

Villa Soleil



This place in the sun is used as a second home for a family that enjoy using technology in order to have an easy and relaxing life.

Amy Wallington explores.

Located near Montpellier in the South of France, it's easy to see why this property was nicknamed 'Villa Soleil', or sunny villa in English. The south orientation of the villa combined with the huge windows and bright interior design makes you feel like you are bathing in the sun, whether you're inside or out.

Covering 250m² (2,691 sq ft), the villa is composed of a large living area, three bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms, a dressing room in the master bedroom, an independent toilet in the living area, a family room, a garage, a laundry room and a summer kitchen/lounge in the garden area, next to the swimming pool.

Built as a second home for a businessman, his wife and two adult sons, a home automation system was required mainly to enable remote monitoring of the property when it is not occupied, especially as the main family home is located 100 miles away. Not only that, but the primary home does not have an automated system and the client decided that he wanted to enjoy the relaxed experience that a smart home can give while he is at this property.

French integrator, Henri, came on board after being recommended by the electrician already working on the

project. The house is a new build so Henri had the advantage that they could start from scratch and didn't have any existing infrastructure to work around. "During the project, we had a great relationship with the client and his wife," says Michael Sherman, Henri's managing director. "They put complete trust in our know-how, expertise and advice throughout."

The name's Bond...

The client's main requirement for this system was that he could always monitor and control the house remotely from anywhere in the world because it is not always occupied. Crestron was the obvious choice for this project, allowing the homeowner to have easy and simple remote control when the villa is vacant, and ease of use while he is there.

Sherman continues: "Because he is not using the control system in the villa every day, we have created a very simple bespoke interface for the in-wall touchscreens and TV remotes from Crestron. We have also developed an iPhone app that he loves. It has been created in accordance with his habits and includes the features he wanted.

"For instance, when he is in his car in the garage and is leaving the house, he

only has to press the 'Leave the house at day' button on the app which then opens the garage and gate and turns off the lights. Once the car has left the property, without having to press anything else, the system automatically closes the garage and gates behind him and turns the alarm system on. He told us that this feature makes him feel like James Bond!"

There is also a 'Leave the house at night' button, which activates the same actions, only it also closes the blinds too.

Interestingly, there was no interior designer on this project which was unusual for the integrator who is used to working directly with them on specific scenarios and creating user experiences that are most practical for the client. However, it meant that the integrator could work hand in hand with the owners to adapt scenarios and interfaces to match their lifestyle.

Sherman says: "The owner and his wife were very solicitous to fit all the technology nicely into their home with aesthetic appeal. As a result, we have installed flush-mounted touchscreens on the walls, so they fit better with the décor."

Features & functionality

A HomeWorks system from Lutron has been installed with DALI modules for the lighting circuits inside the house, and On/Off modules for the outdoor lighting. All lighting is easily controlled through the Lutron Signature range keypads, with bespoke engravings on the buttons to label each function.



To match the lighting, Henri installed a Sivoia shading system from Lutron including three QS smart panels to power a total of 27 roller blinds. “We like working with Lutron roller blinds because they are ultra-quiet, precise to control, have a lot of fabric and colour choices, and we can easily control them independently or within a lighting scenario,” explains Sherman. Again, the blinds can be controlled through the Lutron Signature keypads, the in-wall touchscreens and the iPhone app.

A specialist installed seven HVAC units using a KNX protocol throughout the property which Henri then linked up to the Creston system with a KNX bridge to enable communication between the HVAC and control system. There are also Crestron sensors integrated into every room to indicate the temperature of each zone on the user interfaces.

Split into seven zones, Henri installed a Creston Sonnex multiroom audio system that shares one play stream, one FM radio stream, one internet radio stream, and one iPod. The Sonnex matrix amplifies the in-ceiling speakers from Bowers & Wilkins that have been installed in each of the seven audio zones.

Crestron’s 8x8 DigitalMedia Matrix gives the home multiroom video capability. It includes 4K HDCP 2.2 cards for eight sources – three Apple TVs, two TV decoders, one Mac Mini, one Blu-ray player, and one NVR recorder for the CCTV – as well as six displays – five TVs and one mirror TV.

Both the family room and living room

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have been given a 5.1 home cinema setup, each with an 85-in TV. A mirror TV was advised for the kitchen area, which is open plan to the living area, to avoid having two televisions on display in the same room.

The alarm system was not specified and installed by Henri but they were able to use dry contacts to control it and show its status on the user interfaces. There is also CCTV around the property, giving the owner peace of mind while he’s not there. Sherman recalls: “The cameras were installed by a specialist, but we have added a multitouch standalone network video recorder from LILIN to enable remote monitoring in real time on the control interfaces. It can also record and store up to 6TB footage.”

