

Lighten up

Everyone wants to change the mood of their interiors with the flick of a switch, but is lighting gadgetry as user friendly as it ought to be? We take a look at systems that are simple yet sophisticated

WORDS: JILL ENTWISTLE

LARGE URBAN APARTMENT DEVELOPMENT:
Beacon Court, Dublin
(269 luxury apartments and penthouses)
DEVELOPER: *Landmark* SUPPLIER: *Lutron*

The brief was that the lighting solution had to be both functional but flexible so as to respond to the requirements of each occupant. By using Lutron's Grafik series in the main living areas and Lutron's Rania individual zone wallbox dimmers in the bedrooms, purchasers are able to sub-divide spaces into intimate areas to suit a wide variety of moods and uses. The Grafik Eye QS is the latest version of the system and controls not only light levels, but motorised blinds and curtains.

Lighting controls, along with other home automation systems, may have become more popular over the past decade - and positively de rigueur in many new developments - but they still have their issues. In fact, they've even developed a few along the way.

There's no doubt that the basic modular systems such as Lutron's Grafik Eye or Mode's Scene Style have caught on because they are intrinsically easy to understand and operate. But moving up to the next stage is trickier. 'The biggest problem is the jump from the single room control to the next stage where you look at whether you're going to control the whole house - how cost-effective it is and how you're going to do it,' says Rebecca Weir of lighting consultant Light IQ. 'At the top end of the market, most of the large manufacturers don't release the programme so that you can control or programme your own lighting. That means you're always calling someone back every time

you want to tweak it. That is definitely one of the downsides to it.'

John Bullock of John Bullock Lighting Design agrees. 'My biggest beef with most of the top-end systems is that they need a laptop and an engineer attached to it in order to alter the programming. If the client finally decides that the bedside light is just a tad too bright, that means a hefty call-out charge and a lot of faff, and all for a table lamp. Why bother?'

Greg Noble of Mode Lighting thinks that this is being partly resolved as centralised systems become Ethernet-based. 'The advantages of centralising means you have everything all in one place and integration between systems is easier,' he says. 'If they are Ethernet-based it means they can be controlled remotely so rather than waiting for an engineer to retweak something, it can be done from the company's office or they can run a diagnostic.'

Another benefit of having all the technical



LARGE TRADITIONAL PROPERTY:

Country house, Surrey

LIGHTING DESIGN: *Imagine This* SUPPLIER: *Crestron*

A Crestron iLUX system was installed in the property's winter garden extension, mainly because of its reputation for seamless integration with security, entertainment and audio systems. The lighting system controls cold cathode for the perimeter of the domes and glazed areas, fibre optics for the starlight effect on the ceiling, colour-changing via DMX in the pool itself and LEDs in the pool floor areas.



SMALL TOWN APARTMENT:

Kensington Mews, London

LIGHTING DESIGN: *Light IQ* SUPPLIER: *Lutron*

With a small budget, it was decided to restrict the lighting control to just one room - the kitchen/dining area. As a multi-functional space, it cried out for scene-setting. The Lutron Grafik Eye system controls four circuits: over the island, the main body of the kitchen, the eating area and the backlighting of the panels. It was selected for being cost-effective, reliable, easy to install and simple to operate.



CONTEMPORARY COUNTRYSIDE DEVELOPMENT:

Muswell House, Piddington, Oxfordshire

SUPPLIER: *Mode Lighting*

All elements - heating, ventilation, blinds/curtains, security, AV and lighting - had to be controllable from the owner's wi-fi linked laptop. For the lighting control, the client chose the easily interfaceable Mode Evolution system for its compact dimmer packs and stylish wall plates. It allows scene-setting on a room-by-room basis. Some plates are LCD type with text and menu pages to further enhance flexibility.

