



CASE STUDY: BESPOKE IN FLOOR TV LIFT

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Perched on the cliffs in the Big Sur region of the Central Coast of California, off the grid, down a switchback a hundred feet below the main road, sits a gorgeous octagonal house owned by a world-travelling entrepreneur. It has a 210-degree view of the Pacific ocean 300 feet below. Grab a pair of binoculars and you can spend hours taking in the sea birds, seals, dolphins and migrating whales, and on a calm day the barking songs of sea lions fill the air.

It's hard to imagine any electronics experience fitting into this environment, much less living up to it, but that's exactly the sort of experience that Jim Richards of FutureHome Systems & Design Inc. in Fresno was tasked with creating.

"There is only one room on the main floor of this spectacular home that doesn't have a direct view of the ocean," Richards says, "so there's glare control for television viewing. And so the client wanted to use this space as his primary television viewing area. It's on the inland side of the house, but it's also the entryway—two stories, big and open, with this living space right as you

enter. So the client didn't want someone to open the door and have a television right in front of them when they came into the house. We had to conceal it, but there was no place to do so in the wall, because it's a stone wall in an octagonal house. And the ceilings are too high to drop a TV from above. The only place was to go down."

Richards knew that if he wanted to bring up a television up from the floor, he would need the assistance of Future Automation's Ollie French, who worked with Richards, the interior designer, and general contractor to custom craft a solution.

The biggest challenges? On the one hand, digging downward meant jack-hammering through solid granite. There's also the matter of the floors in the room, which are gorgeous stone and whose aesthetic couldn't be disturbed in the slightest by the lift mechanism.



"They were very particular from an interior design perspective about the floor looking as it should," French says. "But as you can see from the way the panel slides back, you would never know there's a seam there. By doing the sort of jagged edge with the seam, it matches with the rest of the flooring. So there's no way you would ever know a television is under there. You can also walk over that section, as well. It's a structural piece. And whatever that stone material is, it weighs a

hell of a lot. It's one of those things where, from an interior perspective, they weren't willing to make compromises to the quality of materials they were using, just to fit in the technology. So we very much had to meet their criteria with regard to weight and everything else.

The lift in question is Future Automation's PLF In Floor TV Lift, which had to be modified a good bit to suit the needs of the client.

"One of the biggest challenges on all of this just came down to the pipe that holds the television. They gave us a finish that was what they wanted—a kind of rubbed, distressed bronze to match the up-lights in the room—and we then took pieces of metal and finished them in three different swatches for them to choose from. They were really specific on what they wanted, and bear in mind that they're in Fresno and we're in the UK, so it was a bit of back and forth."

It wasn't just the TV that was hidden, though. The room also houses a JBL Synthesis sound system that operates in stereo driving a pair of custom Sonus Faber speaker—the only visible technology in the room when the TV is down—but transforms into a surround sound system when the TV is up. Serving as center speaker is a custom Leon Speakers sound bar mounted to the TV itself. "A project like this doesn't just happen by bopping down to your local Best Buy and speaking to the Geek Squad," French says. "You have to have the right people involved. You have to have the right home tech specialist. You have to have the right contractor. The difference when using the right professionals is just phenomenal, and those professionals really have to think outside the box to accomplish a project of this magnitude. You can't just say to the client, 'Aw, no, we can't do that.' Of course we can do it. If they've got the budget and the time and the desire, we can create whatever they want. We're only limited by our imagination and their budget."