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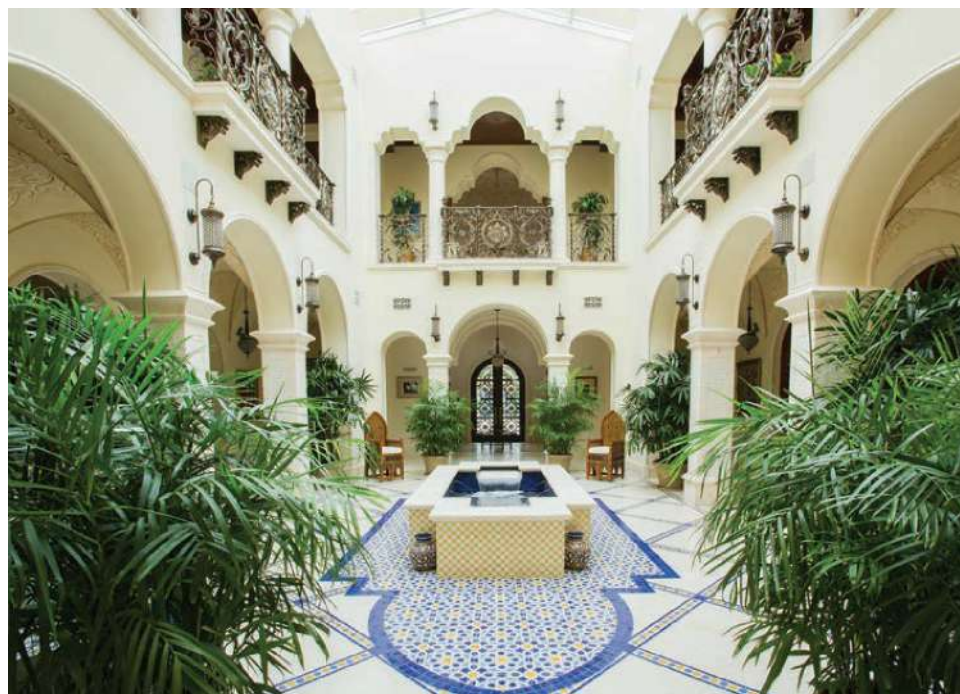
An Opulent Operation

STAYING ON TOP OF A FIVE-YEAR-LONG MEGA-LUXURY HOME PROJECT

by Jeremy Glowacki

Situated just off the coast of Miami's South Beach on Star Island, a stretch of land that is home to some of the brightest stars from the worlds of sports and entertainment Sean "Diddy" Combs, Shaquille O'Neal, and Gloria Estefan, to name a few is a crown jewel of a home. A newly built, 25,000-square-foot waterfront Mediterranean villa that boasts vaulted ceilings, voluminous domes, gazebos, fountains, a dual-winged grand staircase, and at its center, a two-story piazza courtyard lined with Roman columns and loggias. It sounds like a custom integrator's dream project. But with its construction stretched out over the course of half a decade, managing all of the work could easily have become a nightmare.

"We've done work on big projects, but didn't do as much integration as we did on this project," said Raul Gonzalez, president of R&M Systems Group, the technology integration firm placed in charge of not only tying the entire residence and surrounding property which also includes a 7,000-square-foot guesthouse together with an ELAN Entertainment and Control System, but also all of the electrical work, as well. "The thing with this large project; it was time consuming. We were involved in not only AV but also the electrical side (we have an electrical division in the company as well). We got in from the beginning, and it took about five years to complete the project. It gets tiring at some point going there every day."



The home features a two-story piazza lined with Roman columns and loggias, as well as integrated technology solutions, such as speakers that blend into the walls.

In addition to the villa's many architectural triumphs, John Forte, founder and president of Forte Properties, says his home's ultimate X Factor is its sophisticated smart home infrastructure completely controlled by an ELAN Entertainment and Control System that is invisibly woven through every thread of the palatial villa.

"Owners of high-end, luxury estates such as the

Forte's Star Island villa expect their home to be outfitted with next-generation technology that is easy-to-use and fully functional, but virtually invisible to the eye," Gonzalez said. "That's precisely what we delivered: a sophisticated network of cutting-edge, interconnected AV, security, climate, lighting, and pool/spa subsystems, united and managed with a seamlessly integrated ELAN control system."



To match the home's opulent décor, many of its Niles in-ceiling speakers were embedded in the ceiling's hand-painted Venetian frescoes and painted flush, by the artist himself, to perfectly match their surroundings.



The \$500,000 ELAN-controlled home theater is outfitted with nearly a dozen cinema-quality in-wall speakers and subwoofers that are virtually invisible to the eye.

According to Forte, he wanted a control system that covered the entire 25,000-square-foot villa without jeopardizing the home's architectural and design aesthetic.

Luckily, no sacrifice was required just a bit of savvy design work from Gonzalez. "To build the villa's 'brain,' we integrated over 65 separate ELAN components including seven Systems Controllers, seven Integrated Multi-Room Audio Amplifiers/Controllers, two Communications Controllers, 12 handheld remotes, and 26 in-wall touchpanels," Gonzalez said.

Gonzales collaborated closely with the project's interior designer, Perla Lichi, ASID, of Perla Lichi



The 25,000-square-foot home is built on Star Island, outside of Miami, and took five years to complete.

Design Luxury.

To make the villa's 112 Niles in-ceiling speakers disappear from sight, many were embedded in the ceiling's hand-painted Venetian frescoes or wood

panels and painted flush, by the artist himself, to perfectly match their surroundings. Additionally, components of the family room, bar, and master suite's surround sound system, including Sunfire subwoofers and amps, sit behind Moroccan filigree, or perforated screens, hiding the technology without inhibiting the audio performance.

Epitomizing the villa's convergence of technology and interior design is a \$500,000 ELAN-controlled home theater, outfitted with nearly a dozen cinema-quality in-wall speakers and subwoofers that are virtually invisible to the eye.

And that's just the interior. In the piazza courtyard, roof deck, and outdoor pool area, speakers and subwoofers are tucked within bushes and fixed in tree canopies, creating the effect of an invisible sound system that blends naturally with its surroundings.

Beyond entertainment, the ELAN control system allows Forte to manage a sophisticated security system comprised of hi-res dome cameras, photoelectric smoke detectors, mechanical heat detectors, and professional-grade sirens with stainless steel enclosures.

In addition to the security system, the roughly 38 rooms of the property boast an AV system that includes 112 Niles in-ceiling speakers; 10 Sunfire subwoofers and amplifiers; 23 televisions, ranging from 55 to 70 inches; 10 surround sound systems, including a cinema-quality home theater equipped with a TheatreScope Classic projector from Digital Projection, a 133-inch CineCurve screen from Stewart Filmscreen, a power filtration and conditioning system from Furman, and a sophisticated Panamax power management system with BlueBOLT remote energy management to protect the home's tech infrastructure from electrical storms common to the Miami area. To cover the home's lighting control needs, 22 panels were required.

One of the unique challenges of working on such a huge project was that technology spec'd at the start of the process is not likely to be considered "state of the art" five years later, when the home is complete. "In five years, equipment changes, technology changes, and we always have to keep on track with everything," Gonzalez said. "Our client was very receptive to our comments and opinions. I think the best experience we had with the dedicated theater, where we started off modest and ended up with very high-end equipment and everything integrated with ELAN."

Jeremy J. Glowacki is editorial director of *Residential Systems*.

