

LUXURY CE

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Project of a Lifetime

A New York integrator takes on a 250-foot luxury liner

by David Dritsas

Some projects are just too amazing for words. For David Kepke, the owner of the Multimedia Resource Group, a high-end A/V integrator based in Chappaqua, New York, this was one of those times. Kepke and his team got the chance to work on a luxury yacht, over 250-foot long, named “The Samar,” a larger-than-life boat that calls Barcelona its home port. It was Kepke’s assignment to create the same A/V experience on water as the owner had on land.

Multimedia Resource Group is similar to many in the industry. Kepke started the business nine years ago, after having just gotten into residential A/V two years prior. Previously, he had spent 11 years in the commercial temperature control industry. His company works primarily in designing, installing, and programming Crestron-based residential A/V and home control systems for high-end clients.

Normally the company works on homes, but when one of his wealthier clients came to him with a proposal for his new yacht that was being commissioned, it would be represent new opportunity for Kepke. “This was the first boat,” he says. “This particular client was one of my first when I opened my doors. I do work for him all over the world.”

The Samar is a personal yacht that the client uses a few times a year. When he’s not on it he charters it out for the tune of nearly \$1 million a week. The grandeur and opulence of the boat is easy to see—it is truly a floating mansion. Kepke had to take that into account. “Essentially he wanted it to work like his houses. The overall system has the same feel,” he says. That meant matching many of the products, as well as the control interfaces.

The project also demanded a complex network of distributed audio and video to cover the stateroom, five guest cabins, a dedicated media room, numerous common rooms and outdoor deck areas. Kepke

says that overall there are 24 simultaneous discrete streams of video and audio, plus an additional 10 zones of audio. There are 26 satellite television tuners and servers on the boat store 3,000 movies and 5,000 CDs.

Creston systems were used to control everything, including the lighting systems that were installed by the boating manufacturer, whose shipyard is located at the British Naval Shipyard in Plymouth, England. The company that designed the boat was building military vessels, but has branched out into the public sector. “This was one of their earlier efforts in private yachts, so it is built like a battleship,” says Kepke.

There is almost nowhere on the ship that A/V content cannot be accessed and the ship has four media rooms: a dedicated media room, master suite, office and main salon. The installation was extremely complex, with five areas receiving surround sound. In fact, there are over 30 speakers installed in the interior of the boat alone, not counting a number of speakers outside.

Customization was also in order. “Of those thirty or so speakers, 20 of them are custom designed,” Kepke explains. “They never existed before this project. We were given cabinet sizes and were told ‘get speakers that fit here and, oh, by the way, they have to be reference quality speakers.’ Also, every cabinet was a different size.”

The company turned to Snell, who was able to take five models from its reference quality line. “They took five different

models of their speakers and customized them into seven designs,” he says. “And they were able to keep the quality of the reference speakers in tact.”

For video they started out using a sever product from one company, but were eventually unhappy with it, so they swapped it out for several Kaleidescape servers. Though these servers can do both audio and video, they choose to split the duties and went with AudioReQuest for the music storage.

The project presented numerous additional challenges. Space was a major concern and there was not a lot of room to place equipment. But Kepke devised a clever way to hide it. “In most of the guest suites, if you lift up the mattress and the frame you will find some of the equipment,” he explains, adding, “I used PS Audio multichannel amplifiers because they are extremely high quality and run very cold to the touch.”

Projection was also tricky. Some of the rooms required smaller format projects that could work well for short-throw distances. He has been able to answer the problem with projectors from Sim2.

When all was said and done the installation about \$1.6 to \$1.7 million, and Kepke continues to work on the boat when upgrades are needed or new requests are made. Call it a baptism of fire for working on boats, but for Kepke and his team it was the installation of a lifetime. ●

FEATURE SPOTLIGHT



The Samari is a private luxury yacht over 250-foot long. Multimedia Resource Group provided the installation for all of the audio/video and control systems.

A salon area in the boat looks like the lobby of a luxury hotel. The boat can deliver up to 24 zones of independent video streamed from a number of sources, including Kaleidescape servers and 26 satellite TV tuners.



The stateroom of the boat is wired for surround sound and has a Sim2 projector that is installed in the headboard.



The central staircase of the yacht, a vessel almost larger than most people's homes on land. Snell customized 20 of the 30-plus speakers on the ship to fit in inside the intricate cabinetry.