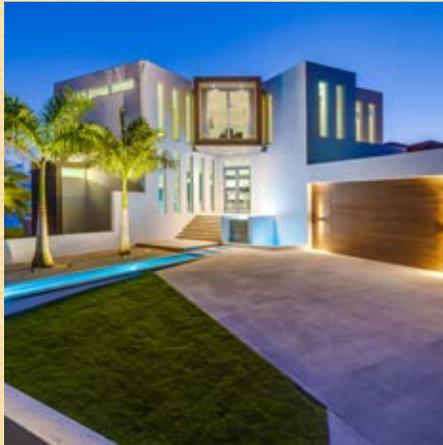


EH HOME 2016 GOLD OF THE YEAR WINNERS



GOING FOR THE GOLD



ELEVEN YEARS AND *ELECTRONIC HOUSE* IS STILL GOING STRONG with its annual Home of the Year contest—an awards program intended to showcase some of the smartest homes on the planet. There was no shortage of amazing entries submitted by home systems integrators to the 2016 Home of the Year judging panel, making it more difficult than ever to select Gold, Silver, and Bronze recipients in nine different categories. After thorough discussion and debate, winners were ultimately chosen—based on the high level of innovation, creativity, and customization demonstrated in the design and installation of smart systems into stunningly beautiful and brainy homes.

In this special issue of *Electronic House*, we pay special tribute to the

Gold winners of the following categories:

- ◆ Smart Home, more than \$150,000
- ◆ Smart Home, less than \$150,000
- ◆ Home Theater, \$150,000+
- ◆ Home Theater, \$75,000-\$150,000
- ◆ Home Theater, \$25,000-\$75,000
- ◆ Multipurpose Entertainment Room
- ◆ Outdoor Entertainment Area
- ◆ Unique Space
- ◆ Before & After

Inside, you'll see a wide variety of homes—all sizes, price ranges, styles, and ages. There are beachfront vacation properties where the ability to monitor and control systems remotely was a must for their owners, as well as residences whose electronics cater to the busy lifestyles of active families. You'll also read about an outdoor entertainment system that rises up from the ground and a barn from the 1800s that was transformed into a high-tech living space for owners eager to live off the grid.

Based on the range of homes feature in our Gold Home of the Year issue, it's no wonder more people than ever are choosing to smarten up their homes by adding intelligent thermostats, dimmable lighting, Internet-connected security cameras, integrated management systems, and more. No matter what the needs, the budget, or the lifestyle, anyone can benefit from having smart products and systems added to their home. It's a gold-winning formula for greater convenience, efficiency, and fun, so we hope these award-winning projects offer the inspiration you need to add some IQ to your own home.

—Lisa Montgomery
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WARM TO THE TOUCH

Automated fireplaces, snow melting system, and 96 window shades prep 8,000-square-foot mountain home for fabulous family retreats — with a touch of a button.

TUCKED WITHIN A GROVE OF EVERGREEN TREES stands a home so smart, the family that visits there occasionally for long ski weekends barely needs to lift a finger to ready their mountainside dwelling for their arrival. Well, maybe they lift a finger, pressing it to the screen of a smartphone — but that's about as difficult as it gets. There's no snow to shovel off the driveway, no thermostats to adjust to crank up the heat, no window shades to open, or lights to turn on. It all happens automatically during their hour-long flight from the San Francisco Bay Area to Lake Tahoe. Or, as is the case with the start-up of the hydronic heating system that warms the 8,000-square-foot home slowly yet efficiently from below the floor, the finger tap happens a few days before their departure.

The ability to monitor and manage nearly every electronic system in their new mountain home from afar is what ultimately sold the homeowners on a Savant control system — this and the fact that they were

SYSTEMS & EQUIPMENT

Home Control: Savant
Lighting & Shading Control: Lutron
Whole-House Audio: Savant
Speakers: Leon Speakers, Pro Audio Technology, Sonance
TVs: Sony
Surveillance Cameras: Axis

HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Snow-melting system, gas fireplaces, and hydronic floor heating system are all automated
- ◆ Tiling system displays six

video streams simultaneously on a single TV screen

- ◆ Custom, architectural, and bipolar speakers combine for audio awesomeness

THE PROFESSIONALS
Systems Design & Installation
RAC Advanced Control
Tahoe City, Calif.
www.racav.com

Builder
Joans Corda Construction,
Tahoe City, Calif.
www.joanscorda.com

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already intimately familiar with the system, having used it previously in their other homes, according to Marcin Przybylski from RAC Advanced Control, of Tahoe City, Calif. He and his team of home systems integrators were hired by the owners to handle the design and installation of the sophisticated technology systems that handle many of the home's core functions, and won our coveted Best Smart Home of the Year award.

