

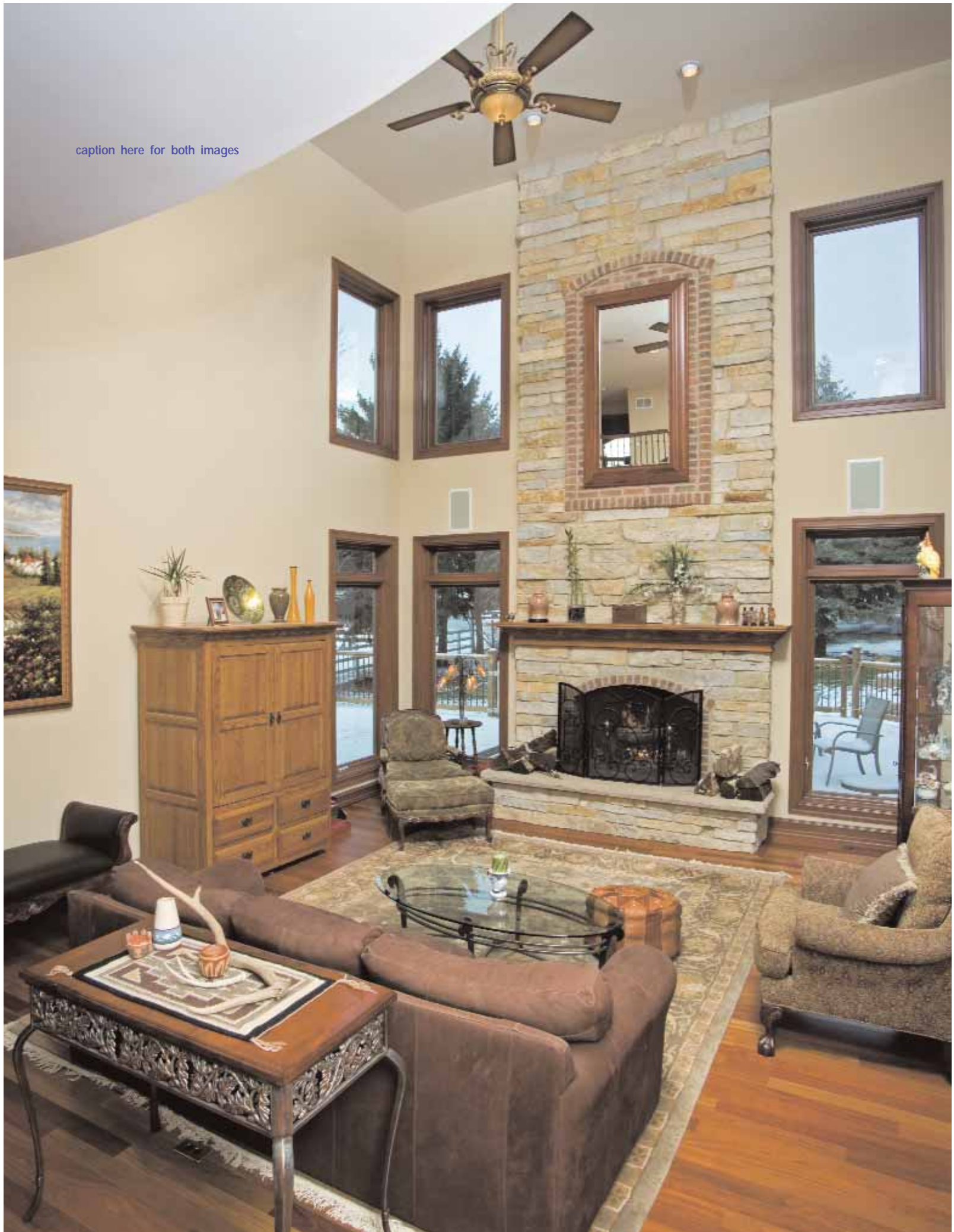


Concentrated Effort

By pouring nearly every cent of their budget into a whole-house music system, the owners of this Midwestern abode got more than they bargained for.

by Lisa Montgomery, photography by Joe Hilliard

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Home systems installers always recommend allocating the largest part of your electronics budget to products and systems you enjoy most. If you're a home theater buff, for example, putting most of your money into a huge screen and high-quality projector makes sense. Similarly, if you can't get enough of Xbox, you'll want to spend more on gaming equipment than you would, say, on a TV for your bedroom.

In Marge and Chuck Dushek's case, a system that could spread music everywhere both inside and outside the residence would consume most of the cash set aside for electronic enhancements. Although the decision would end up costing them more than \$30,000, it ultimately helped the couple save money on other items. "Because the Dusheks focused their funds on one system, money wasn't wasted on scrupulous items they would-

n't really use anyway," explains Ken Walker of Sound Design Systems, the Winfield, IL-based firm hired to integrate an extensive audio distribution system into the new 7,500-square-foot home. "Like the Dusheks, many of my customers want high-quality audio systems, but they also want three plasma TVs and distributed video. These jobs come in at about \$100,000. Because the Dusheks didn't spread their budget across several different systems, I could spoil them with their music system."

Musical Tour

Before any spoiling could happen, Ken had to get a feel for what sort of listening the Dusheks planned on doing. With so much focus placed on a single system, one might expect Marge and Chuck to be hardcore audiophiles. That couldn't be further from the truth.

