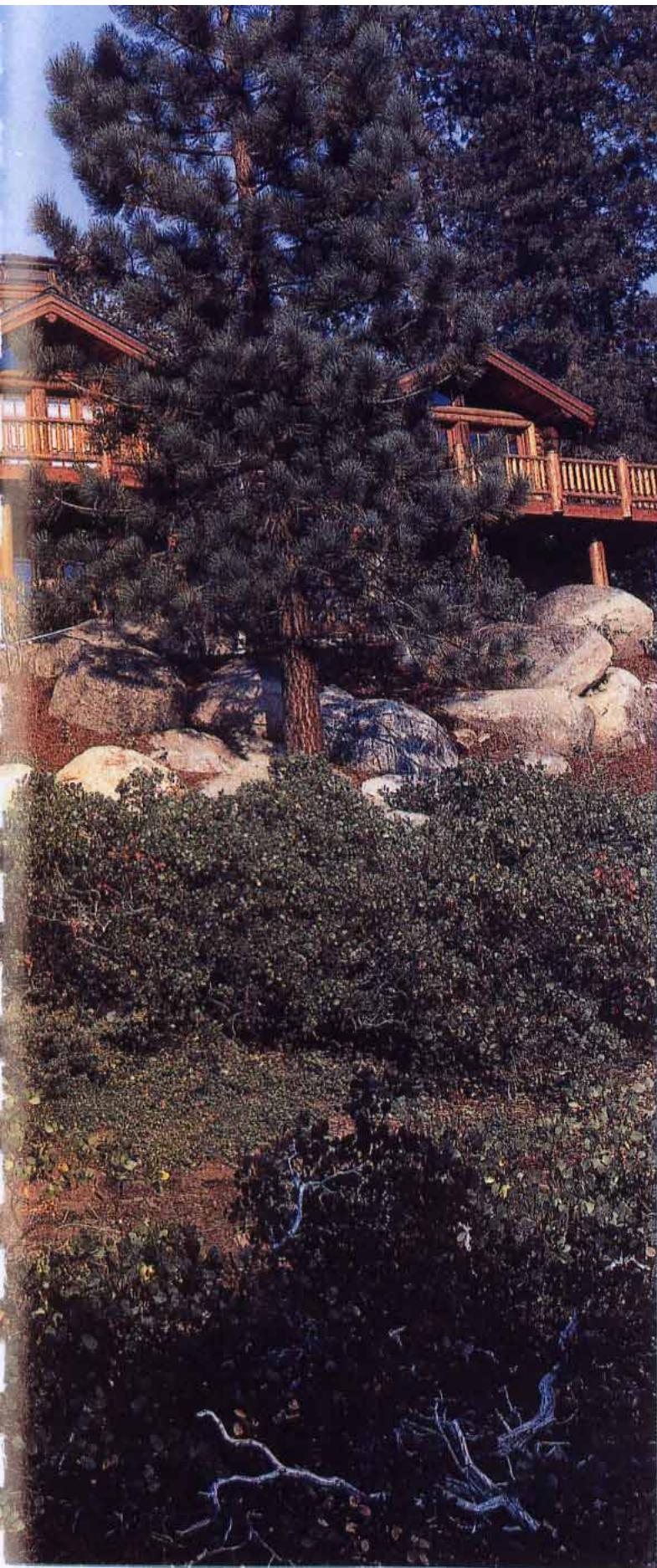


# Mountain Majesty

A log cabin in Incline Village redefines what we think of America's most fabled structure.

by Tank Menzies



The log cabin is deeply rooted in American culture. The simple, humble dwelling has always been associated with frontier life—defined by simplicity, hard work, and hardship. The log cabin has not only come to symbolize those humble virtues, but a sense of American pragmatism forged in the character of great men such as Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, who are among the many former American presidents who proudly claim to have been born and raised within log walls.

