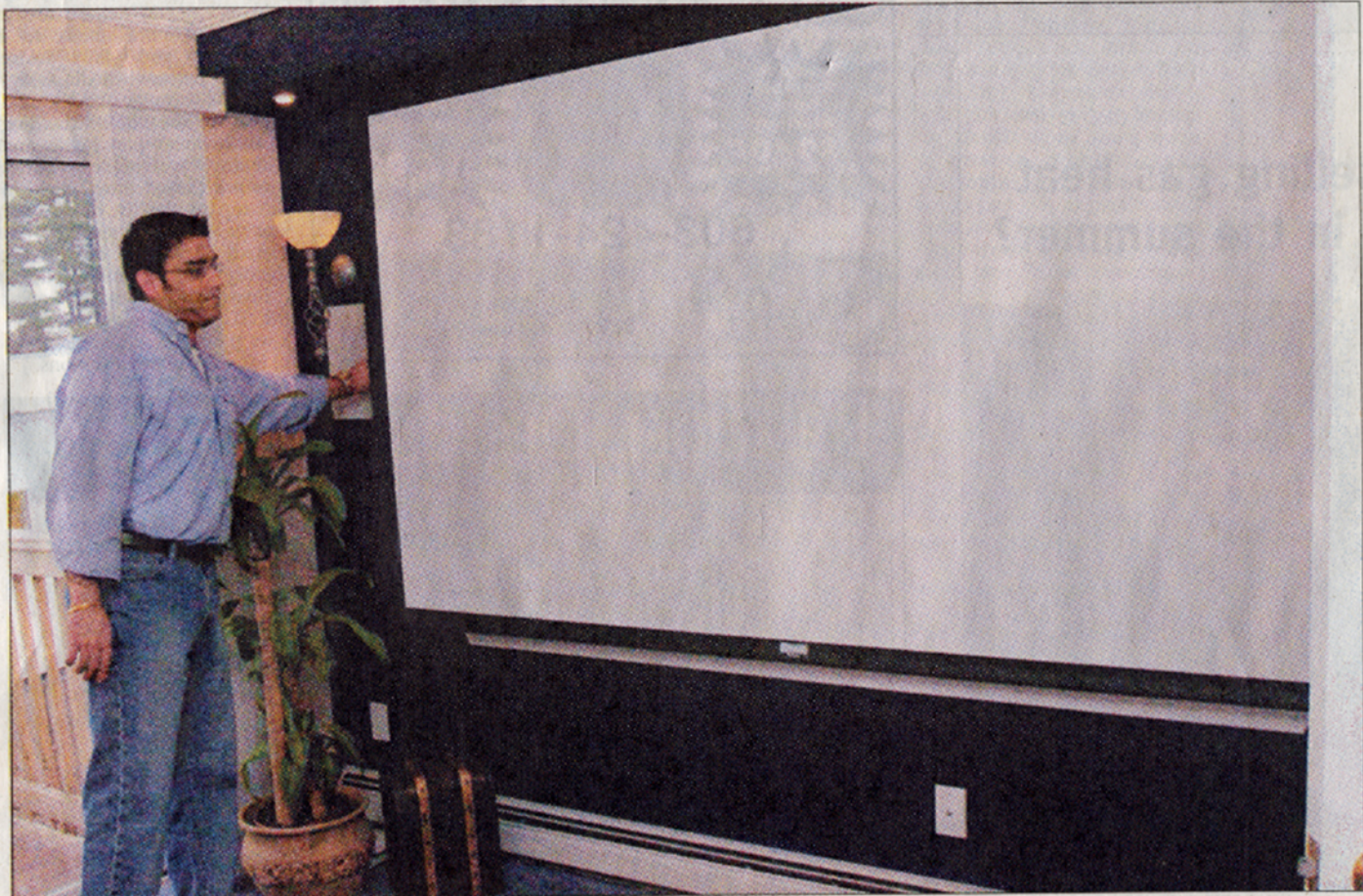


Wired for Sound



DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER

Bill Soggu, the owner of Acoustical Development Associates in Manchester, shows how his projection screen in the theater room of his condominium drops from a box in the ceiling.



The remote control for Soggu's entertainment center is contained in one unit. The system is also accessed from keypads located on the walls of several rooms of the condo unit.

Today's homes do more of the work, connecting their owners to the world

By BOB CHAREST
Special Sections Editor

IMAGINE WATCHING a DVD on your 50-inch Plasma screen television, the sound blaring through subwoofers and three-inch speakers installed in the ceiling over your head.

Suddenly, the picture dims, the sound fades, a doorbell rings from the front door — you know it's the front door by the distinct sound the bell makes — and a Federal Express man standing on your front step comes into view on the TV screen.

Sound futuristic?

Hardly.

It's the latest in home automation technology that is allowing homeowners to let their home do more and more of the work.

In New Hampshire, more new homes are being constructed with the wiring installed so that someday, whether that be now or later, the homeowner can connect rooms to audio and video sources.

A New Hampshire company is making some of that automation happen in the acoustics end of the market. Russound in Newmarket designs home acoustic products from two buildings in an industrial park located off Route 108.

The technology is here for homeowners who want to pipe music into any room of the house, watch a movie in one room while the kids are playing video games in the next, or play a compact disc on the patio for a pool party — all controlled from one system.

Imagine being able to start a DVD in your home theater, then watching the rest of it from the bedroom as you get ready to retire — without taking the DVD with you.

