



# GOING WIRELESS

THE DIGITAL HOUSE COMES OF AGE



**ABOVE:** Enjoy watching your TV and then switch the screen to a giant computer screen and work on projects from the comfort of your den. Photo courtesy Article Resource Association



**ABOVE:** Stream your favorite tunes via Bluetooth technology to the Parrot wireless sound system so that music can be heard on your MP3 player, your mobile phone or your personal computer.

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BY HARVEY MARKS AND ALYSSA FRY

Imagine a home that instantly and effortlessly does your bidding — beaming Internet programming to your television or stereo, meeting your family's needs for comfort and security and even helping you save energy.

If that sounds like sheer science fantasy, then you haven't been paying attention to the wireless revolution sweeping America. According to current statistics, about 20 million Americans now have digital home networks, up from just 2.5 million in 1998. Along with faster computing performance and other obvious advantages, these broadband connections also make it possible to set up wireless command centers to automate functions in your home.

#### WHAT'S FOR YOU?

Many automated functions are readily available through standardized systems and components that easily can be installed in your home. However, there's virtually no limit to the possibilities, and individualized systems can readily be created to meet unique lifestyle needs.

Want to enhance the pleasure, comfort and security your home provides? A wireless system can be programmed to turn lights on at sunrise or sunset or various other times of day. It can provide lighting scenes for different rooms and for activities as varied as reading, TV watching or entertaining. Such a system can help you save energy by controlling your thermostat to correspond to sleep schedules, room occupancy or outside temperature. And it can increase your security by providing an early warning about smoke or fire or other hazardous conditions, then automatically illuminate your family's best evacuation route.



**GOING WIRELESS**



**ABOVE:** Selecting and setting up the wireless function you want can be a fun and educational project. Photo courtesy Dell



**ABOVE:** Controlling your home can be as simple as flipping a light switch with a wall panel like the one seen here. Photo courtesy Mary Kathryn Reese, co-owner Einstein House

**BELOW:** To get started on going wireless, you'll need a router (a small radio transmitter), such as this packaged model from Verizon. You'll also need a receiver that hooks up to your television, stereo or other device.

Einstein House in Dallas offers the Smart Home system that allows homeowners convenient control of features such as the thermostat or lighting from a pad on the wall or a portable tablet. Co-owner Mary Kathryn Reese says the music feature is like an iPod with two output chords instead of one, where many selections can be played simultaneously, in different locations of the house.

“A typical selling point is music,” Reese says. “Say a client has five kids and a 7,000-square-foot home. In the master bedroom and bathroom, they could be listening to Luther Vandross, and the kids could be in their bedrooms listening to Beyoncé.”

**ENTERTAINING POSSIBILITIES**

Sophisticated whole-house automation systems won't fit every taste or budget. However, increasing numbers of homeowners are turning their computers into networks for beaming information from the Internet to their stereos and TVs. Imagine turning your television into a computer monitor to surf the net. Or how about inviting the gang over for a slide show presentation of your vacation pictures beamed straight from your laptop to your large-screen TV? For radio lovers, Apple's iTunes and other services and products, such as AirPort Express, offer a number of pure-music and other channels that you can stream directly from your computer to your stereo system.

Reese uses this feature at her annual Christmas party to display pictures from the previous year to her family and co-workers. “It's nice because everybody will be talking, and you'll hear, ‘There I am!’ and someone will be pointing to the television.”

To get started, you'll need a router, which is basically a small radio transmitter that sits on your desk and a receiver that hooks up to your television, stereo or other device. Routers can cost as little as \$50, but before you buy, you'll want to spend a little time researching. If you have a large, multistory home, it might be difficult for a single router to send a strong signal to every part of it.

Security issues also are a concern. According to the experts, fully securing a wireless network is a difficult, if not impossible, task. Knowledgeable and determined hackers can penetrate virtually any wireless network. But basic security measures available with most wireless systems can at least keep amateurs out of your network and lead more knowledgeable intruders to move on to easier targets.

