

PRIVATE PLEASURES

Some of the best A/V set-ups lie behind the closed doors of private residences in the world's affluent cities. **Richard Lawn** gains exclusive access to one of Singapore's best

AS A PRO AUDIO DESIGN AND project consultancy company based in Singapore, Lin Asia can put its name to some of the most prestigious A/V installations in the republic, being invited to tender for projects where quality – rather than price – is the key consideration. There are occasions when large-scale applications also demand a submission based upon added value rather than reduced costs, as was the case when the company was called upon to design and install the entire voice evacuation and BGM music system in the public areas of the 33-storey Marriott Hotel in the Orchard Road district. The colossal project was proof that 'the bigger the job, the longer it takes' theory is not entirely true. That particular project took six months to complete, whereas a high-end residential application requiring a fraction of the equipment can often take much more planning, thought and time to install.

The 4m residents of Singapore dwell largely in tower blocks on the island's many housing estates, although an exclusive and wealthy elite group can usually be found located on top of the bukits (hills) in six-star bungalows and houses. It is this select group that continues to enlist the services of Lin Asia for their personal audio-video needs. 'About 30 per cent of our current work comes from high-end residential applications,' confirms president and principal consultant Kelvin Lin. 'Both my wife Gina and myself network with many consultants and architects for Singapore's rich and famous. These clients are extremely discerning when it comes to high-end audio and video.'

Although the details of their most recent project cannot be disclosed, it did afford *Pro Audio Asia* an opportunity to examine one of these extremely prestigious installations at close quarters...

Upon entering the living room of the 1950s building, a magnificent Challen grand piano provides the focal point – and this is where the tour of the project begins as this was fully restored by the Lin Asia team. 'The piano is beautiful and is back in performance condition, but it was a massive undertaking as it was in a very poor state,' says Mr Lin of what he regards as the most exciting part of the venture. 'Now, during parties and



functions, it is the centrepiece of attention and professional piano players are called in to tinkle the ivories.'

There isn't a room in the three-floor dwelling – or, indeed, an area outdoors – that isn't served by background music, reflecting the client's desire to be surrounded by high-quality ambient music. Lin Asia worked very closely with the architect to integrate the audio system into the residence and prevent it being visible to either the host or guests. Although the



Lin Asia team did not compromise the sound by respecting the aesthetics of the interior design, it was faced with acoustic problems arising from the marble floors and glass. To overcome this, a number of acoustic baffles were installed in the furnishings. The speakers were aligned so as not to direct significant levels of sound towards these reflective surfaces.

The living room is served by eight Electro-Voice Evid C-8.2 ceiling-mounted speakers, concealed behind custom-made gold grilles and offering an even, 110° horizontal dispersion. Although the limited ceiling space

for the 300mm back boxes made the installer's task difficult, the two-way speakers were fixed to the joists with no problems. The four speakers on the patio side of the living room are daisy-chained to four Evid C-8.2 speakers located in the covered patio section itself. Two further zones comprise a further eight ceiling speakers together with two Evid 4.2tW wall-mounted speakers in the A/V room, kitchen and casual dining room areas. Both of these zones can be controlled from wall-mounted volume control panels. A final downstairs zone of eight Evid 4.2tW wall-mounted speakers

Top left: The A/V room. Bottom left: Massage parlour and Tannoy Eyris R speakers. Below: Outdoor speakers.



Clockwise from top left: The living room; The pool area; The master bedroom; The lovingly restored Challen grand piano.

serve the patio and the formal dining room, some of which have had their grilles removed and are installed behind the air conditioning grilles.

Outdoors, a natural waveguide was designed channel the sound down towards the pool area and away from the perimeter fencing and neighbours' properties. The speakers have been integrated into wall-mounted, custom-made wooden casings to create the desired waveguide. The outdoor Evid 4.2tW speakers have been further weather protected against the effects of Singapore humidity, heat and rain. Canare star-quad speaker, video and line cables with gold-plated Switchcraft and Neutrik connectors are used throughout.

