

# Custom Home

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## 2005 Pacesetter Awards

# Future-Proofed

*A penthouse with wiring for every whim.*

A projection TV for the big Sunday game and two smaller plasma TVs allow the owners to watch television while their grandkids play video games.



In a tract-home development, electronics subcontractors have the luxury of designing in a predictable array of audio systems, home networking gear,

and maybe a home theater. They offer cookie-cutter packages, and then home buyers either opt in or out of the upgrades.

In a custom home, where homeowners can indulge every whim, electronics designers have to be ready for anything on the wish list. The smart ones also anticipate what a homeowner may want later on and build in an infrastructure that enables easy upgrades. Then they work closely with the builder and other subs to ensure that everyone's on the same page at

## The Digital Home

By Rebecca Day

each step of construction.

This penthouse project in New Hope, Pa., is an "everything plus the kitchen sink" installation, according to

Robert Baumann, director of project management and systems design at electronics firm Hifi House in Broomall, Pa. At various stages of the project Baumann coordinated with builder Scannapieco Development Corp. and the electrical contractor to make sure wiring and framing were all in place before concrete was poured and walls went up.

"This residence has concrete floors, which can muck things up because once they're in, it's hard to run wires," Baumann

says. The location of TVs used to be fairly predictable, but now at 3 inches deep homeowners can put them just about anywhere. In the master bedroom of this townhouse, a 37-inch Sharp LCD TV rises from a lift at the end of the bed, so an outlet was needed in the floor for both TV and motorized lift. "We had to talk to the electrician and the builder to make sure we had enough electrical service there," he says, "because you don't want to be sharing the TV circuit with the washing machine or the bathroom outlet your wife uses for the blow dryer. If you're looking for the purest signal—without interference—you want to run as much as you can on dedicated circuits."

He also coordinated with the builder to frame a nook for a 15-inch LCD TV in the wall next to the master bath sink. Thanks to the flat TV, Baumann sees the water closet TV trend taking off over the next few years because for many people the bathroom TV gets the most face time of any display in the house. "Every morning you turn it on to get news, weather, and traffic," he says. The company recently added the Seura two-way mirror with integrated TV and would have sped it into this project if it had been on the market when plans were drawn up. "When it's off, you see nothing but a mir-

ror," he says. And when it's on there's a terrific picture. We're expecting to sell a lot."

The New Hope project is controlled by a Crestron system that integrates lighting, motorized shades, audio/video, security, and HVAC, which are all operated by wall- and table-mount touchpanels. The system is also Internet-capable, which benefits both the homeowner and installer. "The homeowner has control over his entire home whether he's sitting in his home office or checking in from Bangkok," says Baumann. "He can turn on lights to check things, look at cameras, and turn the alarm off if he needs to let someone in."

Hifi House benefits from the connection by being able to make programming