



TOWER OF POWER

Smart homes are cropping up everywhere these days... IAN GALE casts his eye over an unusual home install and its Linn-powered multi-room audio set-up...

We at *International Smarthouse* often go to great lengths to stress that smart homes aren't exclusively reserved for the super rich. And, for the most part, it's true. This very issue includes great examples of how intelligent homes are becoming more widespread everyday, without losing their high-tech and modern lifestyle appeal. However, although we're more than happy to stress the increasingly inclusive nature of the smart revolution that doesn't mean we'll let a prestigious one-off pass us by. They might be more inspirational than realistic alternatives to your current property, but everyone needs to dream don't they...

Of course they do and that even includes us hardened smart-hacks, which is why we were only too happy to take a look at a domestic development that represents a considerable departure from the norm. Just how considerable should become clear when we tell you that the property in question is a water tower. Whilst you may question the merits of living in such a building, you can't argue with a specification and, thanks to a significant contribution from renowned manufacturer Linn, the home is kitted out to an incredibly high standard, with both multi-room audio and lighting in attendance. Add into the equation some unique aesthetics and tasteful interior style and you have an intriguing proposition...

Designed for life

In situations like this it's best to start at the beginning: Lymm Water Tower was purchased by former daytime TV presenter Russell Harris and his wife Jannette around six-years ago – the idea being to rescue and

renovate what was at the time a derelict building, 130-years old and grade II listed, the landmark was of special architectural and historical interest, so the aim of the redesign was to blend elements of contemporary design with the building's more traditional features. The end result is a unique family home, characterised by simple but effective detailing and a striking minimalist interior.

The project was certainly no stroll in the park, however. As with many listed buildings, complex negotiations were required before work could begin. The initial budget soon spiraled, finally peaking at over £600,000 (from an initial estimate of £75,000) and it was only under the third team of architects that the project finally got underway. The family finally moved in during the autumn of last year and, despite the struggles necessary to create their dream home, the results speak for themselves.

The nature of the building made for some interesting design decisions: changes in level helped to differentiate between the various spaces within the tower, which themselves were arranged to couple function with the changing quality of natural light throughout the course of a day. Consequently, the sun rises on the kitchen and early morning spaces, then sets on the dining and evening spaces, whilst a Summer Lounge is centrally located and faces due south. A facade created from low-energy structural glass provides all of these areas with spectacular views of the countryside.

Looking good

The tower's décor is overwhelmingly white, including all surfaces and the resin floor. Colour is injected into proceedings with the skillful use of

lighting. Indirect and carefully concealed, the latter does not intrude at all - unless the family wish it to. Exploiting the building's shape, the architects have delivered a range of interesting rooms, each tailored to perfectly suit its allotted role. Take the Winter Lounge, for example, a snug area perfect for long, cold evenings. Wide-board oak flooring with a white resin plinth, a curving cone wall and simple, low furniture all contribute to an effective and cosy environment.

The aforementioned Summer Lounge, on the other hand, employs two red sofas, which face each other across a low table, a stunning wood-burning fire and innovative lighting to great effect. The heart of the open-plan ground floor, it also provides a fine view of the garden.

The kitchen and its surrounding areas are equally impressive. A double height space with a gallery above, the kitchen features handle-less drawers, a Corian island unit and a six-metre high window of curtain wall glazing. Just adjacent to this open plan area is a hardwood-decked space with a shallow black reflection pool. Enclosed within white rendered walls and boasting bamboo and a limestone spout, the space makes a considerable aesthetic contribution to the property.

The tower's bathrooms match the appeal of the living areas. Touches such as a bath set atop oak blocks, themselves on a raised plinth of limestone, and a wall constructed entirely of frosted glass blocks help create a space that truly lives up to the building's calm modernist design ethic. The ensuite mezzanine bathroom for the master bedroom continues the good work, making use of twin basins on an Iroko table and a walk-in shower set on floors of Portland limestone and travertine mosaic. The room 'floats' above the bedroom below, the two connected by a modern oak staircase.