PLACED ON AUTOMATIC PILOT

While the house is vacant, the Savant home control processor puts all of the systems into an Away mode that was custom-configured and programmed into the processor's operating platform by the software engineers at RAC Advanced Control. This setting was designed to help the home run at an efficient level and without any risk of freezing pipes or other potentially harmful events like extended power outages or extreme dips in temperature.

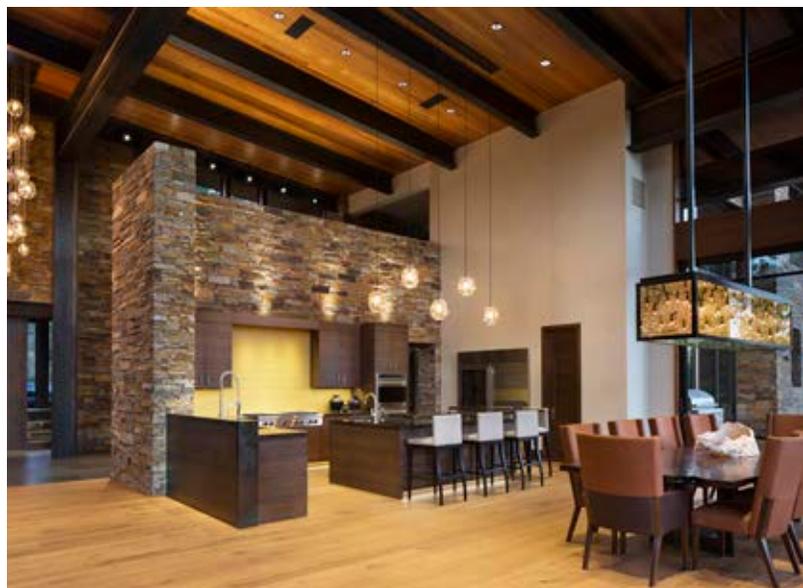
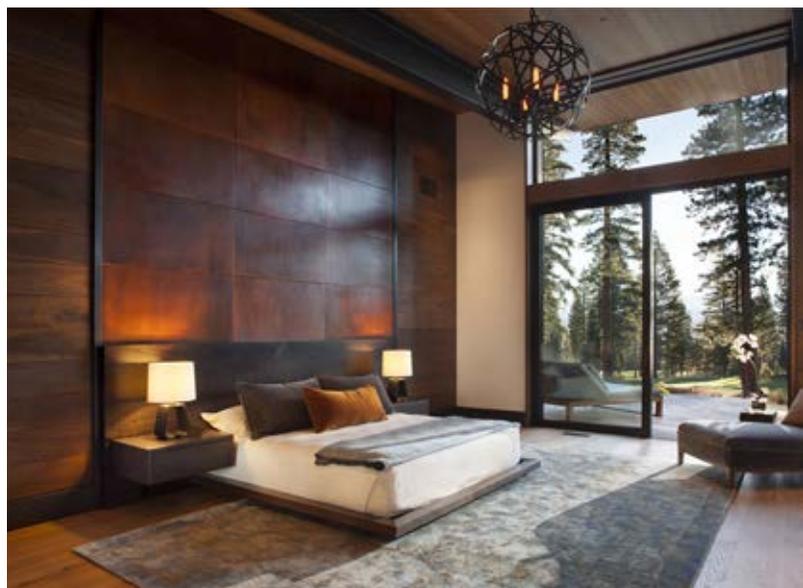
The house is virtually problem-free, as the homeowners are able to monitor several conditions in real-time, from the temperature of the water in the hot tub to the status of light switches. Should the owners want extra assurance of their home's well-being, they can tap into the video captured by several Axis surveillance cameras positioned strategically throughout the property and view it from the screen of an iPad, no matter if they are five miles away picking up milk at the grocery store or 500 miles from the residence on a business trip. Remote access to real-time camera video is a great complement to the snow melting system, as the owners can visually determine just how much snow has fallen and if it warrants activation of the melting system.

