

# BRIGHT IDEAS

Automated lighting and control of ambient light can have a huge impact on the appeal of an install, not to mention a healthy addition to the bottom line. *EI* flips the switch on the latest.



■ An Infinity star ceiling array is part of this project by UK Home Cinemas

Getting the lighting right in a home cinema can turn an ordinary cinema into a special one and a company that specialises in doing just that is **Starscape**, with its bespoke approach to fibre optic ceiling installs.

The company is currently gearing up for an appearance at *Essential Install Live! North* (Stands 77-78) showcasing its Infinity modular home cinema star ceiling system.

“We’ve been supplying fibre optic components to professional home cinema installers here in the UK, all over the EU and as far afield as South Africa for several years now,” says sales director Peter Fagan. “One significant feature of the feedback we had was that - although the star ceiling always contributed to the finished effect - the process of creating it was laborious and frequently underestimated at the pricing stage. People were budgeting a day to create the star ceiling, but then finding that it took three to four.

“So, we set ourselves to developing a system in which the bulk of the work could be done off-site - in our workshops - so that the on-site component of the installation could be made as quick and easy as possible. The result was our Infinity system, which has now been used by installers in three countries.”

Fibre optic star ceilings in upstairs bedrooms and bathrooms are generally achieved by drilling holes directly in the ceiling and then threading the fibres through from the loft. Since home cinema rooms are frequently in downstairs or basement rooms, or in loft conversions, this approach is often not possible, so the fibres need to be fitted first to a panel or set of panels which are then fixed beneath the existing ceiling.

A star panel can range from a single sheet of ply, MDF, Dibond or Foamalux to a completely new suspended

ceiling with plaster skim finish. Creating a panel-based system on site can be time-consuming, messy and involve calling in subcontractors.

With Starscape’s Infinity system, the lightweight panels are supplied with the fibres already in place and since the panels are finished in a soft black flock, there’s no requirement for any painting or other finishing.

Infinity panels (available in two sizes - 1000x1000x12mm and 1000x500x12mm) can be screwed directly in place, but most customers opt for magnetic fixing in which the panels fasten magnetically to steel track, easily removed if required for maintenance or cleaning.

Each panel is linked to an LED light source via a ‘tail’ of bundled optical fibres, with light sources able to illuminate up to 6 or even 12 panels. Push-fit optical joints make it easy to connect the panels to their respective light sources and light source models include types with DMX functionality to integrate with smart lighting systems.

Fibres of four different diameters are used to create the 100 stars in each panel at a higher density than is usually practicable for in-situ approaches.

For customers who prefer to take care of the install themselves, Starscape continues to make up custom fibre harnesses to meet individual requirements and can also offer fibre optic/LED options for down lights and step lighting.

In the more general lighting sector, LED of course has been the big story of recent times. **Ivory Egg**, supplier of KNX based solution has lots to offer the lighting sector. The company explains that all the main KNX manufacturers now promote LED compatibility as part of their universal dimmer line-ups, but not all to the same extent. Some have been developed for a specific range of lamps, such as



■ Some impressive results for amBX at the Majik House showroom



ABB working with Philips Master LED whereas others have approached the market more generically.

Ivory Egg says the key thing to watch out for is the ‘Inrush’ current that is generated as the LED fitting turns on. This can be as high as 1A on a 7W fitting and is why all universal dimmers are down rated when used with LED. For example the two-channel 400w Theben DMG2T can only drive 60w of LED’s.

Another consideration is the actual dimming curve of the output. Some LED dimmer combinations will dim nicely down to 1% where others will dim to 50% with a flat output below this. The company says using a dimmer with adaptable curves is essential to provide a quality installation, but not as important as testing the proposed combination first. To be sure of a smooth and wide ranging light output, the company recommends looking for fittings with separate LED drivers so installers are able to directly control the output of the driver.

Direct KNX LED Drivers is the most native KNX solution as the LED driver has a direct connection to KNX platform. Zennio and Bilton are key in this category and Bilton is launching a range with the transformer built into the driver so you only need mains and KNX at the fitting.

As Ivory Egg points out the Digital Addressable Lighting Interface (DALI) is another story all together although the physical driver is similar to the Direct KNX drivers. The benefit KNX offers here is the ability to link multiple DALI universes together and control the fittings as part of the wider building controls. There is a huge range of DALI gateways available for all manner of configurations.