Russound sells its products through dealers — approximately 1,200 in the United States, with more abroad — who install anything from a simple system that can pipe music into several rooms of the house, to the system that can handle audio and video signals for the full movie-going experience in one room, while other rooms

Whole-house audio systems aren't just for the very rich

Audio

(Continued From Page F1)

can be immersed in a symphony concert or a hip-hop CD.

Surprisingly, it's not just for the very rich. An average system can be installed in a home for around \$400 per room, according to Russound's assistant marketing director Andrea Renz.

Russound amplifiers and controllers can be accessed by keypads and remotes from any room of a house — or in industry jargon, zones.

Russound got its start more than 37 years ago making volume controls. Today, their engineering staff of ten, part of the company's 75 employees, creates speakers as well as whole-house audio systems including UNO keypads and multi-zone controllers. They also design doorbells that can mute the system, low-voltage power supplies, assorted connectors and accessories. All told, the company sells about 1,100 products and launched 10 new products in January.

For the average homeowner, maybe something such as the company's A-BUS system will suffice, with the ability to connect one or more sources — be it a radio, CD player or other audio device — to several rooms.

The flagship of the Russound line is the CAV6.6 Deluxe, a system that can connect up to six



Russound engineering assistant John Good, left, senior engineer John Cronk, and engineering assistant Pete Engle in the electronics test lab where equipment is checked for performance.

audio/video sources to six zones, which in most cases are six rooms. Keypads in each room make the sources — such as a radio, CD player or DVD — available and different from what's playing in the next room.

As company president Maureen Baldwin notes in her company's literature, "Today's multi-room audio systems offer the exciting ability to select our favorite music and access it from almost anywhere we wish, indoors or out."

Her own home is outfitted with the latest technology that allows her to accomplish everything mentioned in the first paragraphs of this story. She can call her home computer from her computer at work or

telephone and set the lights, music and temperature, getting the home in shape for her arrival.

What Russound designs is much different than what a homeowner can buy at a big-box store and install himself. Treatments crafted by engineers and installers determine whether the system produces good sound that makes being in the room an absolute joy — or worse.

Dealer Bill Soggu, who owns Advanced Acoustic Development in Manchester, installs Russound systems as well as other home automation equipment as part of his business.

He said good acoustical design involves analyzing a room and determining where treatments should go. For instance,

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in Soggu's condo unit in South Manchester, a fake potted plant sitting near the corner of his TV projection room is not just a pretty accessory — it's a sound deadener.

Installing the right projection screen is also a matter of matching the reflective index of the screen to the projector and the size of the room.

More and more homeowners are having their homes wired at the time of construction to accommodate complex audio-video systems. Soggu also "retrofits" older homes with wiring so that they, too, can be outfitted with audio in every room. According to industry figures, about 4 to 5 percent of new homes are being built with distributed audio systems. The Distributed Audio Alliance, a trade group, hopes to see that double in the next two years.

"For the price of a fireplace, you can get yourself a good system," Soggu said.

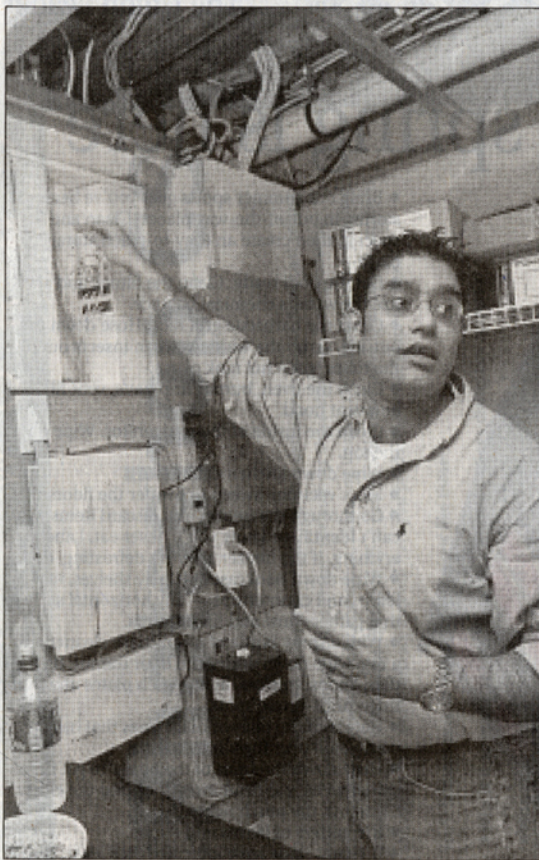
Soggu's company is affiliated with ConnectHome, a national network that installs residential networking, control and entertainment systems. Soggu is currently working from his Manchester condominium, but plans to open a shop somewhere in downtown Manchester, possibly in the Millyard.

Soggu's condo at Willow Bluff Estates has a TV projection room, a Russound system wired to several rooms as well as other home automation that allows him to control lights, security, heating and ventilation.

His entertainment equipment sits in a closet and is connected via keypads throughout the three floors.

Russound and its sister company, IntelliNet Controls, are making a new smart media server that stores music to a hard drive and, via a device called a personal media assistant, will arrange background music for the home according to the owner's play habits and listening preferences. Songs that are played often move to the top of the list, and when storage capacity becomes depleted, the system compresses the digital files for more space.

Russound is also introducing the ST2 Dual Tuner, which allows people in different rooms to listen to different stations.



DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER

The basement garage area contains many of the connections coming into the condominium unit.