

Technology designer Greta Colgan (left) can integrate every system and device in your home in a network controlled from one discreet panel—or cell phone.



## Control Freaks

Whether you're a techie or not, you'll want to meet the woman who is changing the way people run their homes.

BY SCOTT PRUDEN

**I**n a rehabbed single-family house in Wilmington, the technology we only dreamed of as kids is being realized.

The new future, on display inside Beyond the Studs, is a home automation system so discreet, it's almost invisible, a system that uses off-the-shelf technology and intuitive, Web-based design to let anyone who can use a computer or high-end mobile phone become a true master of his domain.

From a single monitor or remote control such as a laptop computer, a homeowner can adjust a whole-house audio and video system, heating and air conditioning, security cameras and biometric fingerprint scanners, lighting—even individual electrical outlets.

That means you can spy on the babysitter and her boyfriend while you're at the gala, crank the heat when your return flight lands, or start that casserole in the microwave before you leave the office.

Gone are the racks of black-faced components with digital displays and bouncing equalizer bars. Hardware that was once exposed is carefully hidden in dedicated spaces that are easily accessed,

but removed from view. Remote controls are reduced from dozens to a single master.

"That's a big thing that I pride myself on. I can do this in historic homes, I have done this sort of work in historic buildings, so I can make it as evident or not evident as anybody wants," says owner and head engineer Greta Colgan. "I build in this stuff in ways that you don't even have to know it's there."

Colgan taps a touch screen in the living room. Within seconds, a video begins to play on a flat-screen TV above a custom fireplace, audio starts to hum from surround-sound speakers overhead, the lights dim, and a dormant Zen table fountain bubbles to life. A few taps later, the lights have changed again, the video has dimmed and music, stored on an iPod in the rear entry, fills the house.

Yet each room still maintains its own lighting and audio control, as well as the ability to choose audio and video from dedicated servers and household computers. That means Dad can listen to the Eagles in the den while Chip is jamming The Killers in his room.