HIGH STYLE & HIGH TECH
A NEW YORK BUSINESS EXECUTIVE BRINGS HOME THE LOOK OF A FAVORITE GOLF CLUB IN THE FORM OF A CLUBBY SETTING FOR HIS ELITE AUDIOVISUAL TOYS.

> By Louise Farr > Photography by Olson Photographic

It’s not often that the decor of an exclusive golf club becomes inspiration for a private residence. Such was the case, though, when a New York businessman and jazz aficionado found himself enamored with the lofty, masculine and streamlined atmosphere of Long Island’s East Hampton Golf Club, designed by the Manhattan design firm of Pembroke & Ives. The financial executive liked the club’s interiors so much, in fact, that he hired Pembroke & Ives to orchestrate the aesthetics of his New York apartment, perched on a top floor of a grand Upper Eastside building whose units—which variously offer views of the Hudson and East rivers, Central Park and towering skyscrapers—were still under construction.

“Our client wanted superb-quality sound and vision, but never wanted to compromise the look and feel of the voluminous interiors with its spectacular city views,” says interior designer Michael Lewis, who worked with Pembroke & Ives owner Andrew Sheinman to fulfill the client’s wishes. “He demanded that the interiors and the technology segue seamlessly and effortlessly together—not an easy feat when the amount of controls and cabling that run through the apartment would be enough to cable a small village.”

Lewis isn’t joking. The wiring, he points out, snakes its way through the airy 3,500-square-foot apartment from an equipment room that is the size of many Manhattan bedrooms. “So often the equipment and technology can be allowed to take over and, in the end, become the focal point with wires trailing everywhere,” says Lewis, who credits the satisfactory invisibility of all of the audiovisual gear in this project to the expertise of custom installer Barry Reiner of InnerSpace Electronics Inc. in Port Chester, NY.

To get the wiring and outlets into the carefully plotted positions in order to accommodate the owner’s high-end audio and visual equipment, Reiner and Lewis worked closely with the client. “The worst thing from our point of view is looking from the side and seeing the whole bulk of the TV,” Lewis says. “We’re keen on integrating televisions into the interiors in a very streamlined way and not as add-ons—looking like the boy with the toy who bought these huge things and just shoved them on the wall.”
Lewis marvels that there's not one visible, dangling wire in the entire home, which includes a 63-inch Fujitsu HDTV plasma TV in the media room and a swivel-mounted Pioneer 50-inch flat-panel TV in the master suite. “Either we did a bronze [frame] around the television, or the bulk of the TV is set with brackets into the wall,” the designer says. “An enormous amount of technology and wiring was going on behind the surface. The serene atmosphere isn't compromised at all because everything is very carefully integrated.”

Secret technology aside, the beauty of the apartment lies in its spectacular triple-exposure cityscapes, glimpsed through 13-foot, floor-to-ceiling windows. “The views are totally stunning,” Lewis says. “This is what you're aware of when you arrive, and that's why you couldn't have the interiors take over. The views are the star.”

Unwilling to block those vistas with oversized furnishings, Lewis assembled and commissioned a collection of contemporary and vintage pieces for the home, ranging from Milo Baughman chairs in the master bedroom to Hervé Van Der Straeten cabinets and a 1950s Paul McCobb brass game table and chairs in the living area. Throughout the apartment, the rugs designed by New York’s Fort Street Studios and are woven in China of wild silk. They appear like delicate paintings as their sheens shift in the changing light. The result is luxurious yet unpretentious.

“These interiors are not derivative,” says Lewis. “What I do is always labor intensive. In the living room I could have used white paint, but it doesn't have the same effect as doing three-dimensional [polished plaster] stenciling.” The three-dimensional finish of plaster and marble dust Lewis alludes to provides a reflective quality. In the master bedroom, too, a plain wooden bed could have served its purpose. But instead, Pembrooke & Ives designed a mahogany bed frame covered with parchment-colored goatskin.

During the many months it can take to complete a project, it isn't unusual for the firm to accompany a client to Milan, Paris or London on shopping trips. “But we also have people in the field to go fishing for the best possible product,” says Lewis. “We do have a lot of clients who are interested, and part of their pleasure in

Previous spread and above left: Beneath the Pioneer flat-screen TV is an asymmetric console designed by the imaginative and prolific Paris-based Hervé Van Der Straeten. Interior designer Lewis describes the Wilson WATT/Puppy speakers, shown here and in the living room, as “the Rolls-Royce of speakers.”
the apartment is the collection. But we have other clients who have multiple homes and who trust our eye."

When Lewis reflects on this project, he says that he and the custom installer constantly shifted control, depending at which stage they were in and the installation spectrum. For his part, Reiner sees himself as dealing at different times throughout an installation with a succession of individual clients—ranging from the architect to the interior designer to the security expert—but always with the homeowner in mind.

