



Where Technical Meets Traditional

Pasadena Showcase House of Design illustrates how

The trend to giant flat-screen televisions is not a happy one for those who love traditional decor. “You have to have them, but they’re so big, and they’re always right in the middle of everything,” says one homeowner.

Fortunately, a few electronics manufacturers recognize the problem and are working to minimize it.

A beautiful example is the family media room of the 1930’s Cravens Mansion in Pasadena, California, extensively remodeled and opened to the public as the Pasadena Showcase House of Design.

“We had thousands of people pass through this room, ranging from the general public to architects and professional decorators – and I think every one of them was shocked when we turned on the audio/video system. They just didn’t realize it was there.”

That’s David Bradford of Thousand Oaks-based Wilshire Media Systems, talking about the electronics his company installed

in the family room, which blended seamlessly with the decor when not in use.

“First, we had a gorgeous wall-mounted 52” LED mirrored TV. No one had a clue it was a display until we turned it on for each tour. We also had a 46” flat screen rising out of a cabinet,” Bradford notes. “More people had seen this type of device, but they still were impressed by the beautiful piece of furniture we enclosed it in.”

A set of in-ceiling surround loudspeakers and a subwoofer were almost invisible, even while in use. “The sound was absolutely wonderful,” Bradford adds. There was also an automated lighting and shading system. When the TVs were turned on, these lowered automatically as the room lights dimmed, setting the stage for a memorable viewing experience.

Wilshire Media tied all of these systems together with a control system from Crestron, operated from a 5.7” touch-sensitive panel not hidden, but discretely placed on a credenza.



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Behind the scenes

“The feedback from the people who visited the room has been amazing,” says Bradford. “Among the written comments we received were ‘Breathtaking,’ and ‘A WOW factor of 10!’”

According to David Martin of Casgan, Inc., who programmed the Crestron systems, a control system like the one installed in the Craven House makes it easy to operate multiple devices with the touch of one or two buttons. Press “Blu-Ray,” for example, and the mirror TV turns on, the hidden TV rises up from the cabinet, the sound system switches to the correct input, the lights dim, the shades lower, and the menu appears on each screen. “A Crestron touch screen can put everything in your home at your fingertips, from music to movies, TV, DVR, lights, heating, air conditioning and security system,” Martin explains. “We couldn’t have made all this happen without the Crestron systems.”

Wilshire Media also installed a Crestron lighting system to simplify and automate operation of the family room lights. “The decorators spent a lot of time on the lighting in this room,” Bradford explains, “and the Crestron system adjusted each fixture perfectly every time we turned them on, with just the touch of one button.” Wilshire technicians set up several scenes, for evening family time, entertaining and for watching TV. There was even a setting that turned on a few lights for an overcast day.

One of the nice features of the lighting system was its ecologically-friendly design. Visitors were able to see how Crestron can display the current energy usage on the touch screen.

“One of the challenges we had in the Craven Mansion was snaking in new wires without disturbing the original plasterwork,” Bradford adds. “The Crestron iLux® lighting system greatly simplified that process, because all of the control commands travel wirelessly.” All installers had to do was remove the old switches and switch plates and insert the Crestron dimmers. Once they were in place, the technicians were ready to program the various lighting scenes.

The showcase was a resounding success, with the admission price of more than 40,000 visitors going to support the Los Angeles Philharmonic and other local cultural and educational programs. The visitors walked away with a new vision of how home electronics can seamlessly blend with a beautiful home’s décor.

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