



ENTERTAINMENT & THE SMART HOME

In Our Experience: what's possible & effective

For some customers 'home entertainment' can be as simple as a Roberts radio playing Radio 4 which they carry with them from room to room but those same customers may care deeply about having a reliable Sky installation to watch sports, for instance. For others, home entertainment requires a full home cinema set-up so that the visceral visual and audio impact of a movie comes across exactly as the director & producer intended it to.

Yet more customers want a home that is in some way 'smart' about their needs which often means that it makes them more efficient and productive in everything they do at home. This may mean reliable wifi to make it easy to finish the internet shopping, well thought-out door entry systems for seeing who's at the door or reliable IT to make replying to work emails easy in 30 snatched minutes between children's tea and bath-time.

The best 'smart homes' are not those with the largest TVs or most complicated video distribution systems, but those that satisfy customers' needs and yet provide a solid foundation for the easy adoption of future technologies should the customer want to embrace them at a later date.

Some Fundamentals:

- **Price Deflation:** it is now possible to put together a home cinema system for only a few thousand pounds, for instance, that will beat the experience you can get in your local multiplex. From multi-room audio to whole-house control systems, these products have never been so affordable. Even 'consumer' products like Sonos or Sky benefit from proper set-up and planning by a specialist because they remain deeply complicated products which require a solid foundation to operate reliably.
- **Performance & Multi-Room Living Spaces:** modern homes are less segregated than in the past and so the open family kitchen may be at once an entertaining space requiring good music, a relaxing place for family TV, a working space during the day etc. These multiple roles require carefully selected equipment to make sure that multi-use doesn't mean compromised results. Equally, it requires careful early planning & design to make sure all bases can be covered and that the technology stays in the background, so that only the solution is evident.
- **Anticipating the Future:** in the same way that our homes have multi-use spaces they also evolve over time. The responsibility of the 'smart home' specialist lies not just in the initial design but also in making sure that future requirements can be catered for. A top-floor bedroom, for instance, may become a home office with dedicated telephone lines and full IT facilities and all of this should be as easy as plugging in some cables without any need to redecorate. The home will soon see great changes in the way TV & utilities operate and both will require data connections that, in our congested WiFi environment, will be much more reliable and capable if they can be connected to existing data cabling. As such it is vital, not just for the successful implementation of entertainment & 'smart home' systems in your immediate project design, to lay cable with an eye to the future and for your specialist to have an understanding of what is coming over the horizon as far as is practicable.

Things to bear in mind when evaluating this technology

- The all new 'features' in tech marketing are often irrelevant or misleading - buy what actually matters
- How well will one unit work with another?
- Look for specialist controls to simplify the operation of all your equipment
- Popular 'high street' equipment like Sonos can perform much better if installed with proper care
- We live in a world of congested WiFi: use cables wherever possible