



LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

Installing an automated lighting system is the ideal way to add that something extra to your property DARREN HARVEY, with a little help from Futronix, shows what's possible...

All too often in International Smarthouse we're confronted with installation stories that simply have too much information to cram into the space available.

We either have to summarise when confronted with the details or, in certain situations, omit certain aspects altogether. That's why it's nice when we get a story that homes in on one specific aspect of a smart installation, allowing us to give the subject the attention it deserves. It's with this happy state of affairs that we approach Futronix and the use of their PFX lighting control system in a no-expenses spared project in Hampstead, north London.

Special PFX

The property in question is owned by a Russian billionaire and, after personally visiting Futronix's London showroom office, he requested a whole-house digital dimming system. The system had to be able to cater for the entirety of the completely remodelled, multi-storey home and PFX was the perfect choice.

A proposed lighting plan, produced by the project consultants and followed by a complete design-brief that laid down the needs for the whole property, identified the requirements for, amongst other things, a dedicated Home Cinema projection room and several distinctive architectural

features. The latter included up-lit glass treads in the main staircase, which needed to be incorporated into pre-programmed scenes, with non-lighting elements such as curtains and bathroom-mirror demisters also controlled by the same system.

During these stages it became apparent that the project would utilise in excess of 140 circuits and 30 switch plates, whilst the owner had also requested full-system control from a personal computer with colour touchscreen.

The designed system comprises a total of 10 Futronix PFX16 control panels, linked together by

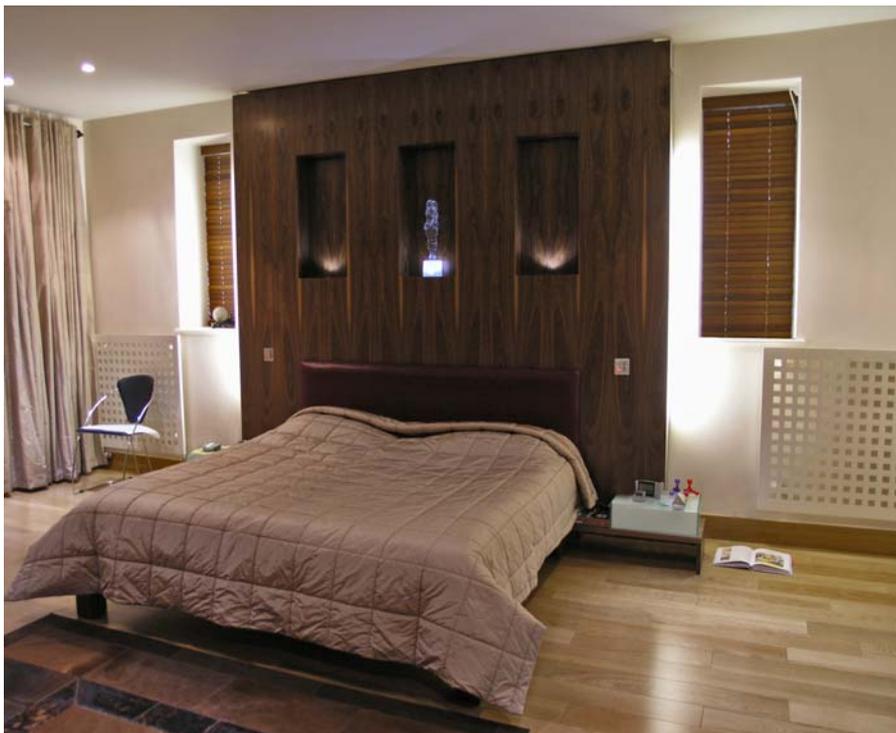
an RS485 network to the home's computer room. Five independent, but linked, Futronix systems have been put in place-one for each of the property's floors. Therefore, inside the home, one system of two PFX16 Panels controls ground floor room lights; one panel controls all hallways, stairs and landings; a three-panel system handles the first floor; and a two-panel system controls the second floor. Finally, exterior lights are controlled by a further PFX16 panel.

Control was an important issue for Futronix and the project consultants. It was decided to install SP4 infra-red controlled plates in every room and SP8 plates in the halls. This combination ensures that both remote control and 20 programmed scenes were available for each and every room, with one-touch scene dimmers placed in hallways, corridors and stairways. The company's all-digital lighting controls also provide fading between scenes, guaranteeing that the lighting environment is always appropriate and that transitions are unobtrusive. Additionally, macros permit the combination of various scenes for multiple functions.



Setting the scene

Centralised computer control for the entire lighting system was achieved via a dedicated network linking the second-floor computer room and all PFX panels. The computer itself is connected to a touchscreen via an RS232 to RS485 optically isolated driver and runs Futronix PFX V9.00 programming and control software for whole-house lighting systems. This set-up also has an added advantage in that up to 100 extra scenes can be programmed and exchanged between systems, with full-function timer operation and astronomical time clock giving perfect sunrise/sunset control. This prestigious project also called for a number of additional control and non-standard lighting features. These included low-energy lighting in cupboards and blue-effect LED coffer lighting in two of the rooms.



Lighting for the whole home



The blinds in the master bedroom are also opened and closed by the Futronix relay switching unit on selected lighting scenes, without being affected by the lights being turned on or off. The bathrooms aren't forgotten either, having been fitted with extractor fans with an overrun timer fitted that allow fans to operate when the lighting is activated and turn off after it's turned off.

A further benefit of Futronix's PFX system was that it proved relatively simple to install. Though the site electrical contractors, who carried out the electrical and data cable installation, were not previously familiar with Futronix systems, technical information and assistance from the company have resulted in them now specifying and installing Futronix systems in their other projects

A major whole-house lighting control system such as that described is obviously a complex undertaking, but all of the original specifications for lighting for the property were achieved, with flexibility that went beyond the owner's expectations. The results not only make living in the property an even more pleasant experience but also add even more to the interior décor, showcasing the house at its very best. Thanks to Futronix's modular approach, the excellent build quality and the all-digital design of the installation, the owner is in a position to enjoy superb whole-house lighting for many years to come.



Dim the lights for a truly cinematic experience

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