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“We like listening to music, sure,” says Chuck, “but we had never experienced satellite radio and had typically just listened to music in just one or two rooms.” The notion of having music everywhere, however, was appealing to them. “We figured music was something we could enjoy all the time,” Chuck adds, “unlike a home theater where you use it only for a specific event.”

To keep the system under the \$30,000 budget, Ken and his business partner at the time, Mike Gryzik, would use a variety of speakers—higher-end models for key listening areas and less expensive units for other parts of the house. “Marge and I walked room to room while the house was being framed to visualize how each space was going to be used,” Ken explains. The music-planning tour took several hours and involved climbing ladders to reach some of the unfinished portions of the residence. In the end, they decided to deck out the great room, master bedroom and a sitting area off the kitchen with high-grade in-wall and in-ceiling speakers from Sonance. The rest of the house received less-expensive in-ceiling speakers from Sonance and Elan. A total of 49 speakers were incorporated, blanketing every square inch of the residence with sound. Even the steam shower and walk-in closet have their own speakers. “There are absolutely no dead zones in this house, which is quite an accomplishment, considering its size,” says Ken. “Having subtle music wrapped around you at all times takes music listening to a new dimension. It’s very therapeutic,” Chuck notes.

Tunes for All Occasions

In addition to being therapeutic, the Elan System 6 whole-house audio system has introduced the Dusheks to new varieties of music. Ken added a Polk XM tuner, Elan dual AM/FM tuner and an Elan VIA! dj Series music server to the setup. Chuck and Marge can access the many sources—all of which are stowed in an equipment room in the basement—from any of five Elan Z250 keypads or the Elan VIA! 64 touchpanel found in the office. The \$2,000 touchpanel was never a part of the original plan, but after two months of pressing keypad buttons to find music on the media server, the Dusheks decided to upgrade. “The touchscreen has made a huge difference,” Chuck confirms. “We can see the pictures of the album covers instead of just the titles. Often a title doesn’t ring a bell, but when we

see the cover, we know immediately what the music will be. The Dusheks can pick a song by scrolling through a list of music stored on the server, or they can skip to a menu of special playlists compiled for them by Ken. “We have a playlist of instrumental music for quiet evenings at home and another playlist of upbeat music with vocals for parties,” says Chuck. “I also put together a compilation of Sinatra tunes, Latin music and even German beer drinking tunes,” Ken adds.

The Elan system offers them the opportunity to play different songs in different areas simultaneously. “When we host parties, it’s nice to be able to segment the music by putting on something lively outside and bringing it down with some Kenny G inside,” says Chuck. The exterior of the house is as well covered as the inside, with 13 speakers pumping out tunes on the extra large front porch, veranda and deck. Even the garage has a pair of in-wall Sonance speakers and a wall-mounted volume control. Fortunately, volume doesn’t seem to be an issue. “The speakers outside are positioned so well that the music never seems to bother our neighbors,” Chuck notes. “But cranking it up really isn’t in the Dusheks’ nature anyway. They prefer to keep things quiet and peaceful. “Sitting on the front porch on Saturday and Sunday mornings with the music playing softly is one of our favorite things to do,” says Chuck. “Music adds to the tranquility of the morning. It feels as natural as listening to the wind whistle through the trees. When there’s no music, I almost feel uncomfortable.”

Working 24/7

Given how deeply entrenched music has become in the Marge and Chuck’s lifestyle, the \$30,000 they spent on their whole-house audio system was well worth it. They have access to a huge assortment of tunes that can be played anywhere inside or outside the house. Strategically placed speakers ensure that every inch of the property is covered, while simple controls provide a quick and easy

Elan MM650C in-ceiling speakers (20)
 Elan MM650D in-ceiling speakers (3)
 Sonance Symphony in-wall speakers (4)
 Sonance Virtuoso in-wall speakers (2)
 Sonance Symphony XTR in-ceiling speakers (9)
 Sonance Symphony XSSTR
 in-ceiling speaker
 Sonance Ellipse in-ceiling speakers (2)
 Sonance Mariner 100 outdoor speakers (2)
 Sonance Mariner Jr. outdoor speakers (2)
 Sonance Symphony 624TR
 in-ceiling speakers (3)
 Sonance Symphony CR101SST
 in-ceiling speaker
 Elan VIA! 64 touchpanel
 Elan Z250 keypads (5)
 Elan VS100 volume controls (16)
 Elan D1201 power amp
 Elan D1651 power amp
 Elan System 6 multiroom controller
 Elan VIA! dj Series music server
 Elan dual digital tuner
 Polk Audio XM tuner
 Elan Z880 video switcher
 Elan SC4 serial controller
 Elan PVIA4 patch panel
 Elan ZPWR power sources (2)
 Middle Atlantic Slim 5 equipment rack
 Liberty Wire & Cable cabling
 Panasonic 37-inch plasma TV

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 Sound Design Systems, Winfield, IL
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 JB Architecture Group Inc., Naperville, IL

way to adjust the volume or find some other tune to listen to. The Dusheks may have put all their financial eggs in one basket, but the basket they chose was the hands down the wisest choice for this music-loving couple. **EH**