



Crestron's new Design & Experience Centre is now open for business

INSIDE CI



Full of the joys of summer, shows and short-straw-not-selecting, DAVE SLATER brings us up to speed on this month Inside CI. Just don't mention France...

Ah, I love June. Not only is it my birthday, the sun normally shines and with so much in the calendar it can never be called a dull month. Just look at what's going on in the CI game: you have *Infocomm* in Las Vegas (blimey, wish I could have swung a trip there!), *Essential Install Live!*, *Crestron open day* at their head office in Cobham and, finally, *euroLED* in Birmingham. Looks like my month is going to fun!

At least I didn't draw the short straw to go back to the job in Nice! This has to be the longest job we have ever been on – the building work started over two years ago, the first builders and project managers were lined up and shot, only to be replaced by some characters from the *Muppet Show*. Yet again we were summoned to be at the job, telephone calls and emails were checked: "It is ready for us this time, isn't it?!" "Yes!" came the reply. With it being the Monaco race weekend it was obvious my credit card was going to be stretched with over-inflated hotel and flight prices and, frankly, I might have sussed it was not going to be any different this time round. Sure enough, our install team turned up to what looked like a building site not a luxury villa ready to move into in July; again. This time, however, we can't blame a French team as the new team are Brits! What is so hard about knowing at what point you should be getting us in?

The customer is now sick of the villa and I doubt she will ever move in. It brings that old chestnut to front of stage again: a badly run job will always taint the whole job. I feel incredible sorry for the client as she has spent nearly £200k on technology, yet the furniture guy seems to have a different model of tape measure to the rest of us what adds an inch onto all of our measurements. Ah well, all of our guys are back in this country now, ready to re-group for the final visit to put this nightmare fully behind us.

TV times

With some great new kit hitting our shores recently, I have been busy having a play with some of the latest screens from Samsung and Panasonic, and have to

report back that I am impressed. The new WT 55-inch from Panasonic is a lovely piece of kit and the 55-inch Samsung 8000 series is now onto version E and the picture is jaw-dropping. There is, however, a big flaw with the Sammy for us CI guys, however, as if you want to build it into a piece of furniture, the little bumps top and bottom of the screen just don't work for me; and to rub salt into the wounds the IR receiver is in the top bump making it virtually impossible to mount an IR eye without it staring you in the face.

Coupled with no RS232 control and the mind-numbing problem of trying to control it over IP (screen can be controlled but when the screen is in standby the IP port has no power, so therefore the power on command does not work). In a nutshell, then: a CI nightmare. We just loved the old days when the Pioneer screens were quality, controllable via RS232, great picture quality and had a square no-fuss border... and we all used to make some money on them.

Sometimes control can be over-complicated if you just want to, say, turn on your TV and change Sky channel with the same controller, but I have come across the perfect solution from Extra Vegetables. Using a Keene KIRA and Extra Vegetable driver you can now use your Sky remote control to operate your Control4 system. With the driver shipped ready to recognise the Sky+ HD remote, by pressing 'Interactive' the Control4 OSD pops up just like pressing the Red Control4 button on a Control4 remote. The Sky remote can then be used to navigate the on-screen display, and when a device is selected the Sky remote will control that device as well. A great piece of kit that makes integration of the Sky remote simple, the Keene KIRA is a real customer pleaser, especially if your customers are like mine and just love the Sky remote.

More than mere plug-n-play

After a couple of trips to see new technology at numerous press events, I have to say that the future work of the Custom Installer will be massively different to today. Screens now have voice recognition and gesture control – yes, at the moment they don't work very well, but you just have to look at how quickly technology moves to see that it will not be long before they will. Will this mean that the customer just has to plug his kit into his network and press one button for it all to work? If it does we are going to be in trouble trying to make money as an installer. Personally, though, I think there will always be the need for a good install, as having kit which is easy to setup is only part of an installer's job – you also have to hide the cables, calibrate the TV, setup the sound to be awe-inspiring etc., and all of this takes knowledge and good practice.

So, it's not time to hang up my boots just yet! And as I write this I'm looking forward to a busy June, more shows are upon us and it's time to catch up with all my colleagues...

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