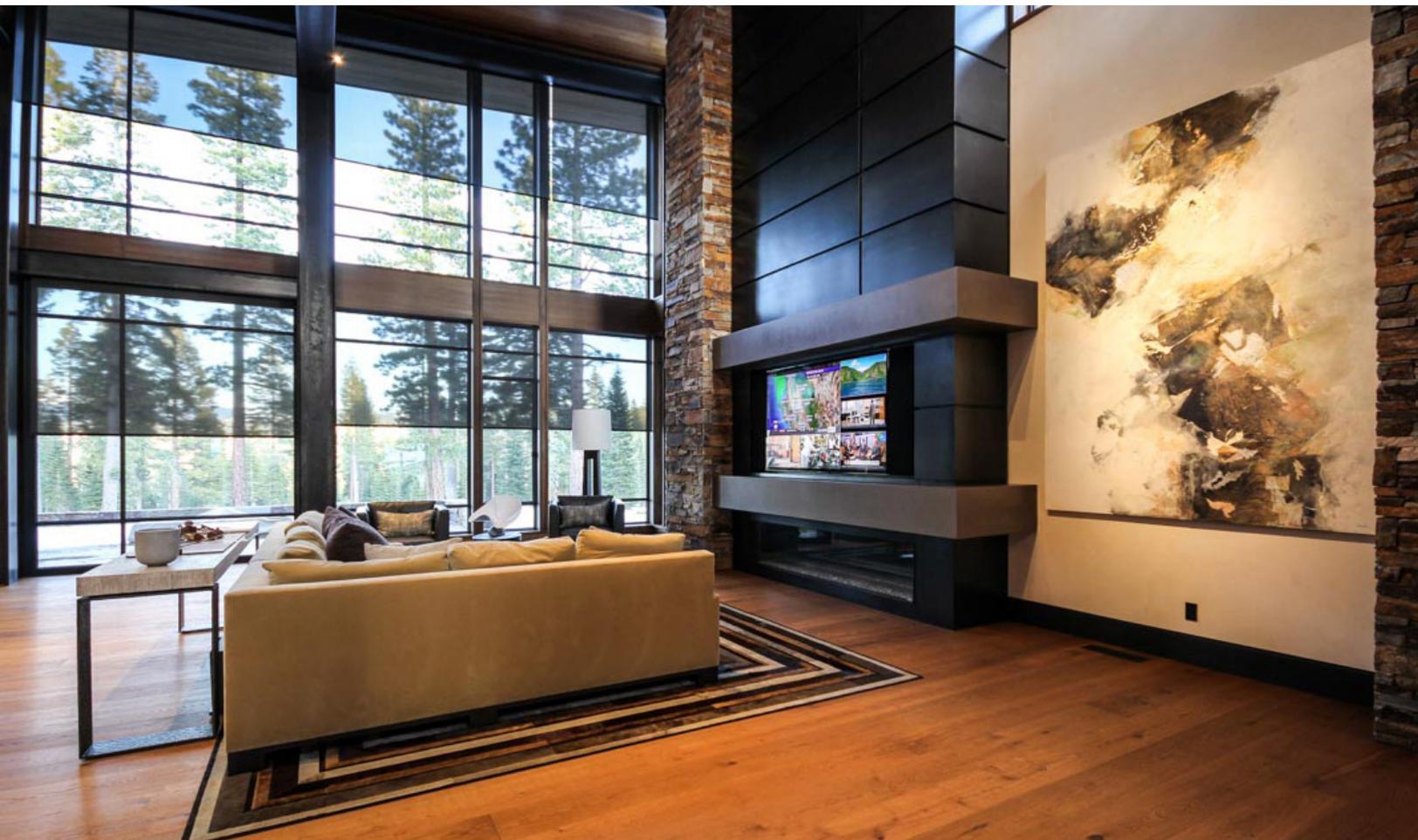
"Sometimes all it takes is just a few flakes to set off the system," Przybylski explains. "It's a waste of energy, so the owners can choose to temporarily deactivate the melting system, and even when there's enough snow, we set up the Savant system to trigger the melting system on a three-, six- and 12-hour timer rather than continuously."

FINICKY FIREPLACES LEARN TO COOPERATE

The real magic happens, though, when the homeowners arrive at the house. Like a virtual property manager, the Savant system has raised all 25 zones of hydronic heating to a prescribed comfort level, and follows through by signaling a Lutron QS lighting system to brighten several select LED fixtures, activating the snow melting system to clear the driveway, opening a few of the home's nearly 100 Lutron QS motorized window shades, and switching on the gas fireplace in the family room.