**Sun-Light Solutions (SLS)** distributor for amBX has introduced a new digital, multi room amBX Light-Scene Engine to the residential and professional markets throughout Europe. The distributor says the IP based, multi room lighting control engine has been designed and developed to transport intelligent and intuitive lighting control to new levels. Light-Scene Engine delivers new possibilities for interactive lighting and drops amBX Apps and interfaces from Lutron, AMX, Crestron, Control4 and DemoPad into the hands of the user.

The effects driven lighting scenes are a good match for any project involving a cinema room, media room, pool room, gym, etc. but with the capability to control up to 32 spaces, the system is flexible enough to adapt to almost any type of project, domestic or light commercial. A neat feature is to lend areas of a building more character if they are starved of light such as a basement, offerings scenes such as sunrise, sunset, morning and afternoon sun for relaxation as well as

more dynamic light and audio mixes for when it’s party time.

SLS offers full systems including the amBX control, RGB LED lighting, DMX drivers, PSU’s, cables and design assistance. Training is also on offer to gain a full understanding of the technology.

**Lutron**, available from several CI distributors including RGB, Armour Home and Pluse Marketing, is continuing to add to its line-up.

Fayaz Kermali, UK sales manager, residential systems at Lutron, explains: “As well as increasing flexibility to our HomeWorks QS range with the addition of RF modules (Softswitch and Contact Closure Output modules and a 0-10v dimming module), Lutron’s battery powered roller blind solution, Sivoia QS Triathlon, has been proving popular.

“We have also launched a range of online initiatives that include the Lutron Support Community forum for installers to share and communicate. There is also the new Lutron LED product selection tool, an information tool that shows tested LED solutions that will ensure compatibility between controls, drivers and other LED products.”

Fayaz adds: “In addition we have been looking a lot at HVAC control and expanded HomeWorks QS to include wider ranges of integration, including the MODBUS protocol. This enables communication with Trend and Siemens amongst others.”

Fayaz adds: “Integrators are also liking the fact that we offer some of the longest warranties in the industry for our LED drivers; 50,000 hours. This ensures that our specifiers and end users know that we endorse our drivers to last as long as the LED lamps, if not longer.”

Lutron has also updated its control App for the HomeWorks QS platform, providing a more intuitive front screen for simple control as well as including HVAC control and a time-clock builder. This last feature enables the creation of time events and scenes via the App.

Other App additions include the Lutron Pleasance iPad App and Lutron Fabric Collection App. The Pleasance App provides a one-stop-shop of information to inspire, specify and install Lutron residential light, shade and temperature control solutions, whilst the Fabric Collection App enables specifiers to access Lutron’s entire shading system catalogue.

### Set the controls for the heart of the sun

Control of ambient light has been one of the major development factors in recent times and a strong combination here is offered by **Oceanair** supplied through



■ Oceanair supplies products to some of the finest marine and on-shore homes around the globe

## RGB Communications.

Since 1990 Oceanair has been the one of the world's leading manufacturers of blinds, curtains and soft furnishings. In partnership with motor manufacturers, including Somfy, Lutron, Goelst and Silent Gliss, the maker says it is uniquely unbiased in its approach to motor selection; offering a big range of choice and the reassurance that the right motor is always specified.

Oceanair offers a 'turnkey' service of technical advice, drawing service, survey, installation (CSCS certified and with full public liability insurance) and programming capability, making sure installers have maximum support to get each install correct regardless of experience with the system. All of the products are also supported online and come complete with measuring and installation instructions. The products are also at home integrating with the major third-party automation platforms.

All the products are designed and manufactured in-house at Oceanair's state-of-the-art facility on the English south coast, with strict quality control and a commitment to on-time delivery. Experienced fabric buyers are also on hand to guide installers through the range or to source something unique. Ultimately, Oceanair specialises in delivering fully customised products, which integrate seamlessly and are fully compliant with the very latest building regulations.

Oceanair says it aims to not only meet quality expectations, but really understand the complexities posed by custom integration.

The 'Motor Menu' starts with a regular low cost entry level motor offering the easiest and simplest way to give an automated experience. This can be upgraded to the 'whispering' Sonnesse motor, enabling blind control without creating unwanted noise. The range is completed with the near silent Lutron drive, with its inbuilt intelligence to align blind and curtain movements, supported by integration with Lutron Homeworks.

