

# electric snap

Home automation transforms a Hawaiian home into a resort-like retreat

BY SAM SATHER

*We're living at a rapid pace I vow,  
These times are filled with fancies strange and queer,  
Electric snaps are now familiar things,  
New wonders great are bobbing up each year.*  
—W.S. Mullaly and Webster Fulton, 1891

Mullaly and Fulton's lyrics to *You Press the Button, We Do the Rest*, written over a century ago, couldn't be more fitting for what was to happen to technology over the next 100 years. With the birth of electricity came the electromechanical switch and the advent of doorbells, call buttons, light switches and flashlights. These advances were introduced as marvels and marketed as timesavers and the "electric snap," or

more familiar "button," was born. From simple on-and-off devices to creating shortcuts and reducing steps, the button began to promise more leisure time. Appliances, remote controls and the automation of manufacturing were the first to truly lead the way. Advertising in the 1950s centered on how the simple push of a button could streamline a housewife's life. It wasn't long before buttons could be found everywhere—computers, video

The homeowners can adjust the lighting, music and temperature of the home, swimming pool and spa from this AMX touchscreen.

The tiki torches and fire bowls that adorn the grounds can also be controlled by the touch of a button.



Near the entryway is the home's main control panel from which the owners can view and change any of the home's settings, including its security system.

games, calculators, watches, microwaves, ATM's—the list is endless. And once the Internet surfaced, buttons morphed into text and images, and anything found onscreen could be made actionable. Today, the button has become conceptual and technology has given us touch screens and fiber optics to enable the integration of many systems for even greater convenience.

Enter home automation and the ability to manage the technology of one's home from a touch screen while lounging at the edge of the pool or from a Blackberry halfway around the world. Home automation can be almost anything, but most importantly it is the ability to manage everything—from audio and video to security, lighting and temperature—quickly and efficiently.

At the forefront of this industry is the Hawaii-based company, Art and Automation. Led by award-winning designers and former Walt Disney Imagineers (the arm of the Walt Disney Company that designs and builds its theme parks) Paul Bailey and Mike Ruger, the company designs and executes “everything that's hard to describe” about the automation and integration of a home's technology. By approaching automation and integration as an extension of its occupants, Art and Automation strives

to make the technology invisible and the experience of a private resort seamless.

“We have designed and installed systems that require 99 percent up-time 20 hours a day,” says Ruger, president of Art and Automation. “We specialize in custom-designed environments to create an individual resort-home experience. We are not only home theater specialists; we are also accomplished interior and lighting designers and dedicated craftsmen.”

This is no more apparent than as illustrated by the custom-designed Hawaiian home of Richard and Brenda Scholl. With wow-factors such as water and fire elements and a jaw-dropping media room, each piece of the estate cleverly blends technology and art in such a way that the workhorses of the home like the lighting, cooling and security features operate quietly behind the scenes so that occupants become fully immersed in the environment.

“We strive to help tell the story of the home—who the owners are, and how they live—and to express that story in how we enrich their living experience. What we do is intended to be omnipresent but invisible,” says Bailey, Art and Automation CEO. “It's during that

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**For added privacy, the master bathroom features windows that can be changed from transparent to opaque with the touch of a button.**

**Art and Automation is updating the home's automation system so that the owners can check and update their wine inventory from anywhere in the world.**

process of storytelling that we glean a lot of information and come up with the right solutions.”

The process of developing the Scholls’ needs began as the design team interviewed them with the architect, Greg Bayless, and the interior designer, Leona Bayless, visiting the Scholls at their other homes. During this process, the narrative of what their Hawaiian home should have began to emerge. By getting a sense of who the Scholls are, how they live and what their lifestyle is like, the design team determined a handful of needs for their new home—a beautiful pool, gourmet kitchen, staged wine cellar and a place to entertain and accommodate friends and family.

The final product is breathtaking. By way of introduction, guests are welcomed to the estate, via speaker, at a tropically-inspired entrance gate, before beginning their way up through the lava-walled gardens to the home. At dusk, the grounds take on a dreamy quality as tiki-bowl torches light the way and illuminate the home’s organic and tropical architecture. With each element there is a sense that the Hawaiian climate and landscape is very much the stage upon which the Scholls’ lifestyle takes place. Once at the home and from the moment of entry, guests are struck by the immediate sense that it is unclear where the line separating the interior of the great room and the exterior leading to the infinity-edge swimming pool begins and ends. It is this unique, immersive quality of blending the indoors with the outdoors that typifies the resort-feel of the Scholls’ home and their love of Hawaii. In order to accomplish

that feeling, the home features automated glass walls that completely open to unobstructed views of the ocean and the island of Lanai in the distance. Every moment and experience, every space, is artful and considered.

“Every vista should have a focal point and always move you through beautiful spaces,” says the home’s architect Greg Bayless. “The round infinity pool anchors the home; it is the jewel and the element from which everything else radiates.”

Without realizing it, as guests move from one beautiful space to another, it is often the technology behind those spaces that is integral to the home’s resort-like ambiance. Every technological aspect—from distributed audio to floor lights that serve as nightlights to a security system that pinpoints open doors and windows—functions smoothly to ensure the owners and their guests enjoy the home to its fullest.

Often what Art and Automation does is termed “custom integration” and is typically the last consideration when building a home. “We prefer and really need to be on the project from the outset, working in union with the architects and designers,” emphasizes Bailey. “We are the ‘systems architect’ of the design team. We make it our imperative that each detail is in place as though the home were our own.”

If only Mullalay and Fulton could see how far the electric snap has come. ■

*SOURCES: Art and Automation, (877) 808-8900, [artandautomation.com](http://artandautomation.com); AMX, (800) 222-0193, [amx.com](http://amx.com); Farrington Bayless Architects, [fba@maui.net](mailto:fba@maui.net); Leona Bayless and Associates, [fba-le@maui.net](mailto:fba-le@maui.net)*