The alterations are so beautifully choreographed, it appears technologically effortless, but as Przybylski assures, getting the fireplaces (four total) to cooperate was no easy task. Manufacturers have been slow to warm up (no pun intended) to the smart home movement, he says, and therefore their products can be tough to integrate with control systems without some very intricate engineering involved. "We had to actually get into the electrical schematics of each fireplace to engineer drivers that would allow them to be monitored and controlled by the Savant system," Przybylski says.





RAC Advanced Systems rose to the challenge by tying not just one brand of fireplace into the Savant control platform, but four different brands of fireplaces, each with their own unique operating systems. “The homeowners had already picked out the fireplaces they wanted based on their cosmetic features; it was our job to make them work together technologically,” Przybylski adds. With all systems in sync and united under the Savant system, the house is warm, welcoming, and ready to cater to an active family who enjoys hanging out in their smart home just as much as they do hitting the ski slopes.

MULTISCREEN SPORTS VIEWING

There’s just about nothing this home can’t manage to do on its own, or at least when commanded with a swipe and a tap of the Savant control app on a smartphone or tablet. “The owner is a very tech-savvy guy and wanted to have every conceivable system in his home accessible from one user interface,” Przybylski says. “The Savant system sets everything in motion so that the environment is precisely to their liking.

One of the family’s favorite activities is watching sporting events. On a given Sunday afternoon, there may be a half-dozen games worthy of their viewing time, so rather than have to channel surf to the point of ridiculousness, the homeowner requested that RAC Advanced Control include a Savant video tiling system in the home technology plans. This

advanced video processing technology, called SmartView, allows viewing of multiple video windows, or tiles, on a single display — for this home, a maximum of six tiles per display. Using an app on an iPad, the owners can switch video sources between the tiles and alter the shape and configuration of them; for example, expanding the size of a particular tile for viewing a big football game, and flanking that big window with five smaller windows for lesser matchups.

It’s an extremely sophisticated sort of system typically reserved for a home’s one main TV. For this project, however, RAC Advanced Control installed two SmartView units: One for the 85-inch 4K Sony TV in the great room, and another for the 85-inch 4K Sony TV in the rec room. “Tiling for two TVs is something we had never done before,” says Przybylski. “It really raises the bar in terms of entertainment extravagance.”

COVERT TACTICS FOR AUTOMATION AND A/V COMPONENTS

The SmartView processors sit in a well-appointed equipment rack in a specially designed and constructed closet in a hallway, as do all of the home’s audio and video components, which includes an Autonomic Controls media server, three Apple TV units, four DirecTV satellite set-top boxes, and an Oppo Digital Blu-ray Disc player. Each video component is connected via HDMI cabling to one of four TVs. There is no sharing of video sources among the displays, but all of these compo-

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nents connect directly to each SmartView processor so that every source can be accessed on the two tiling-enabled TVs.

Audio is another matter. Songs curated by the Autonomic media server travel to an interesting mix of speakers from Leon Speakers, Pro Audio Technology, and Sonance. Each brand of speaker was chosen by RAC Advanced Control for certain performance and cosmetic reasons. For example, Pro Audio Technology was the speaker of choice for the great room, due to the awesome audio muscle of its bi-amplified design. Even though the speakers were installed 28 feet high on the cathedral ceiling, they are powerful enough to be easily heard and enjoyed from anywhere in the spacious room.

Speakers from Leon Speakers, meanwhile, were chosen for their ability to be customized to suit the style and dimension of each of the home's Sony 4K TVs. Architectural speakers from Sonance round out the whole-house audio system, disappearing into the ceiling surfaces with their bezel-less grilles and small footprints. All meticulously installed, the speakers provide music to 11 listening zones, which includes three surround-sound setups. From a menu on the Savant control app, the family can peruse their audio options, like favorite streaming channels from Pandora, Deezer, Rhapsody, Sirius XM or Tidal, choose what they want to hear, and direct it to a specific zone or several zones.

FROM CONTROL TO COMMUNICATION

iPads are the mode of control in this super-smart home, but in addition to their traditional role as an Internet portal, they were configured by RAC Advanced Control to function as VoIP (voice over Internet Protocol) telephones. When an incoming call comes through the phone system, the family can converse with the caller directly from an iPad. It's a slick setup that utilizes the full potential of the Savant home control



system, making this mountain home a shining example of how technology can impact every aspect of a family's life.

From the peace of mind it provides and energy it can help save, to the enjoyment of amazing entertainment options, the Savant system sets apart this award-winning residence as one of the most intelligent, technologically sophisticated, and simplest-to-manage home around. **EH**