The company's relationship with RGB is also proving a big hit as RGB customers have access to the full suite of products and services offered by Oceanair, integrating the service into all RGB's other install focused brands.

Innovation is a big part of the Oceanair story and recent product introductions include a new Curtain Quick Release System, ideal for use with powered curtains. Operated by an electro-magnet, magnetic discs are added on to the tie-back and the tie-back housing. When the curtain is deployed, an electronic pulse is sent to the tie-back distorting the magnetic field and splitting the tie-back from the housing. Also new is a range of leather Venetian blinds, where leather or faux leather is hand stitched around sustainable hard wood slats, creating a tailored blind with inherent in-built strength. The blinds can be supplied to work with Lutron's quiet drive system and the blinds are available in a wide choice of finishes and colours to fit any window up to two metres wide.

RGB has other offerings in this sector including its supply of the new Lutron GRAFIK RA2 mid-range, wireless lighting and shading control system with two-way RF control or via its free App. RGB also wants installers to be aware of new Lutron HomeWorks components including keypads with glass facias, DIN rail system enclosures and the new Lutron Triathlon and Serena series of long life battery powered shades for zero wiring installations. RGB says the Triathlon shades have a wide variety of fabric colours and textures and the Serena



■ Control4 is now helping UK installers with an enhanced package of products and support



shades offer the quality of a Lutron motorised shade at a price comparable to that of other brands' manual shades.

Another distributor keen to offer a solution in ambient light control, **AWE** recently announced a new deal with automated window and blind specialist Silent Gliss. AWE customers will have access to the full Silent Gliss support package including project planning, design and installation should it be required. All Silent Gliss products are 'made to measure' with almost any solution possible, regardless of size and shape of window. AWE will be looking to combine this partnership with its existing supply and support for the Philips Dynalite platform.

**Control4** has recently enhanced its UK offering with its lighting fixture compatibility database and service. The database allows installers to quickly search for third-party lighting fixtures and bulbs that have been tested and are compatible with Control4 panelised and wireless lighting. In addition, fixtures and bulbs that require verification of compatibility can be submitted to Control4 for testing. By using this service in the planning stages, Control4 says dealers are better able to provide accurate client proposals and proper system operation.

A coherent approach to bespoke design including RGB backlight colour and engraving is also available via the Composer Pro software and button engraving can also be ordered online. Control4 is also offering an array of new tools to support the design, sales and installation process including a comprehensive lighting design guide, detailed CAD drawings, quick-reference cards and new showroom displays.

On the product side, Control4 has introduced wireless options including new adaptive phase dimmers, combination 120v keypad/dimmers and 0-10V dimmers for LED applications as well as configurable keypads for control. Control4 says its wireless lighting family delivers its functional innovation with elegant design including, a diverse palette of colour and finish options, custom backlit engraved buttons and programmable status LEDs supporting customisable colour hues for at-a-glance feedback. Additionally, each switch, dimmer and keypad includes an ambient light sensor to automatically adjust the brightness of status LEDs and button backlighting. The range is of course compatible with the company's panelised lighting products for combining the two approaches.

On the panelised side of things, the new eight-channel, Control4 Adaptive Phase Dimmer module includes automatic, adaptive phase control technology to support new technologies such as dimmable fluorescent, CFLs and LED sources as well as legacy light sources. Control4 adds that Euro-style square (UK) keypads are now available in three, four and six button configurations.

UK manufacturer **Rako** continues to develop its offering of wired and wireless lighting control products.

The company's retrofittable wireless modules allow systems to be installed with the minimum of hassle and expanded later while the CAT5 wired options can deal with the largest and most complex of projects. Rako also offers bridging between its wired and wireless systems offering the option to combine the technologies where appropriate. Control options include keypads, remotes, tablets or smartphone Apps as well as engraved dedicated controls for that extra touch of personality.

As well as keeping pace with the move to LED and the need for more sophisticated dimming methods, the company also offers curtain and blind control delivering privacy functions and control of natural light.

Giving installers the info they need to choose the right partner products, Rako has also tested and published results of over 100 lamps and drivers giving the installer and end user a choice of suitable options. Achieving integration across a whole home system is promoted with the inclusion of RS232 and IP input.