"His expectations were clear and they were high." says Reiner of the
homeowner. "He was meticulous. He is an extremely intelligent man, and he did his homework impeccably.

"Our systems," Reiner continues, "though fun and lovely, are really not important to some clients in the sense that they're not focused on them. In this case the electronic system in the house was something that intrigued him. [That] makes [a project like this] more challenging, but it also makes it more gratifying."

One sticky issue for Lewis was the homeowner's personal decision to feature award-winning Wilson WATT/Puppy Series 8 speakers in both the living room and the bedroom. "They're enormously imposing and we didn't want the stereo to be the focal point," Lewis says. To integrate the equipment into the master suite, he supplied the manufacturer with a sample of the iridescent, sand-colored silk wall covering. Wilson custom-painted the speakers to match perfectly. The silk, which also lines the master suite's niches and recesses, aids in the room's acoustics by providing sound absorption.

In the living room, the Watt Puppies—custom-painted a frosted metallic platinum by Wilson—weigh a behemoth 170 lbs. each. "When it came to standing those speakers' pins on [the glossy, espresso-stained oak floor], it wasn't a question of putting them down [and] then being able to move them this way and that," Lewis says. "Due to the experience of the client and the installer, they were able to foresee [these kinds of] glitches."

The owner, it turns out, is so pleased with his new home that he hired Pembroke & Ives to design his office.

"Our clients are the well-known people," Lewis says. "We like to work behind the scenes to fulfill their dreams."
A look at the main equipment rack, above, reveals the owner’s passion for music—and the equipment that allows him to enjoy his audio collection. In addition to the ultra high-end Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD Player (in the upper-right side of the double-sided rack) and the AudioRequest S4.2500 music server beneath it—which stores 2,500 CDs worth of uncompressed digital audio—the system also features a five-disc CD changer and a Sony TC-WA9ES Dual-Well Cassette Deck (something you don’t see in today’s high-tech world). Above left: the cityscape as viewed through the master bath.

The Technology of Things
It takes little more than a glance at this beautiful apartment’s amazing equipment list to figure out that the emphasis—at least in terms of entertainment—was undoubtedly on music.

Not that the media room system is a slouch, mind you. In fact, it’s a very well-assembled system that many would envy: It features a beautiful 63-inch Fujitsu P63XTA51 US PlasmaVision Display, a Denon AVR-3806 A/V Surround Receiver, a full complement of Triad speakers, a trio of InRoom Gold MiniMonitors housed in the cabinetry at the front of the room, and a pair of InWall Silver/4 Omnis serving as surround speakers. The home also features several pairs of Triad InWall Silver/4 Omnis throughout for the purposes of distributed audio.

But the real stars of the audio show are the Wilson WATT/Puppy System 8 loudspeakers in both the master bedroom and living room. “The ultimate goal for this job was fabulous sound quality in those two rooms,” says Reiner. “In addition to the WATT/Puppies, he had some existing equipment that he asked us to integrate into the system—some really nice stuff,” says Reiner, including a Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 300. “It’s a really lovely integrated amplifier that we used to power the living room speakers.

“The homeowner also has a Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD Player, which is really a lovely CD and SACD player,” the custom installer adds.

While some installers may find it difficult to integrate existing equipment into a new plan, Reiner sees it as a positive challenge. “We do have a little footnote in our contract whenever there’s an existing piece of hardware, which says that we can’t be responsible for the functionality of existing equipment, including cable boxes from the local cable company. But in this case it was a joy. Our specific industry doesn’t focus on esoteric equipment. So being handed a fun piece of equipment like a Musical Fidelity amplifier every once in a while is a treat.”

The music system also boasts an AudioRequest S4.2500 music server, with 1.5 terabytes of hard-drive space that seems staggering even today, nearly two years after it was installed. (For those of you who slept through math class, 1.5 terabytes is a lot of iPod downloads.) Why the need for so much music storage?

“The client has a very, very impressive jazz collection,” Reiner says. “And he wanted everything ripped in a lossless format, which is interesting because that almost never happens. Hence the need for the large AudioRequest piece. There was never any question about ripping his music in compressed format.

“He wanted the best audio quality he could have,” Reiner continues, “and we did our best to give it to him.”—Dennis Binger

RESOURCES
ARCHITECT:
Plains Architecture Design Strategy of New York, NY (plainsdesigngroup.com, 212.482.0630)

CUSTOM INSTALLER:
Innerspace Electronics Inc. of Port Chester, NY (914.937.9700, innerspaceelectronics.com)

INTERIOR DESIGNER:
Pembrooke & Ives, of New York, NY (212.996.0555)

For more images of this home and a full equipment list, please visit HEmagazine.com.

"Impressively, the client knew when to seek advice and when to say, 'Here's what I want to do.'"—Barry Reiner, custom installer