When I heard that *Home Theater Interiors* would be reviewing a log cabin located in Incline Village, Nevada—that just happens to have a dedicated home theater installation—I immediately had the ludicrous thought of a lumberjack sitting in front of a B&W television after a hard day of chopping firewood. You know, I have never written about a home theater I didn't like—but in this case, I thought our excellent editorial team was suddenly slipping.

Then I saw the pictures. It was a log cabin, but there wasn't anything meager or primitive about it. This was the Kennedy version of a log cabin.

This log cabin is the converse of what most people conceive of such an abode being like, but the fact of the matter is that this cabin is constructed just like its traditional predecessors. Keep in mind that this isn't just a fake log facade nailed to a brick-and-mortar home. The homebuilder, Alan Richards of Richards Built Homes located right in Incline Village, and architect Sherry Guzzi constructed the home using a refined log carpentry technique of chinking shaped



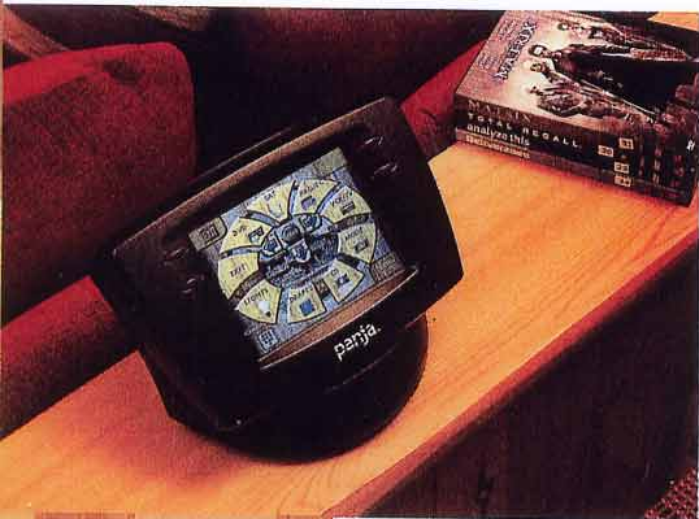


**The wholehouse automation system, controlled via PC with Internet access, can send music to the living room and open the front gate.**



logs and using special dovetail notches—the same techniques that German-speaking colonists in Pennsylvania used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In total, it took three meticulous years to complete the home, including innumerable hours of hand labor. In this sense, the home is a traditional American log cabin.

While this home's vintage construction is part of its inherent charm, it also caused a world of technical and design problems. The homeowner wanted a high-tech house with top-notch gear but also wanted to preserve the rustic charisma that Richards and Guzzi constructed. So, all of the audio/video components in the home theater—as well as the control panels and equipment associated with the integrated wholehouse system—would need to be carefully concealed. Nancy Jones of JLD Lighting Design originally brought in Don Calley, owner of Image, Sound & Control, to assist with the lighting installation. The homeowner then hired Calley to handle the home's A/V integration.



An acoustically transparent wall hides three B&W speakers and a Velodyne subwoofer. The Runco DLP projector drops from the ceiling and stays out of sight when it's not in use.



## EQUIPMENT LIST

- Runco Reflection VX-1c DLP projector
- Stewart SND110 54- by 96-inch filmscreen
- Chief SL-100 projector lift
- Krell Home Theater Standard surround processor
- Krell KAV-250 three-channel power amplifier
- Rotel RMB-1075 five-channel power amplifier
- Integra DPT-1 33-disc DVD changer
- RCA DTC-100 HDTV/DSS satellite receiver
- Panasonic PVV54820 S-VHS VCR
- B&W Nautilus 802 loudspeakers
- B&W Nautilus HTM1 center-channel speaker
- B&W Signature 7 surround speakers
- Velodyne HGS-18 subwoofer
- Cinepro Power Pro 30 balanced AC power supply
- Tributaries interconnects
- AMX VPT-CP wireless color touchpanel
- AMX VPA-DS touchpanel docking station
- AMX AXR-RF touchpanel RF receiver
- AMX PCS2 power controller
- AMX VSS2 video sensor

The first problem Calley encountered was the log cabin's wiring. Normally, an installer either wires a house as it's being constructed or knocks holes in the drywall and strings wire through. Nice and simple. But with a log structure, a space needs to be carved out for every piece of equipment, and wire needs to run horizontally through the grooves and slats of individual logs to each carved section. To accomplish this task, the installer drills hundreds of horizontal holes through individual logs, making for a painstaking logistical nightmare.

