



"We've had another successful year at Supercalibrations and I want to thank all of our loyal customers new and old. We appreciate your support and the confidence you have placed with us."

I Gotta Have One!

In 1989, I was fortunate enough to attend the initial meeting of our trade association – the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association (CEDIA). About 100 other founding members were in attendance. As part of the process we approved the name and paid our first membership dues.

Fast forward to 2005, where I along with about 25,000 other people attended the latest CEDIA convention and product Expo. Wow! I feel lucky to be involved in such a fast growing industry. The convention offers excellent training for all levels of experience and interests. I have learned a ton while attending dozens of seminars over the years, but I really look forward to the weekend Expo where all the latest products for our industry are on display.

You might speculate that after all these years of exposure to new gadgets and gizmos it might become somewhat boring. Nope! At one point or another while strolling the seemingly endless aisles of cool technology, I know I am going to stop and say "I have got to have one of these". This year was no exception. Sony would be my personal leader in the "I have got to have one" competition over the years and once again they introduced an exciting new line of projectors; one front projector normally found in a light controlled home theater and two new rear projectors which are more tolerant of a variety of lighting conditions. All three of them are based on a new projection technology called SXRD. I won't bore you with the technical details, but this is the same basic "engine" used in the world class Sony Qualia products.

(You may recall in a previous newsletter I described the Qualia 004 front and the 006 rear projectors as the "Best TV's in the world" and they deserve such praise.)

OK, so what is so special about the new non-Qualia SXRD products? PRICE!! The Qualia 004 sells for about \$30,000 and the Qualia 70" rear projector is around \$13,000. The new Sony "Ruby" VPL 100W front projector is 1/3 the cost of the 004 at \$10,000 while coming very close to the performance of its more expensive sibling. The big difference is light output. The maximum image size for the Ruby would be around 110" diagonal. The Qualia can easily fill a much larger 150" screen. As you might have guessed, I have a "Ruby" on order. This is an unusual situation where projection television outshines any other options on the market today.

If you have any qualms about the quality of larger screen television I dare you to make an appointment to see one of these bad boys. This is the kind of performance to price ratio that was only dreamed about even last year! I am very excited about firing one up one of these units at home. Of course, \$10,000 is not a small amount either, but certainly the best value on the market today.

Equally high on my list are the 50" and 60" SXRD rear projectors (KDSR-50XBR1 and KDSR-60XBR1). These produce the best images I have seen on a rear projector and would recommend them over the thinner flat panel plasma and LCD displays - if you have a little extra room (25" deep) to put one in. Both have twice the resolution (1920x1080) of nearly all of the competition. Pricing is \$4000 and \$5000 respectively. Performance is beyond anything we have seen at this price!! I am sure demand will be high.

Once installed, we take their picture quality to even higher levels, by calibrating (Supercalibrating?) all the critical internal



adjustments. Tricky, but well worth it. Very few dealers take the extra time or have the equipment to complete this "tweak".

Hopefully, by the time you get this newsletter, we will have an example or two to demonstrate either at the office, or as mentioned, at my house. As usual, I will gladly answer any questions or set up an appointment by phone. Mobile 612.868.6129

"Duke Time"

Put concisely, our business is about combining a vast assortment of complicated equipment into a flawlessly performing, easy to use "package". A prevailing example would be a "classic" home theater with projector, screen, DVD player, CD player, cable and/or satellite, VCR, surround sound processor/amplifier and more.

As it comes from the factory, these combinations are very complicated to operate: several remotes are needed just to turn everything on. If you want to catch the latest episode of "Desperate Housewives", a barrage of additional commands are required. One miscue and Susan and David are nowhere to be found. A real headache! We think an elaborate effort to accomplish a mundane task is not the road to TV nirvana, so we almost always specify the Niles Intellicontrol, a microprocessor based RF remote system.

This remarkable product integrates all your controls into one magically simple device. The theater is now easier to start than the family minivan! Simply push the big bright "Cable" button and you will soon be enjoying all the latest activities on Wisteria Lane in high definition and Dolby surround sound! The Intellicontrol is great for Home Theaters, but for the ultimate in Home electronic control, we recommend the super reliable products from

AMX. The pinnacle of these computer based controllers goes way beyond home theater. You may not recognize the name but you will find AMX in use at world famous locations like Disney World and "Camp David", the Presidential retreat. Yes! The President uses an AMX touch panel. It must be easy to use!! :)

These upper echelon systems not only operate your TV and audio equipment, but in addition, regulate lighting, heating, cooling, security, sprinkler and spa systems. Hmmm. . . there are these new electronic toilet seats from Japan... OK, AMX is probably not really needed there.

