



# ARCHITECT'S CONTRACT

Whilst the client often seems to 'know' what he wants, **George Cole** discovers that this installation got the benefit of an architect as a client, whose hands-on approach to the design embraced the systems integration

A home installation should be a close partnership between the client and the installer. Sometimes, the client knows what they want; but sometimes the installer needs to probe a little to get a feel for what the client desires (and can afford). Once a system has been agreed, most clients are then perfectly happy to leave everything to the installer. But when custom installers Dark Side of the Room (DSR), based in Lyon, France, received a commission from one of its clients, they found that the client wanted to have a rather more hands-on approach. This is no surprise when you realise that the client was an architect, who wanted a lighting and multi-room AV system installed in his house. "We had worked with him on a regular basis, so he was aware of our work," says Marc-Etienne Huneau, DSR's co-owner.

The architect's house, located near Lyon, was built in the 1970s and was about to undergo extensive redecoration. This provided a great opportunity to custom install the AV and lighting systems. Lighting was a very important part of the project and not simply a secondary requirement. The main living area inside the house - living room, kitchen, dining room - is open plan and there are lots of large windows. The harmony between light and space was important to the client and it was vital that the AV system blended in with its surroundings. To give you an idea of how much attention to detail is given to lighting,

you need just to step outside the house where the pathway to the front door is lined with a series of lighting posts. Also on the path are motion detectors, and when these detect someone moving along the path, they automatically activate the lights to illuminate the pathway - it looks rather like an airport runway. "It's fun and a good way for the customer to tell his visitors that this house is high-tech," says Huneau.

## A light decision

The client and his wife visited DSR's showroom to discuss a proposed system and it's here where they saw the Lutron lighting control system. "For us, using Lutron was a no-brainer, but you never know if the client is going to agree with your choice. But within thirty seconds of seeing the system, his wife said 'okay, we're getting this!'" recalls Huneau. "She just looked at the system and loved it." The rest of the system would also integrate both a 50-inch plasma display and a 24-inch LCD TV.

"Normally, the first step is to draw a blueprint for the system, but the architect wanted to know how this was done and said that he would do the plans for the lighting system," says Huneau, "so we gave him the relevant information and he started work on it. We would go to his office periodically to look at his plans and discuss things. Once we had agreed on the system, it was then a question of where to put the equipment and the best way to do the wiring." The latter was a major job and Huneau estimates that

"kilometres" of wiring was involved. "You could not have done the job without extensive redecorating." A contractor was used to install the wiring and do other work, such as preparing the wall boxes.

After this, DSR moved in to do the rest of the work, including the installation of ten in-ceiling speakers. "Most of the ceiling was brown and so we had to paint the speakers the same colour so that they blended in," says Huneau. Technically, the job was not too difficult, although Huneau says: "We've installed so many ceiling speakers in this job that we now ask more and more contractors to do the installation for us." After the lighting system was installed, the DSR team worked on installing the control system in the basement.

## Securely invisible TV

The installation involved around five visits and took around 15-20 days to complete. In the living room, there is a 50" LG plasma display with two B&W FPM-5 plasma speakers. The plasma TV is installed in a LiftBox, allowing it to be stored away discreetly when not in use. This was both for aesthetic and security reasons, says Huneau, "Our client was concerned about the TV being so visible because the interior of the house can be easily seen from the outside. The lift provided a neat solution." In the multiple living area, DSR placed a Concerto System from NuVo Technologies, which has a bi-directional RS232 port for controlling home automation devices.

The main living area (LH) is a bright, open plan environment, which the client was keen to preserve. The plasma TV lift (RH top) hides the set away when not in use for greater convenience and security and an array of wall-mounted touch control panels (RH bottom) allow entertainment and lighting to be controlled from almost anywhere