

TRENDS FOR THE SMART HOME OWNERS

The UK's only dedicated exhibition for homeowners interested in the latest Smart Home technology is taking place at the NEC from 2 – 5 March 2006. Visitors to the show will see over 70 exhibitors showcasing the very latest technology for the home.

Let's start by clearing up what exactly is a Smart Home. A home is *smart* when technology has been introduced to enhance the owner's lifestyle or quality of life. Many of us are already fledging Smart Home owners – with cordless phones, digital televisions, one or more PCs, dial-up broadband Internet access and alarm systems - and we will increasingly adopt more sophisticated products as Smart Home ownership continues to become an affordable reality. Home networking, home automation and communication systems can make life easier, your home more secure, or simply make your home a more fun place to live.

As we start a new year, here are some of the latest intelligent home technologies that discerning Smart Home owners will be adopting in 2006 ...

- Finger print recognition security: replace conventional key locks and open your door by placing your finger on the recognition device – you'll never be locked out again.
- Multi-room home entertainment systems – allowing access to your entire music and film collection from any zone in your home at the touch of a button. Multi-room audio visual systems enable different music or movies to be played in different zones simultaneously, so that everyone in the house can listen to, or watch, what they want to, where they want, when they want.
- Zoned heating and ventilation controls to ensure that each room is at the ideal temperature at the appropriate time.
- Access control and security featuring CCTV, breakage detection, presence detection, occupation simulation, central locking and remote control and monitoring - a favourite with **Gwyneth Paltrow** who uses it to keep an eye on baby Apple when she's away from home.
- Automated operation of curtain and blinds to assist solar gain, minimise heat loss and simulate occupancy.

- Automated lighting control allowing you to create the perfect lighting for the precise situation and mood in each room and also to simulate occupancy.
- Safety monitoring systems that generate local and remote alarms in case of fire, smoke, gas, water leakage, flood, voltage drop or even a medical emergency.
- Devices to make the lives of the elderly and disabled easier, including access to web-based social and medical services.
- Electricity, gas and water consumption monitoring and feedback to help conservation and bill reduction.
- Remote monitoring and control of the electrical appliances in your home, either by using the control pads in the house, or remotely via your mobile phone. By the time you arrive home you could have the bath run (at a depth and temperature to suit you) and dinner almost ready.

Smart homes aren't just about high tech solutions – the final look of the home is just as important as Iain Shaw, a Partner at Smart Home Show exhibitor **Brilliant Living** explains: “We focus on the user experience, and ensure that the technology is aesthetically beautiful as well as *smart*. If someone is creating a brand new, complete smart home, they will be investing a substantial amount in their project. It is vital that not only is their home everything they desire technologically, but also beautiful, providing them with the environment that they want to relax and entertain in.

“The days of *wall acne* are thankfully a long way behind us; now anything that makes up part of a high-end smart home must be carefully considered and designed into the home and its style. If our client decides that the speakers are going to be visible, they should be beautiful speakers! Every aspect of today's smart home, the technology, the lighting, the physical controls required to operate all the appliances and equipment, should all ideally be considered at the very beginning of the project, ensuring that the technology and all elements of interior design are seamless.”

Smart design in furniture is also a hot trend. For those who don't want a huge plasma screen to dominate their room, or have unsightly wires and cables showing, the new patent pending plasma fireplace from another Smart Home Show exhibitor **Picture House** could be the ideal solution. The plasma TV is hidden away in a fully working fireplace. When you want to watch TV, you simply press the remote and the TV automatically lifts out of the fireplace to viewing height. When the programme has finished, press the remote again and the TV disappears inside the fireplace.

Visitors to the Smart Home Show can also take part in a free seminar programme that will run every day at the show. These seminars have been designed to help you to learn everything you 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. The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show brings together over 450 national and regional exhibitors, new products, new services and all the latest innovations in the self-build and renovation market.

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.

January 2006

Ends

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