

Adam Kent, Managing Director of Telestial, a Birmingham based custom installer of intelligent and affordable home technology reveals just how smart his new smart home is.

Over the past five years, phrases such as “Smart Home” and “Smart Technology” have become increasingly popular; the number of people now installing smart technology to enhance their homes and their lifestyles increases substantially each year.

In 2005, over 26,000 people visited the Smart Home Show, when it was first launched at the NEC, and 28,000 people are expected to attend this year’s show, when it returns to the NEC from 2nd – 5th March.

Smart home technology is no longer only for the rich and famous, and if you thought that although it would be fantastic to have, it is designed for the 21st Century bachelor pad, and is not at all practical for a family house, think again.

Adam Kent’s 17th Century styled house, is situated in a tranquil country estate less than three miles from the M42, and is home to Adam, his partner Vikki Abrahart and Adam’s three children. The technology within the house is phenomenal, and far from being impractical, the whole concept has been designed for family living. As soon as you enter the house through its heavy oak front doors, you are met with a shining demonstration of how it is possible to seamlessly integrate the very latest home electronics into a period styled family home.

Each of the 28 rooms has a touch screen control pad which allows the family to easily manage heating, lighting, TV, radio and CCTV throughout the house. Using Xantech panels, with Helvar dimmers and relays, the lights can all be controlled by any one of the touch pads, for example, last thing at night, rather than going back downstairs to turn out all the lights, one touch of the pad in the master bedroom, and the lights throughout the house are out.

If you do decide that you need to go back downstairs for any reason, another touch of the pad, and a pre-set lighting path can be activated, possibly to the kitchen, or perhaps to the children’s rooms if you need to check on them. You can programme these lights to be as bright, or as low as necessary, for example, just 10 watts, so that you don’t wake sleeping children, but bright enough to light your path. Being able to control the brightness of the lights is not only incredibly practical, but it is also energy and cost efficient.

Multi-room entertainment continues to be the most popular use of smart technology, Adam Kent, explains: “90% of Telestial’s clients come to us with an initial enquiry into home entertainment. The personal MP3 players have proven to be hugely popular, and more and more people now want the same ease of access to their music collection in the home. If we install an Xmusic/lmerge four zone audio visual distribution system into a house, it

means that the whole family can access the same film and music library, from any room, simultaneously.”

Access to the entertainment system doesn't come without restrictions for Adam's children. There may be a flat screen TV in each of their bedrooms, but the system has been programmed by Adam to only allow the children to watch TV at certain times, and also only certain channels. Similarly, although the technology enables each TV in the house to access the central DVD library, by incorporating a simple PIN number security system, the children are not able to access any unsuitable films.

Home entertainment is a major feature in this home, in addition to the TVs in the bedrooms and the kitchen, all of the bathrooms also have flat screens providing access to TV, music and films; and when the family wants to sit down together to watch a film, they can choose between three home cinema rooms!

“Three home cinema rooms, is slightly excessive, even I have to agree with that,” explains Adam. “I wanted to take the opportunity to show people the different ways that home cinema can be incorporated into any family home. One of the rooms has an Epson TW500 digital ceiling projector and surround sound speakers set into the ceiling. This is great way to incorporate home cinema if you have a room in your house that you can make sufficiently dark.

“Our second home cinema room uses a wall mounted 42” Panasonic plasma screen, and rather than installing this on an existing wall, and having to plaster over the cables, I decided to incorporate a false wall. I had the false wall built about 40 centimetres in from the existing wall, so all the wires and cabling can be hidden away in the void space. We also installed speakers into the false wall, in addition to the ceiling speakers at the back of the room. The third cinema room uses a standard free standing Sony High Definition Rear Projection screen with a THX 7-1 surround sound system linked to high specification TruAudio BLU speakers, over 1200 watts of music power in this room alone. “

Adam's house in Worcestershire has taken him 2 ½ years to renovate to this magnificent standard and was finally completed in December. Although every room benefits from the very latest electronic systems, what makes it such a smart, smart house, is the fact that it has all been carefully designed and installed to blend beautifully into how each room is used by the people living there.

“For a home to be truly “Smart”, the key is to ensure that the technology fits seamlessly into your lifestyle. Whether you want to install a straight forward audio system, or you are renovating your home and want a complete installation, including, lighting, heating, entertainment and security, it is vital to plan the project and be sure that the systems you are installing are suited to your individual family and the way you live.”

For an opportunity to get expert advice about the latest home technologies, Telesial will be one of 70 companies at this year's Smart Home Show at the NEC 2nd – 5th March. The show will bring together the latest innovations in the four key sectors of smart living – home entertainment; intelligent heating and lighting; networking and communications and security. Visitors will be able to get expert advice on everything they need to create a smarter home, from home cinema, multi-room entertainment, intelligent appliances and custom installations, through to lighting and climate control systems, telecomms and wireless communications, integrated touch control systems and remote access, monitoring and security systems.

A free seminar programme will run every day at the show, designed to help people learn everything they need to know about digital homes. The seminar programme will include: "Home Cinema & Multi-room Audio"; "Lighting Control"; "Security, Access Control and CCTV", and "Home Automation and Control".

Visitors to the Smart Home Show will also gain free access into the co-located Homebuilding & Renovating Show.

For tickets to the Smart Home Show, you can call the ticket hotline 0870 730 0964, or visit www.smarthomeshow.co.uk . Tickets are £8.00 in advance, or £12.00 on the door. The show will be open daily from 10am to 5pm on 2nd – 5th March.