**WHERE TO GET IT**

Numerous companies are available to help you set up your home's wireless system. SmartHome is the world's largest home-automation retailer, with more than 7,000 affordable lighting, security and home entertainment products for wireless applications. Among the products SmartHome carries the highly popular and reliable Insteon home automation system developed by SmartLabs.

Home Automation Inc. has been the leading manufacturer of home control products since 1985. Today, the company carries a full range of reliable products and services for home control and sophisticated lighting scenes, as well as audio and energy management.

Lutron offers HomeWorks, a total home lighting control system, as well as Sivoia QED, an electronic shade and drapery control package. You can find Lutron products locally at Passion Lighting in Grapevine, or Lights Fantastic and Lightall in Dallas.

Advanced Home Theater Systems in Plano offers more than just media room expertise. Using Crestron technology, homeowners can control lighting, music, movies, security and the pool from a remote or wall-mounted screen.

There's also the Motorola Homesight system that allows homeowners to use their mobile phone for all-in-one home monitoring and security purposes. Like other systems, Homesight works with an existing broadband connection and features a networked series of sensors and control components.

Powered by dual-wireless technology, Lagotek's Home Intelligence platform makes the luxury and energy savings of whole



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ABOVE: SmartHome's Insteon home management network gives you the power to control your home simply at an affordable price.

home control available to everyone. With lighting, climate control, video monitoring and even automated irrigation for your landscape and pool functions, Lagotek's system provides the latest in complete home automation.

Many of these wireless automation systems use simple plug-n-tap technology, making it feasible for do-it-yourselfers and home-computing buffs to install components themselves. For people who feel less confident or don't have the time, numerous companies offer full consulting services and expert home installation.

**TUNE IN**

As wireless technology develops, more and more Americans are tuning in to the virtually endless possibilities of the digital age. Now, through continually advancing automated systems, our houses also are taking part, providing us with new and unprecedented levels of entertainment options, comfort and security.



ABOVE: Turn your mobile phone into a window to your home with Motorola's Homesight system, an all-in-one monitoring, security and control package to make your mobile phone or personal computer the "brain" of an automated home.

## RESOURCES

### 1-TIME SURVEILLANCE

972.978.3700  
www.1-timesurveillance.com

### ADVANCED HOME THEATER SYSTEMS

3209 Premier, Ste. 112, Plano, TX  
972.516.1849  
www.advancedhometheater.com

### APPLE

www.apple.com

### AUDIO SYSTEMS PLUS

2014 Brook Tree, Garland, TX  
214.244.3172  
www.audiosystemsplus.com

### CHT SYSTEMS

10606 Shady Trail #109  
Dallas, TX, 214.956.0292  
www.chtsystems.net

### DELL

www.dell.com

### ELECTRONIC INTERIORS

4545 Westgrove Dr., Addison, TX  
972.380.8720  
http://electronicinteriors.net

### EINSTEIN HOUSE

2741 East Bellline Rd., Ste. 113  
Carrollton, TX, 214.390.1600  
www.einsteinhouse.com

### HOME AUTOMATION INC.

www.homeauto.com

### LAGOTEK CORPORATION

www.lagotek.com

### LIGHTALL INC.

2837 Anode Ln., Dallas, TX  
214.358.5331

### LIGHTS FANTASTIC

4645 Greenville Ave., Dallas, TX  
214.369.1101  
www.lightsfantastic.com

### MICROSOFT

www.microsoft.com

### MOTOROLA

Multiple locations  
www.motorola.com

### MYHOMEDIA

4681 Ohio Dr. #117, Frisco, TX  
469.361.6619  
www.myhomedia.com

### PARROT

www.parrot.biz

### PASSION LIGHTING

1649 W. Northwest Highway  
Grapevine, TX, 817.310.3261  
www.passionlighting.com

### POWELL HOME ELECTRONICS INC.

2629 Dickerson #100, Carrollton, TX  
972.245.8700  
www.powellhomeelectronics.com

### SMARTHOME

www.smarthome.com

### UNIVERSAL SYSTEMS

2960 Wesley Way  
Fort Worth, TX  
817.589.9966

### VERIZON

www.verizon.com

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