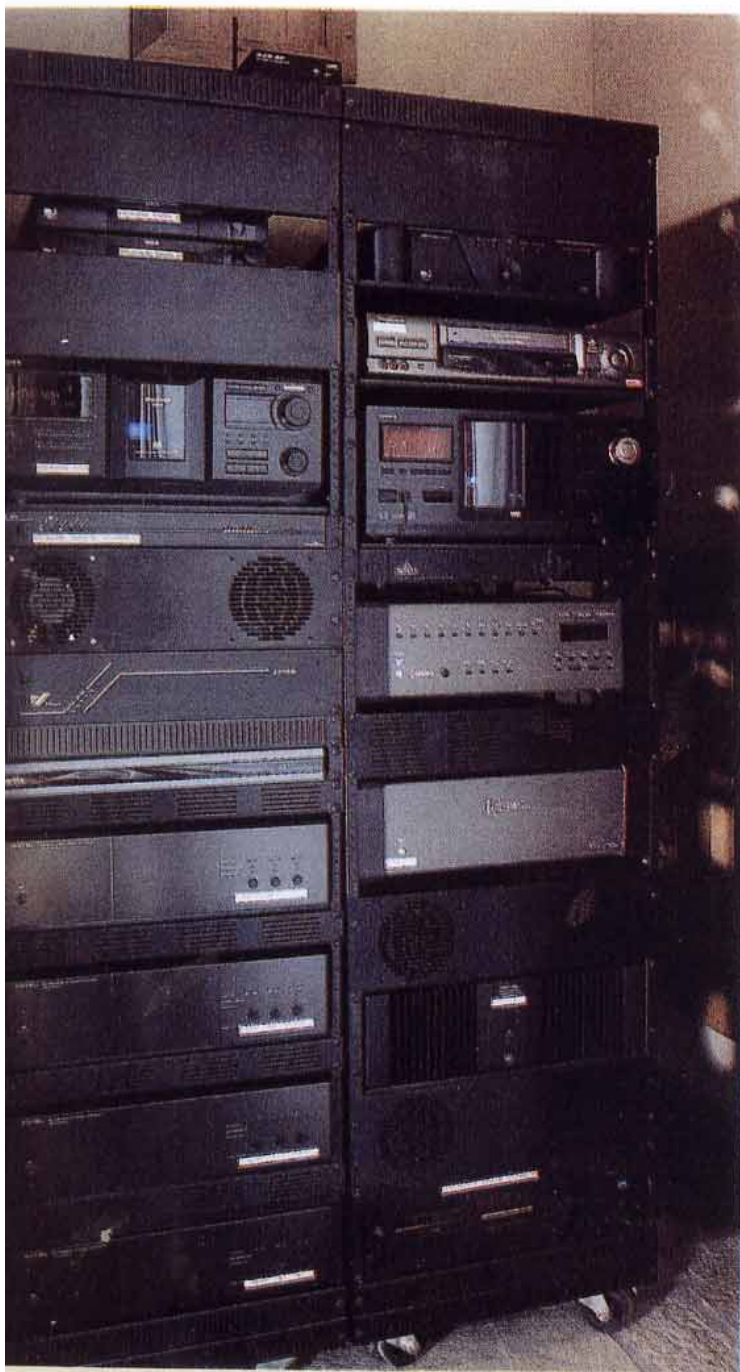
Additionally, since this home was tucked up in the reaches of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, it was prone to frequent power fluctuations that make any audio/video experience inconsistent at best. It's one thing to deal with this occasional annoyance if you're just trying to fry up some trout in your little cabin, and quite another if you're trying to enjoy *Vertical Limit* from your Runco projector. So to avoid power fluctuations, Calley installed a hefty power generator to keep a consistent flow of electricity through the home.

