CD is in which slot etc. You could put all your "jewel boxes" in alphabetical order somewhere, but you still have to find the ones you want to listen to and load them in a player.

Setting up "party mixes" is a slow and painstaking process. As a solution to this issue we have been recommending a product (I just ordered one for my home system!) from a company called "Escient". Their products will interface with up to three 400 disc players - that's 1200 disc capacity!!

Once loaded with your CD or DVD collection, this device immediately connects to the internet and downloads all the pertinent information about each CD or DVD, including the titles, lengths, even the cover art. Simply wait a few hours until all the downloads are complete. Now all your software is organized into appropriate categories, Jazz, rock classical etc.. The disc information is displayed on your TV set or an optional touchscreen. For example the cover art of the "now playing" disc is displayed on your monitor or TV. Very slick indeed!

Click on "Jazz" and set the player to "shuffle" and away you go. Or set up "playlists" with all your favorites. One caveat; making playlists may take some time to complete. I have found it worth the effort, though.

In addition to organizing CD and DVD titles, on certain Escient models, you can download all your MP3 music files from your computer. Or listen to the previously mentioned internet radio stations through this very versatile device. For more information check out the Escient website www.escient.com
<http://www.escient.com>

Improved Products & Pricing: My new Home

I am in the middle of designing and setting up a home theater for my new house. I find my installation is giving me new insight into the installation process. As it turns out, I really do not have a space that I can dedicate to a formal theater, so I am attempting to get the best results in my rather conventional living room.

As I have mentioned before, I really really like front projectors. They allow for super large screen sizes. My current one is 110" diagonal.

Projection systems require a reasonably dark environment to perform properly and since my room has several windows, I opted for blinds from Hunter Douglas. When these are closed very little light gets in even on a bright sunny day. Of course, when they are open the room is swathed in light. Seems like a reasonable compromise to me.

Having a large attic above the living room allowed me to add a Stewart Firehawk roll down screen, it even has a trap door which is basically invisible (flush with the ceiling) when closed. Turn on the system and it rolls

down automatically to its full 54" by '96" size. Admittedly, it is the most expensive part of my system. Substituting a fixed screen reduces the price significantly.

The projector is Sony's new VPL-HS20, which I might say, is the best value on the market right now. Weighing around 20 pounds, the outside dimensions are not much larger than the average bathroom scale, and selling for under \$4000 while performing as well as many products costing twice as much.

I am very much endeared to this outstanding projector. In particular I am blown away by Discovery's new High Definition channel. I recently had 8 foot sharks swimming around in my living room. I actually found myself getting a little nervous.

I really like to listen to music. I guess I consider myself an "audiophile", mostly because I have spent a great deal of time and energy over the years setting up and listening to Hi Fi systems. So, it was tempting to try to integrate some really high-end loudspeakers and amplifiers in my home system.

In this case, I decided It was more important to "integrate" the audio equipment into the room without compromising the interior design than to achieve the ultimate placement and sound quality.

Wow! I can hardly believe I am saying that!!

Fortunately, Boston Acoustics makes a very small loudspeaker that compares favorably to much larger and more expensive products. It is called the Micro 130. In addition, it comes in white, which matches the room color.

I am going to mount seven of these (seven channel surround is highly recommended) as discretely as possible on the ceiling. They won't be flush in the sheetrock, but since they

can be angled down to direct the sound to the seating area, the results should be better. Add a small but powerful Boston sub (maybe 2) and things are starting to sound and look pretty good.

For surround sound processing and amplification, I decided on the new Sony STRD 3000ES receiver. 1050 watts of power will allow for realistic volume levels when desired. What is distinctive about the "3000" are the "digital" amplifiers it uses. I won't go into the details here, but leave it to say it sounds great. Definitely the best sound Sony has ever achieved in their ES receiver line. The difference between these digital amps and processors and products costing many times as much is very small indeed.

Even though (with a lot of effort) I can operate this combination of equipment with the factory supplied remotes; I find a tremendous advantage to using a system controller like the Niles "Intellicontrol". One button push and the screen comes down, the projector, processor and all the electronics turn on and are set to the proper inputs, etc.

Adding Lutron lighting will allow dimming the lights with the same remote. Super easy! Add a HDTV satellite receiver like the HD300 from Sony and, as mentioned earlier, an Escient CD and DVD controller. Let the party begin.

If any of you would like to see and hear my new setup, feel free to call for an appointment. I look at it as another good excuse to spend some quality time in front of this great AV system.

I hope this gives everyone some insight into the current home electronic trends. We actually find it to be kind of fun. We hope this shows in our work. We also know that most of our business comes from referrals, so I would like to thank everyone for your continued support.

I will, as usual, be available as much as possible. So if you have any questions, feel free to call anytime. I can easily be reached on my mobile phone. My number is 612 868 6129. We have found that many problems are usually resolved quickly and easily over the phone.

One last thing; if you do give us a referral that generates new business. We have developed a new program to provide a few perks to your own home entertainment system. They make a nice reward for giving us a call.

I'm always available for further discussion.

*And Thanks again for all of your business
– Dallas*

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