

HOME

Smart Home

Life under control

The "BIG" issue

**FABULOUS
LIVING IN
FLORIDA**

OH, WHAT AN OASIS!
A grand getaway in Spain

ADD MUSCLE
A company gets fit and smart

CONTENTS

6

TIME TO UPGRADE?

Find out what you're missing with the latest feature enhancements included in Control4 OS 2.6 and 2.7.

12

HOLIDAY IN SPAIN

What happens when an engineer who knows what smart homes can do designs his own? Welcome to Villa Oasis.

20

PUSH-BUTTON PARADISE

Find out how one Floridian couple enhanced a bright and beautiful new penthouse with invisible genius.

30

BIG IN TEXAS

Take a trip around the world in this 10,000 square foot home in Texas where art meets smart.

40

SUGAR + TECH

There's more to this candy shop than meets the taste bud. Get a load of the smarts in this unique space.

44

MUSCLE AT WORK

See how a few strategic automation enhancements gave this HQ a serious IQ boost.

52

SMARTS SELL

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood when your decision to invest in home automation comes back to you—and makes a new buyer happy, too.



10

28

GO BIG in your man cave or media room.



EDITOR'S NOTE

"Go big or go home!" That's the well-exercised expression that sets the stage for this particular issue of Home Smart Home. You may have used it yourself to encourage a friend or family member to "go all the way...to do whatever it takes...to not flake out." (Or in modern day SMS-shorthand, perhaps you've just typed out "gbgh!") Instead of taking this phrase at face value, however, we used these five words as our inspiration to prove that with all the right home automation bits and pieces, you can do both: Go big *and* go home.

With more and more people talking the talk of "connected devices" and living the "internet of things" dream, we thought it seemed fitting to find a few interesting people (in a few unusual places) who aren't simply walking the walk of home automation, but are in fact living it loud and large—and doing it right. And lucky us, because this mission took us on quite a journey. We found a spectacular Spanish getaway designed to leave you longing. In Canada, we toured an open house that closed before we could even say "Goodbye." Living large in a state where everything is big, Texas definitely delivered our fill, including a taste of a clever candy shop/ We also got an inside look at a booming company that added more incredible muscle to its business, and a peek inside a castle-like custom home just outside of Austin. When we finally made it to Florida, well...let's just say we quickly learned that "home" can also mean a plush penthouse with every possible pushbutton to make semi-retired life even more relaxing.

With that teaser, now you've got lots to read—and lovely photos to view, too!



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An automated infrastructure was included in the build, allowing the high tech to take backstage to the internationally intriguing interior design.

Project installation by Satellite Station Fire & Security

JIM STONE PHOTOGRAPHY

FIT FOR A KING

AUTOMATION GIVES A TEXAS HOMEOWNER THE POWER TO LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER

They say a man's home is his castle. But sometimes, a man's home *is* a castle. That is nearly the case with Ronnie Harpe and his magnificently massive residence in Horseshoe Bay, Texas. It's a 10,000-square-foot beauty, featuring towers, giant statues and a bathhouse. It's a Shangri-La in the Lone Star State, and it's the kind of residence fit for a king—or, in this case, a very successful businessman with exceptionally high standards.

"It's a very special place," notes Ronnie. He's spent the past three years planning and building his home on a large lot in the Escondido Lake and Golf Club in Horseshoe Bay, about 50 miles west of Austin. After starting the project, however, Ronnie decided to go bigger. He bought the lot next door and doubled the size of his house design. The result? A truly stunning residence that delights around every turn, including a snazzy outdoor kitchen with a wood-burning oven capable of cooking an Italian pizza in minutes at 800 degrees.

Touring the interior is like wandering through a museum of international design. Every nook and cranny of the six bedrooms and 11 bathrooms is filled with eclectic treasures from around the globe—a stockpile of souvenirs amassed when Ronnie and his wife owned a

home furnishing business. There are Indian rugs, paintings from Pakistan, Moroccan tiles and columns, huge chandeliers constructed from antlers, and even a 100-year-old Chinese wedding bed. It's a weave of international curiosities, boasting bright colors and bold statements. Every detail is intentional, right down to the custom-built and custom-hammered copper kitchen hood. And it all comes together to make a unique aesthetic statement.