The bedroom too warrants a mention, with its lofty ceiling, curtain panels that surround a low bed, backlit headboard and walk-in wardrobes. And there's much more, of course, including spacious dining and study areas and a decked space set at the very top of the home, equipped with a solid teak Japanese hot-tub!

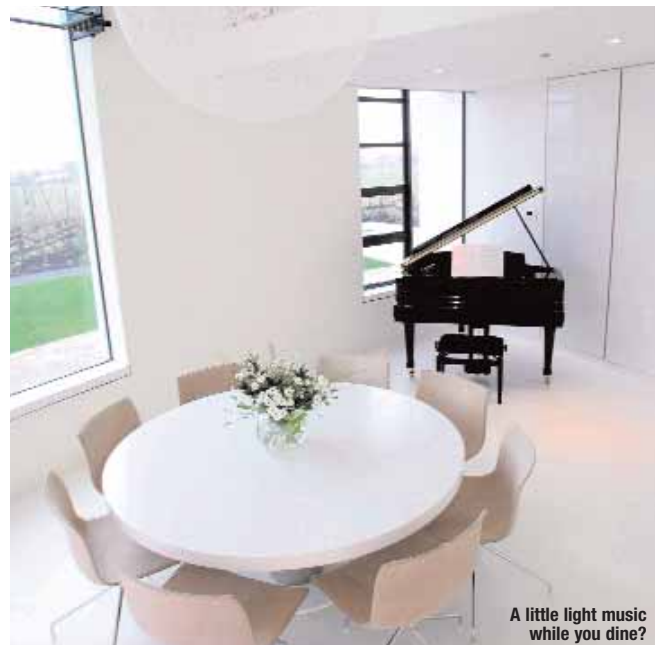
Smart sounds

But now it's time to put our technological hats on and gaze admiringly (and a little enviously) at the Lymm Tower's comprehensive multi-room audio capabilities. The Harris' clearly weren't content with great looks alone - enter Linn, a company with a product range ideal for injecting a dose of smart technology into the very highest-end homes.

To cater for the tower's expansive dimensions an eight-zone system, with one additional sub-zone, was the order of the day. Making up the main system hub is a Knekt KIVOR INDEX, providing the necessary eight outputs and music library with enough capacity to store 500-hours of the family's favourite tracks, a Knekt KIVOR LINNK (the control interface), a PEKIN tuner and the Knekt INTERSEKT R8S8 audio switching matrix. This



The minimalist splendour of the Summer Lounge



A little light music while you dine?



500-hours of audiophile music is available, courtesy of Linn



Snuggle down and relax in pure style in the Winter Lounge



high-quality set-up serves a vast array of Linn kit around the tower, ensuring audio entertainment is never far away.

Every zone, for example, has been gifted a Knekt, or BASIK 3 IR, RCU (room control unit). The programmable, menu-driven unit can be wall-mounted and provides a display, timer and the memory to provide comprehensive multi-room control.

An audio system would be nothing without its speakers and Linn have supplied a variety of their designs. The Summer Lounge, for example, employs NINKA loudspeakers, the winter lounge KATAN models, the childrens' bedroom UNIKs and the main bathroom Sweetspot loudspeakers. The office/study even benefits from an AFEKT bass reinforcement speaker. Each of these is finished in white to perfectly complement the interior.

Other Linn products include the all-in-one CLASSIK MUSIK and CLASSIK Movie Di, the latter, as its name would suggest, contributing multi-channel DVD decoding to the home's entertainment package. Completing this impressive array is a KNEKT ROOMAMP 2 and two 5125 power amplifiers – in case it isn't obvious, this is a system that would stand-up in the finest smart homes on earth.

It may have been a struggle to get off the ground and complete, but few would deny that the finished product was worth it. A work of art in its own right, the Lymm Tower has cutting edge aesthetics and technology, the two combining to great effect throughout. This is in no small part thanks to Linn's stylish high-end kit, which manages to do its job and effortlessly coordinate with the décor, wherever it might be installed. Even the most modest homes could benefit greatly from the company's wares, but when you have a property as eye-catching as this, technology of this calibre really is a must-have... ■

CONTACT

For further information contact: +44 (0)1413 077 777
www.linn.co.uk