

HD Living

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Family Matters

New Jersey dealer designs a high-tech family room.

>> by NATALIE HOPE MCDONALD



FROM THE BEGINNING, THE GOAL WAS CLEAR: DESIGN A COZY ROOM WHERE A FAMILY COULD ENJOY MUSIC, TV AND MOVIES. THE CATCH? ALL OF THE TECHNOLOGY, FROM THE 42-INCH NEC PLASMA TO THE STEWART FILM-SCREEN, WOULD BE HIDDEN IN THIS RENOVATED NEW JERSEY HOME.

"There was a balance between aesthetics and performance," says Bob Gullo, owner of Electronics Design Group in Piscataway, N.J. Gullo's team designed the room to be a home theater, TV room and family den. "The goal was to show that we can integrate various electronics into a space. When you walk into it, everything's hidden," he says.

The focal point of the room was predetermined by a fireplace. This helped the designers decide on the location of the TV and film screen. The plasma above the fireplace is concealed by artwork that can be raised or lowered electronically. Lutron shades are also motorized, along with the 92-inch projection screen and crown molding that hides the DLP projector. Gullo says the control panels operate everything from the window shades to the motorized artwork and film screen to the lighting and temperature. Every conceivable form of automation is included on the controls. The technology is completely invisible to the naked eye.

"We wanted a film-like, large movie experience," says Gullo, "and a standard TV room." The family also wanted the room to be able





to transform back into a sitting area. "It's what I call a day and night application," says Gullo. "The video projector is used mostly in the evening for watching films and sporting events. The flat panel is for more of the everyday TV watching."

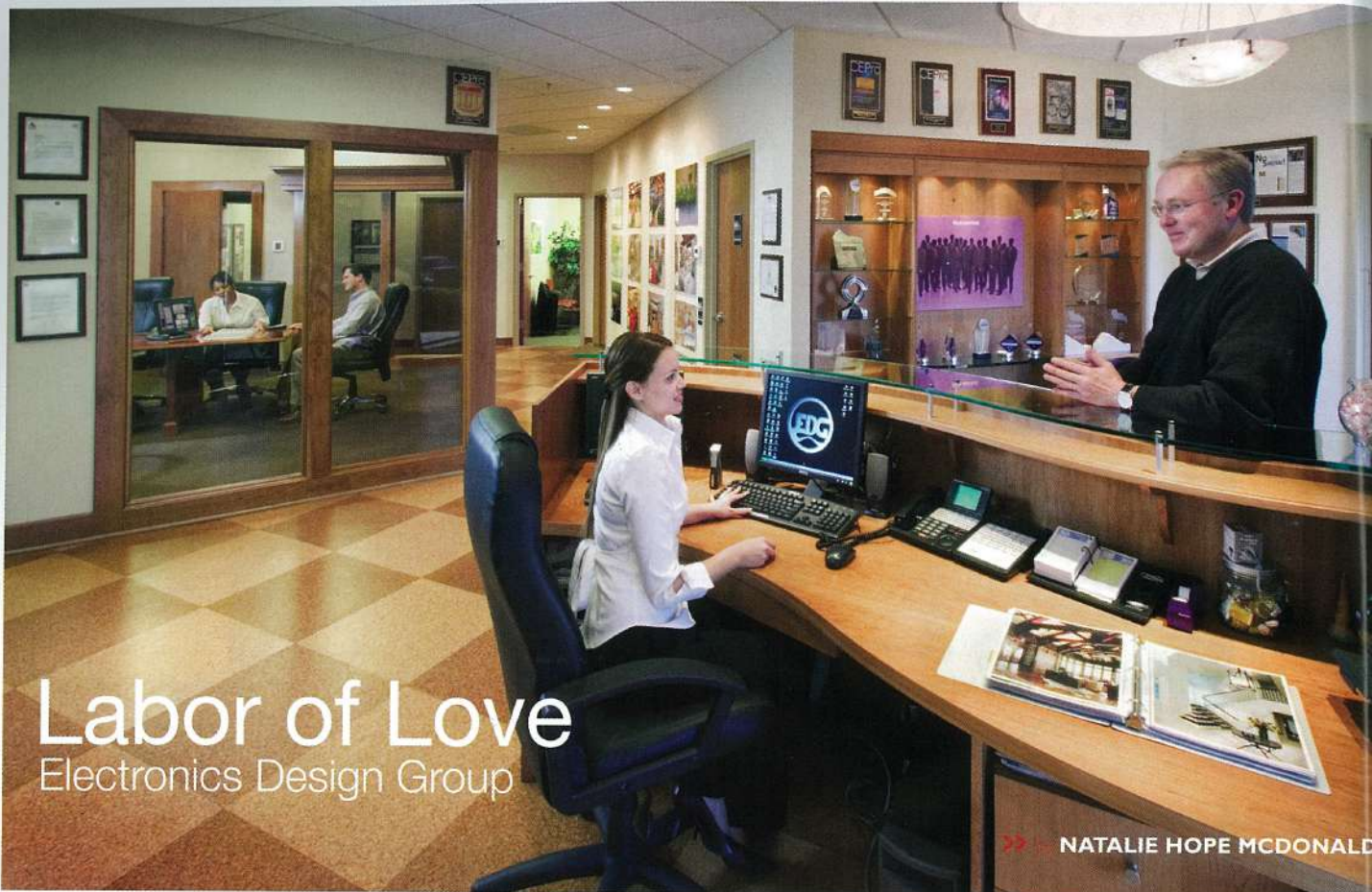
The room also features oval Sonance Ellipse speakers with tilted drivers that create a multi-channel, surround-sound experience. Additional speakers are built into the rear and ceiling of the room, as well. A Canton speaker was placed between the windows in the rear of the room. Since the installers only had a few inches to work with in the wall, Gullo says the Canton speaker was chosen thanks to its slim depth.