A fun application would be labeled "pool party": one push instantly activates your favorite satellite music channel, sets the house temperature and lighting to appropriate levels and even warms up the Jacuzzi. You could definitely reduce your staff . :)

Or how about in the Master Bedroom? A "Good Night" command turns off all the house lights, leaving hallways and bathrooms at 15%, just bright enough to get around; the garage doors are checked and closed and finally the system deactivates all the common audio and video equipment. No more chasing around at bedtime or waking up with the stereo still playing in the living room. Look out George Jetson!

Since AMX systems are infinitely programmable, we personalize each system for the specific needs and desires of each client. Quite a bit of trial and error occurs as we fine tune all the operations; although the extra effort is definitely worth it; final results can be very cool indeed!

Most of the design and programming for these arrangements goes toward comfort and convenience, but recently - near the final stages of an AMX based installation - I was reminded about the client's enthusiasm for his

alma mater, Duke University. He especially enjoys a big basketball win for the "Blue Devils". Not surprisingly, he also really loves to remind supporters of the University of North Carolina, Duke's local nemesis and 2005 NCAA champions; about a Coach K victory.

With that rivalry and enthusiasm in mind, our programmer, Paul Dooley, added a large "Duke Time" icon incorporating the team mascot into a few critical touch panels. Integrating a "Flash" audio recorder commonly found in museum displays allowed us to store about 30 seconds of "Fight, Bluedevils, Fight!" for instant access later. When "Duke Time" is activated, the rouser volume elevates to the loudest tolerated level on all 50+ loudspeakers in and around the house.

In one final attempt to accentuate the revelry, we programmed the entire Lutron lighting system (100+ dimmers!) to flash a random sequence during the fight song playback. The results are better than we expected. . . Impossible to miss and not a very welcome environment for UNC boosters! Paul put the button to activate "Duke Time" a few layers down in the menu system to avoid easily setting off this loud and clear event. It is not something you want to accidentally turn on in the middle of the night . . . unless your guests happen to be from the University of North Carolina! I just read that Duke is ranked #1 this year. It looks like "Duke Time" could be put to good use!

If you want to learn more about these "state of the art" systems, feel free to call. We have an example in our office demo facilities. Hey, I wonder where our home team, the Golden Gophers, is ranked this year. I know I have a copy of the rouser somewhere :)

New Tech & Old Cabinets

We have had the opportunity over the last 20+ years to work with quite a few high quality

cabinet makers. In almost any new or remodeled home, a cabinet is built to house the television, associated electronics and loudspeakers. This "Family Room" tends to become the primary viewing area. Hours of family fun! In this scenario cabinet doors can be closed, hiding the equipment, allowing for a nice aesthetic match to the rest of the interior. Although I will say that if memory serves me correctly, these doors are almost always open! The most popular television size for a "family room" arrangement is 50" diagonal or so. Most, if not all of these are of the rear projection variety and until recently very few of them were compatible with HDTV.

In the last year or two we have found ourselves redesigning these cabinets to accommodate the latest widescreen High Definition displays including plasma and LCD panels along with HD rear projectors.

Of course, as the term "widescreen" indicates these new sets are much more rectangular than the existing television. So the question becomes: how do I upgrade to HDTV and still maintain the beautiful cabinetry? Well, with the help of cabinet makers we have been able to squeeze in 42" and 50" plasmas (or other designs) into existing cabinets while still maintaining the clean, custom look. 42" displays are around 40" wide with 50" versions approximately 49". We recommend models sans built-in loudspeakers as this saves valuable horizontal space.

Sometimes the new model just drops in and other times surgery is required. We might suggest upgrading electronics as well, such as surround sound amplifiers, Tivo's and DVD players. All have new features worth considering.

Our standard policy is to gladly offer a free estimate to anyone interested in upgrading an existing cabinet and television to HDTV, etc. As you might suspect, the price to performance ratio is much higher now than a few years ago..