Long standing supplier of lighting accessories, Wandsworth Electrical, is now offering its own intelligent lighting with the Tronix system, described as easy to install/use, innovative and comes with a wide range of finishes and retractable switches as well as smartphone control. Able to control and dim LED lighting, the company uses its large range of lighting accessories and switches to deliver a 'front end' design aesthetic to match interiors, combining control and a great finish in one package. Rocker, toggle, bell push and multi-button plates can all be personalised and engraved and control is achieved via the iTronix App for smartphone or tablet for instant adjustment or to set scenes or timed events.

Tronix also offers a colour LED driver giving colour selection, cycling and sequencing for RGB strip lighting, whilst still under the overall control of the Tronix lighting network.

The company can also provide a full in-house pre-sales design service to help plan and configure lighting controls from simple rooms to large multi-room and DALI based projects.

Scene-based controls are fully customisable and can be programmed to set all the lights in a room for a particular mood or task, dim lights or groups of lights up and down and also provide full control of each and every





■ The PLAYBULB comes with the E27 screw fitting, but also works with adaptors such as the E40 E14 screw or B22 bayonet

lamp and light in the room. Sensors can also provide occupancy based intelligence or use ambient light levels to trigger actions. Tronix says its system can be integrated easily with other home automation solutions if required.

The company is at pains to point out that its long experience and standing in the market has developed an enviable reputation and client list with projects including the private residence of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Kensington Palace, the Bank of England, ME London and Grosvenor Hotels, Windsor Castle, the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank as well as royal palaces, luxury hotels and houses across the world.

The company does have plans to introduce a full training programme on the system, but this will likely not be until 2015, meanwhile contact the company direct for more details on how to get involved now.

**Habitech** offers the Coolbrium system from Mode Lighting that delivers a range of capacitive touch-control plates, available in stylish black or white glass. The surface above each button can be laser-engraved with text or icons from a big range of templates in short turnaround times (as little as two days). Every button has an RGB LED back light, which can be programmed with different colours to create character and style suited to each project.

Coolbrium represents the latest interface for MODE's eDIN system, described as a compact, modular format control system which delivers a simple, affordable, integrated approach to residential projects.

Lights and blinds can be controlled from keypads or remote devices including iPhones, handheld remote controls or touch-screen multimedia systems. Internet access delivers control when away from the property as well.

**Helvar's** latest innovation comes in the form of the iC (Intelligent Colour) Series of enhanced controls, developed to meet DALI's new Colour Control standard, enabling users to select the desired colour in one step, reducing programming time as a result.

The iC Series, which launched earlier this year with the introduction of Helvar's Designer iC software, enhanced 905, 910 and 920 routers and two channel 35W LED Driver, offers the beginnings of a suite of complete colour enhanced lighting control solutions.

As well as meeting the new control standard and reducing programming, the iC Series allows for the use of just one DALI address, which the system takes full advantage of, helping to reduce the cost of a full scale DALI colour controlled system.

Making it possible to provide a tuneable white solution using only a single DALI address, the iC Series can be programmed to replicate changes in artificial light, in line with the pattern of natural light. The maker says colour temperatures can be mixed over the course of a 24-hour cycle to create a solution that is in tune with the 'circadian rhythm' (the body's natural clock which helps determine eating and sleeping behaviour). The maker argues that work places, retail and education spaces could all benefit from this type of functionality.

Taking a completely different take on 21st century lighting provision is a new product from **MIPOW**, called PLAYBULB, which combines – light and sound with Bluetooth technology. The product is an LED bulb and audio speaker with Bluetooth control for both applications. Compatible with both iOS and Android (4.3 and above) smartphones and tablets, users can create the right ambiance by adjusting the amount of warm white light whilst also playing back stored or streamed music with full control over the level of both. Taking advantage of the low-power Bluetooth Smart standard, PLAYBULB includes two Bluetooth chips, allowing users to control both light and sound simultaneously and independently from any compatible device up to 10 meters away. The product can be used as a single light and sound source or used in conjunction with an existing lighting system. Four set modes are included - Energy Save (turns off after extended use with no changes to settings), Night (gradually dims the light and reduces audio), Sleep (dims light and turns off audio) and Wake Up (gradually increases light and audio). All settings can be accessed through the App, making PLAYBULB adaptable and programmable for different scenarios.

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