"Hidden installation is typically the most challenging," says Gullo. "There's a tremendous amount of coordination and mathematics." Millwork throughout the space was used for both practical and deco-

orative reasons. Not only did it bode well with the traditional style of the home, but it also offered the installers a way to hide wires and electronics.

EDG not only used the framework of the room to hide electronics, but they integrated two B&W subwoofers behind the loveseat and under a sofa. Gullo says they also included a Butt kicker bass transponder that turns low frequencies into mild vibrations. Gullo says most people are surprised by how interactive that makes a cinema experience.

"The room is pretty much a similar reflection of the rest of the house," says Gullo. "None of the electronics can be seen when you walk in the room." He says the majority of equipment is hidden downstairs, with the exception of a DVD player and VCR in an adjacent room for easy access whenever the family wants to watch their favorite films. ■



Labor of Love

Electronics Design Group

»» NATALIE HOPE MCDONALD

PISCATAWAY, N.J., IS AN UNASSUMING COMMUNITY FAMOUS AMONG TRAVELERS FOR ITS GREEK DINERS AND PROXIMITY TO NEW YORK CITY. BUT 20 YEARS AGO, BOB GULLO DECIDED IT WOULD ALSO BE AN IDEAL SPOT TO LAUNCH ELECTRONICS DESIGN GROUP (EDG). "IT WAS ALL QUITE PRIMITIVE 20 YEARS AGO," SAYS GULLO, PRESIDENT OF EDG. "THERE WERE FEW MANUFACTURERS MAKING APPLICATION-SPECIFIC PRODUCTS, SO WE HAD TO IMPROVE."

Fast forward. Gullo's sitting in a main conference room at EDG where he can now demonstrate every single residential and commercial technology available to his clients. "We can show how we integrate lighting, temperature, security cameras," he says, as well as the entertainment systems that are among the most popular

for the residential clients that make up 90 percent of his business.

Within EDG's showroom are specialized examples of how enthusiasts can fully integrate their homes, including TVs behind motorized artwork, high-definition broadcasts, streaming audio as well as video, lighting, temperature and security controls. "It's really a simple formula," says Gullo. "It's about understanding our clients' expectations. Our goal is to exceed their expectations—every time."

While Gullo says more clients today have a better understanding of technology compared to 20 years ago, he still spends a lot of time educating people about the best options for their living spaces. "We go through a discovery process," he says. "Entertainment is still the biggest driver. Clients are interested in having music systems that





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are available in any room of the house." He also says building media rooms and intimate screening rooms and home theaters make up the bulk of EDG's projects these days.

Many installers make great efforts to showcase the technology. Gullo says he takes this lesson one step further by introducing clients to the back office. "We show rack building and testing," he says, including the engineering and mechanical drafting that goes into each project. "We show them actual projects being built for other clients," says Gullo. "The client gets to see what it takes behind the scenes."

This frank approach has led to 14 national awards from CEDIA in recent years. EDG has also been awarded Dealer of the Year from both CEDIA and CEA. The custom installer was also honored by CEA for "Luxury Home of the Year," which recognized best integration of a system up to half a million dollars. EDG's award-winning project included a 16-zone, multi-room audio system, lighting controls, media systems, screening room, HVAC controls and Crestron touch panels throughout the entire home for off-site access. ■