With the power and wiring covered, Calley and his team turned to installing the home theater itself. As the house was being designed, Guzzi and interior designer Jan Gardner of Carmel, California, isolated a large space in the home's lower level, directly under the master bedroom. They initially envisioned this space as a multipurpose room that would contain a big-screen television built into custom cabinetry—which would run across the front wall of the room—and a projection screen to facilitate a higher-end movie-watching experience.

When Calley came in, he consulted with the homeowner regarding the space. The more they talked, the more Calley realized that the homeowner really wanted a more bona fide theatrical experience. So, the multipurpose-room idea quickly morphed into a dedicated home theater.

Calley and his team needed no coaxing to begin installing the home theater and quickly developed a plan to create a true theatrical experience. They installed an acoustically transparent wall (replacing the custom cabinetry) that housed two B&W Nautilus 802 loudspeakers, a B&W HTM1 center-channel speaker, and a Velodyne HGS 18-inch subwoofer. To maximize the sound system's performance and to proactively solve any potential acoustic and sound-transfer problems that could result from the log structure, Calley installed both an Owens Corning acoustic room system and an Acoustic Sciences Corporation noise-control system within the log walls and the ceiling. The result is a higher-caliber sound experience than what could have been achieved in a multipurpose room.

In addition to superior sound elements, Calley worked to provide the best possible picture quality. He explained to the homeowner that because of the limited space between the ceiling and the floor above (known as the throw distance), and the fact that the client wanted the projector to a lift into the ceiling, the projector size was crucial. Calley chose the Runco VX-1c projector for its low profile and high picture quality. Additionally,



## ABOUT THE INSTALLER

In 1981, owner Don Calley formed Don Calley Services, based in Reno, to serve Nevada homeowners with low-voltage needs. To better communicate the services the company provides, Calley changed the name to Image, Sound & Control (IMSOCO).

Although the majority of Image, Sound & Control's clients have been the owners of upscale residences throughout North America, the company's list of projects includes a few large commercial and industrial sites. Don Calley has served as the contractor for numerous nonresidential projects in the Nevada area, including the Las Vegas Airport tower, as well as Caesar's Palace, Imperial Palace, the Las Vegas Hilton, Circus Circus, Aladdin, and other hotels.

One of Image, Sound & Control's proudest accomplishments is their in-house development of specialized control systems. On-staff programmers write customized software programs for their clients, which allows for quick service and upgrades.

hand-carved split logs were installed to cover the two Solar Shading systems installed to block out light from the windows in the rear of the theater.

The theater is also completely automated via an AMX NetLinx system—which, for example, through a simple touch of the theater remote, will trigger the Runco projector to slowly lower from the ceiling, open the curtains, dim the Lutron lighting system, close the blackout shades, turn on the Krell surround processor, and activate the proper input for the selected source component.

The automation isn't relegated only to the home theater—it extends to the Internet as well. The entire house is integrated through the NetLinx system. The homeowner has wholehouse control of every audio/video component, and can also manipulate the local systems—like the entrance gate, landscape lighting, and the multiple waterfalls—from any location in the home. Because the NetLinx system has a Web-based interface that allows control from the most remote locations, the homeowner can have power over the system while away by simply logging on to a computer. Although some people may consider this functionality impractical, when you consider the possibility of having to drive 300-plus miles simply to open the front gate for, let's say, a local repairman, it is invaluable.