For secure access control, Henri installed a custom-made intercom from Siedle next to the main gate to the villa. “The custom-made intercom includes a built-in camera converted to IP, an engraved call button with the name of the owners on there, a speech unit and a mailbox,” Sherman adds. “We have used a Barix interface to show the camera on the

touchscreen displays around the house. The client can also control the outdoor gate and the garage door through this, and he gets a notification when they are opened.”

The whole home automation and technology is run over a Luxul network.

Depending on the room’s use and who occupies it the most, different Crestron user interfaces are installed in each room. Sherman explains: “We have one TSW-1052 10.1-in touchscreen panel in the living area for overall control of the villa. A TSW-752 7-in touchscreen is used in the master area to control that particular space, while bedroom two has a TSW-552 5-in touchscreen dedicated to it. TSR-302 handheld touchscreen remotes are also placed in each video zone, except for in bedroom one where an MLX-3 colour LCD handheld remote is used. Finally, the client also has his custom-made iPhone app to control the house with. For bedrooms one and two, the sons of the owners have chosen themselves which type of control device they prefer to use.”



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Zen business

When planning this project, the client had three main requirements, one being quite unusual for Henri. “He wanted zen-style music to play automatically when someone enters the toilets in the living area,” says Sherman. “To do so, we have installed an occupancy and light sensor from Crestron in the room, connected it to the lighting module in the electrical cabinet, then created a scenario that triggers a ‘zen’ playlist to automatically play when someone enters the toilets and stops when the lights are switched off.”

Another custom feature the client requested was to be able to hear throughout the house when someone

rings the doorbell, even when he is in the garden. Sherman continues: “We have linked an audio file of a doorbell to the Sonnex audio matrix and programmed a scenario on the control processor that says that when someone presses the doorbell button on the outdoor intercom, it turns down the music playing through the outdoor speakers and plays the doorbell sound instead.”

The total cost of the home automation installed into this villa was €250,000. As part of Henri’s ethos, they always look after and support their projects and are able to monitor the system and log in remotely to make any necessary upgrades or changes.



Sherman concludes: “The client and his wife are beyond satisfied with the end result and they were honoured that their villa ended up as a finalist at the CEDIA Awards in 2018.”

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Tech-Spec

- Apple TVs
- Bowers & Wilkins CCM664 In-Ceiling Speakers
- Bowers & Wilkins CCM7.3 Three-Way Speakers
- Bowers & Wilkins CCM7.5 Speakers
- Cabasse IO2 Speakers
- Cabasse Santorin 25 Subwoofer
- Canal Le Cube TV Boxes
- Crestron 4K DigitalMedia 8G+ Receiver & Room Controller 100
- Crestron 8-Port PoDM Power Supply
- Crestron 8x8 DigitalMedia Switcher
- Crestron AV3 3-Series Control System
- Crestron CEN-NVS200 Network Video Streamer
- Crestron Cresnet Remote Temperature and Relative Humidity Sensors
- Crestron iniNET EX Network and ER Wireless Gateways
- Crestron MC3 3-Series Control System w/inifNET
- EX & ER Wireless Gateway
- Crestron MLX-3 Colour LCD Handheld Remotes
- Crestron Network Stream Players
- Crestron Sonnex Multiroom Audio System
- Crestron TSR-302 Handheld Touchscreen Remotes
- Crestron TSW-1052 10.1-in Touchscreen
- Crestron TSW-552 5-in Touchscreen
- Crestron TSW-752 7-in Touchscreen
- Denon AVR-X3300W AV Receivers
- LILIN NVR400L Network Video Recorder
- Loewe Subwoofer 800
- Lutron HomeWorks QS Power Supply
- Lutron HomeWorks QS Processor
- Lutron HomeWorks Signature Series Keypad with Backlight
- Lutron QSE-IO Control Interface
- Lutron Sivoia QS Smart Power Supply Panels
- Lutron Sivoia QS Roller 100 Motorised Shades
- Lutron Sivoia QS Roller 150 Motorised Shades
- Lutron Sivoia QS Roller 64 Motorised Shades
- Lutron Wallplates
- Luxul 12-Port/8PoE+ Gigabit Managed Switch
- Luxul AV Series 26-Port Gigabit L2/L3 Managed Switch
- Luxul AV Series 26-Port Gigabit Managed PoE+ Switch
- Luxul AV Series Multi-WAN Gigabit Router
- Luxul XAP-310 Standard Power Wireless 300N Low Profile Access Points
- Luxul XWC-1000 Wireless Controller
- Middle Atlantic Slim 5 Series Racks 43 RU
- Pakedge Power Distribution
- Panasonic DMP-UB900 4K Blu-ray Players
- Siedle Door Intercom Custom
- Sonance VP65R XT 6.5-in In-Wall/Ceiling Round Speakers