The conferencing/meeting room lies at the heart of the downstairs area, and also serves as a control room for the background music system, built into two 19-inch custom-designed equipment cabinets finished in ornate mahogany wood. Three Dynacord DPA-4260 amplifiers are racked here, powering the 30 wall and ceiling-mounted speakers, together with a single BBE M882i Sonic Maximiser and a Rane MLM-82a mixer-preamplifier.

Furman power conditioning units are used throughout as they prolong the operating life of the equipment and regulate the flow of mains current. 'It may cost more money in the short-term, but it saves money over time,' Mr Lin explains. The A/V power supply consists of dedicated clean path-to-ground electrical lines, with the amplifiers drawing their power from four Furman PL-Pro-DE Series II 16 power amplifier conditioners and a PM-PRO-DE conditioner/

monitor. An FM 75Ω cable from this equipment rack has been laid to an external DX antenna.

Used for meetings and Power Point presentations during the day, the conferencing/meeting room has a connectivity panel in the floor, allowing laptops at the boardroom table to interconnect with the A/V system. In the evenings, when business has been concluded, the room is transformed into a superb THX-Ultra2 certified movie theatre with 7.2 surround sound. An Infocus Screenplay 7210 ceiling mounted DLP projects multi-format movie images onto a 1450mm by 2600mm electrically-operated Da Lite high-power screen. The Klipsch surround sound system consists of three KL-650 THX Ultra2 speakers integrated into the ceiling just in front of the screen, four ceiling-mounted KS-525 THX Ultra2 speakers located at the sides and rear and two KW-120 THX Ultra2 floor-standing subwoofers under the screen.



Above: The patio. Right: Dressing room with Tannoy Eyris R speakers.

The system is powered by an Integra Research RDA-7.1 THX Ultra2 certified power amplifier and managed by an RDC-7.1 A/V controller, while the subs are powered by a dedicated KA-1000 THX amplifier.

Unlike the downstairs area, the master bedroom is entirely designed around the audio-visual equipment. An LG 60-inch plasma monitor is the central attraction of the room, facing the bed, and is supported by two JBL LSR 6332 speaker to the left and right, which have been hidden from view by fine beige gauze to match the frosted oak furnishings. An adjacent study area is equipped with an LG 32-



inch LCD television and supported by two Tannoy Eyris R speakers, while the adjoining bathroom and shower is served by two LG 20-inch LCD televisions and a pair of Tannoy Eyris R speakers. Nor is the magnificent dressing room spared, as two further Tannoy speakers are installed here. Once again, the equipment rack located in the bedroom furniture hosts an FM 75Ω cable, which is linked to the same outdoor external DX antenna as the

conferencing/meeting room downstairs. The heart of the audio system lies in the world-renowned McIntosh MCD-205 CD changer, MR85 FM tuner, C46 control centre and three MC252 amplifiers.

At first glance, this high-class residential installation could be appear little more than a lavish hi-fi set-up, begging the question why Lin Asia spent almost three times longer commissioned to this project compared to the Marriott Hotel? However, each and every detail has been carefully scrutinised at the planning stage and carried out with exacting precision, leaving nothing to chance. 'Such a project is very challenging as every detail is so important,' says Mr Lin. 'However, we find residential projects extremely satisfying as they are much more personal in use than larger, commercial projects. We specify McIntosh amplifiers in most of our residential projects as they are extremely high

performance unlike the equipment used in commercial projects.'

The integration of such A/V equipment into every room in this deluxe dwelling does not simply reflect on the owner's willingness to spend large sums of money on the best equipment on the market: 'I have to work within a budget on most occasions,' says Mr Lin. 'The beauty of residential installations comes from the balance you have to get between clarity of sound and how the equipment relates to the interior design and ambiance of the dwelling. Blending it with the walls and the furnishings is almost an art-form in itself, where lifestyle and technology intertwine. In many aspects, the work we performed here is similar to the Marriott Hotel. However, where one is larger the other is a lot more personable.'

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