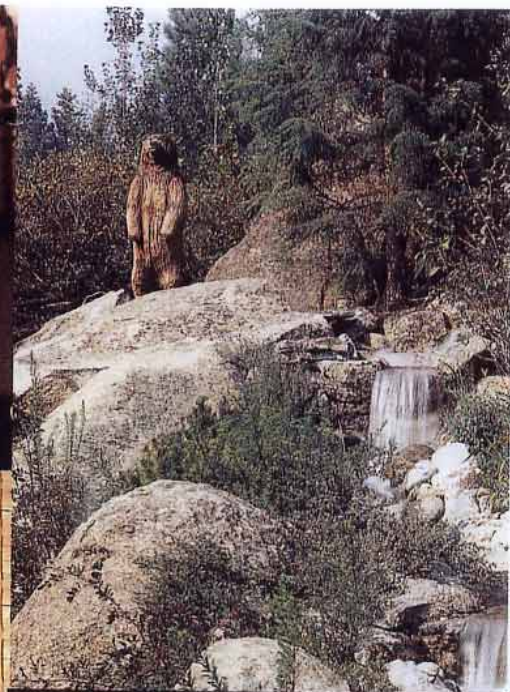
This log cabin's most distinguishing characteristic may well be the way the home's function does not necessarily follow its form. Despite the fact that the cabin is built in a customary manner, it was never meant to be a place for roughing it. Just as Image, Sound & Control balanced the cabin's integrity with its contemporary theater system, good interior design would be essential to maintain that balance of the old and the new.

The homeowners had worked with interior designer Jan Gardner before and called her back a few years later to tackle the log cabin's interior design. Gardner, who has always shunned the trends that may eventually date her peers, favors classic styles. Gardner does most of her buying for her projects in San Francisco, although she occasionally ventures to Los Angeles, the East Coast, and Europe. Regardless of where she buys, she always looks for premium fabrics, elegant and well-constructed furniture, and distinctive accessories—all part of a method of operation she learned when she designed for the prestigious Lodge at Pebble Beach, where she also learned to mingle traditional and contemporary styles.

Those skills fit this project well. From the start, Gardner tried to achieve a rustic feel, without being Southwestern or too American Indian. So throughout the house, she used a more subtle yet distinct combination of ethnic fabrics and materials, such as rugs from Armenia and Turkey, imported bronze and iron fixtures, stone floors, and a slate roof. In all six of the bedrooms, custom woven-wool braided carpet covers every wall. The result is a timeless, elegant, and pastoral look and feel that is consistent with what one might expect to find in a properly evolved log cabin.



Hand-carved split logs hide the two Solar Shading drape systems, which block light from the windows in the rear of the theater.



## CONTACT

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The outdoor waterfalls (above) can be controlled by the NetLinx system. Any of the home's multiple video sources can feed the plasma monitor in the billiards room (left).

When it came to the home theater, the team decided upon a more time-honored approach reminiscent of a real movie house. Cozy red chenille sofas outfit the theater, adorned with bright striped chenille throw pillows that are perfect for sprawling out with the latest DVD. The festive theatrical color scheme is also conveyed in the plaid carpet, as well as the red curtains embroidered with gold stars that hide the Stewart Filmscreen when it's not in use. Even the acoustic cloth that covers the walls, the incense cedar, and the lodge pole beam recall the glamour of the 1920s New York cinema scene.

The theater has a popcorn machine, as well as a splendid selection of vintage posters found during a trip to New York City — such as Cecil B. DeMille's *King of Kings*, Gene Kelly and Judy Garland's *Summer Stock*, and Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey*

*Wales*. The door that leads into the theater is painted to resemble a box office with a ticket seller inside, and the adjoining powder room has a sink with hand-painted gold stars on its rim set in an antique pine dresser. There, a massive poster of the movie classic *The Secret Garden* is hung.

By taking the traditional log-cabin theme and turning it on its head, the team that brought us this home may be very close to redefining how America looks at these dwellings. Log cabins need no longer symbolize insufficient and inadequate living but can represent a new level of comfort and elegance. From its full-fledged dedicated home theater and wholehouse automation system to its sophisticated interior design, this particular log cabin has Lincoln spinning in his grave. ■