"We don't do anything traditional," Ronnie notes.

There's no doubt that a house like this was built and is run by someone who knows what he wants. "I'm a control freak," Ronnie admits.



This stunning antique, a traditional Chinese "bridal bed," makes a lasting impression in one of the guest rooms.



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An HC-800 controller and two HC-250 controllers power the system from a climate-controlled rack room, automating everything from ice machines to aquariums.

And the perfect complement for a home like Ronnie's? An automation system that gives the homeowner the power to control every detail.

With a house of this magnitude, Ronnie knew he wanted the best automation system to help control the home. He saw other systems in action in other people's homes—both good and bad examples. "I saw the problems and heard the horror stories, so I was pretty cautious," he admits. Ronnie explored several options but eventually chose Control4, primarily because of its adaptability. "Some of the other systems were really in their own world," Ronnie says. "You have to buy only their products for it to work. With Control4, you can use all kinds of add-ons and other products, and it all works together, easily."

Ronnie commissioned Satellite Station Fire & Security to build the system—and what a system it is! "This is a very, very big project, probably our biggest project," notes David Root, the installer. The system features two full-size, seven-foot

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Whether visitors arrive by car, foot or boat, the Door Station system announces their arrival to the homeowners with both video and audio.

racks that run 19 televisions, 16 audio zones, 14 security cameras, six In-Wall Touch Screens, two Portable Touch Screens, three Door Stations, 126 Panelized Lighting circuits, and several ZigBee circuits. It's a huge system that, David admits, was a bit intimidating at first. "The biggest challenge was just the sheer size of the project," he says. "But as we started putting the equipment in and seeing how things were coming together, I got more comfortable with it."

Ronnie directed David and his crew to go all-out. So what did Ronnie automate? "What didn't I automate?" he jokes. The pool, lighting, music, audio and video

distribution, three theater rooms with surround sound, outdoor lighting, Door Stations with video security, and even the Christmas lights are included on the system. "I don't know of anything else we can automate," Ronnie laughs. "I guess we could get the toilets to flush with my iPhone, but that's about it." Large vases that flank the outdoor pool can spit fireballs at Ronnie's command. The Door Station at the front gate alerts Ronnie to visitors, whom he can allow entrance (or not) with a touch of a button, which opens the grand front gate. Ronnie can turn on the outdoor firepit—or any other light or heat source in the home—from his phone. "This house



Regal flourishes include a wine cellar, an exotic sitting room and a master kitchen—each featuring its own audio zone, naturally.



was made for entertaining," he notes. And automation helps Ronnie and his wife party in style: They use several lighting scenes to instantly set a morning or evening mood in any room in the house.

It's a fairytale house, no doubt, but the real magic happens on the lower level. Here, you'll find a beautiful wine cellar (accessible from the butler's kitchen by elevator) and, behind some unassuming bookshelves, a secret man cave straight out of a James Bond movie.

"That's where the guys go and hide," Ronnie laughs. The ultra-masculine lounge features a 750-gallon aquarium, three TVs, and



heavy-duty blinds that cover the windows and shield the room from outsiders. Why did the homeowner go to such extravagant ends for a man cave? "Because I could," Ronnie says with Texas charm and a smile.

Every homeowner likes to fine-tune their automation systems to their liking, but Ronnie takes it a step further and makes the type of technical adjustments with the Control4 software that are typically done by a professional. For instance, Ronnie's three dogs got accustomed to the doorbell sound, and would bark loudly when it went off. "My old doorbell just freaked them out," Ronnie notes. So, Ronnie went into the system, changed

the tone, and now the dogs don't make a giant racket when someone calls from the front door.

So, is this self-admitted power-hungry homeowner content with his system? In a word...very. "I know Ronnie is happy," David tells us. "He lets me know when he's not happy. He understands the complexity of what we're doing. He's very happy with it. Every time I come here he always has something new for me to add to the system. He just keeps adding stuff!"

Ronnie agrees. "If you look at the whole scale of the house and what the automation system cost, it was well worth it. If you're not happy, it ain't working. It works. I'm happy." ■

