





Winners of the 2015 CES Mark of Excellence Award for Integrator of the Year and Home Theatre/Media Room Project of the Year for the Hoffman Theatre Project, Encore Custom Audio Video turns your home into a technological haven and makes your audio visual dreams a reality.



The Future of Home Entertainment

15 years ago, Ian Williams was working as a heating and cooling technician. Today, he's the president of Encore Custom Audio/Video in Sterling, Virginia. What seems like an unusual career path was really just about finding something he was passionate about.

"I started out not knowing anything," Williams said. "I woke up one day and decided I'm going to do something with my life that

I really enjoy doing – which is anything related to audio/video, music and movies, and I thought what's better than getting into an industry which allows you to do that."

"So I opened up the Yellow Pages, searched through Northern Virginia, called a bunch of companies and got a job working as an intern making a very low amount of money and then just kept my eyes wide open and



learned as much as I could,” he added.

Gaining commercial experience in places like the Pentagon and their master military command center, Williams began to chart his plan of action in the home automation industry. Through networking and forging relationships with everyone from builders to past clients and people in the business, Encore Custom Audio Video was born in December 2007.

DESIGN + ENGINEERING

Not your typical A/V company, Encore takes the customer experience very seriously. Williams describes focusing heavily on de-

sign and engineering when developing their brand new 4,500 square-foot facility that opened in December 2014, as being very “homey”.

“This is not a retail shop,” he said. “You go into places and you might see a bunch of speakers on display or little listening rooms you can go in or a demo room with TVs and speakers – that’s not what this place is.”


“We’re very heavy on design & engineering. We have a dedicated space for designing theatre rooms – we have an architectural table and we have over 200 samples of wood, granite, carpet, tile, fabric so we can sit down



with interior designers, clients, builders, architects and we can sit here and pick out products and put together a whole project.”

A seamless, flowing layout that serves the need of the client and the internal team – from the warehouse and engineering department – to the staging and employee offices, Encore’s personal commitment to service and attention to detail sets them apart from other firms.

“We do all of our own carpentry; we have a full-time, 25-year + vet carpenter on staff and tradesmen that allow us to do everything in house,” Williams said. “All the work that you



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see – the trim, the moldings, the build outs – we do in house. We design it, we engineer it, we build it and we install the electronics as well. I have guys dedicated to do certain aspects of each project.”

INTEGRATORS AND INFLUENCERS

At just five employees, Encore’s corporate structure solidifies their philosophy and commitment towards custom craftsmanship. It allows Williams to get involved in the process as well, who takes care of everything in the back-end, creating an intimate relationship across the entire process – from discovery to implementation and support.

“We go to these trade shows and people ask us how many employees we have, thinking it’s a 20-30 man operation, but that’s not the case,” Williams said. “If we continue to grow that’s great, but as it stands right now, we can really dial in when it comes to quality control and service to our clients.”

Part of providing clients with a great experience boils down to educating them. Knowing your audience means knowing what works and what suits them best. As winners of the 2015 CEA Mark of Excellence Award for Integrator of the Year and Best Home Theater, understanding the challenges and changes to adopting technology is all about making things more accessible.



“Most people are actually scared of technology,” Williams said. “The dot-com generation feels more comfortable with it. My generation, we didn’t grow up with cell phones. Our clientele in terms of technology – the 30s and 40s seem to be very comfortable with it. The older demographic – 50s and 60s, tend to be a little scared of it.”

“As an integrated design firm our whole objective is we’re here to make your life easier, not harder,” Williams continued. “My motto is: someone should be able to pick up an iPad or go to a touch screen or any control user interface and whether you’re eight years or 80 years old, you should be able to use it with no instruction whatsoever. If we can ac-

complish that, then I’ve done my job.”

SLEEK AND SIMPLE

For Williams, it’s not just enough to make something work. An advocate for the uncomplicated, it’s about embracing the beauty, simplicity and innovation of seeing the technology come to life and banishing the preconceived notions of his clients.

“Guys like myself, or integration firms across the country, tend to make these things way more difficult than they have to be,” Williams explained. “We’re techie guys. We like hardware and we like boxes and we like all these techno gadgets. The average consumer doesn’t give a damn. “They just want the sys-







tem to be simple and to work.”

“It doesn’t really matter about the black boxes and the hardware in the background that it takes to make that magic happen,” Williams continued. “Even if you’re older, if it’s really simple to use and it works, then they see that technology isn’t scary anymore.”

On the outside, the rapid evolution of technology can pose a daunting task for a company like Encore who rely on it to offer quality service to their affluent clientele. Playing the role of integrator, Williams focuses on small, niche partnerships. A selective process, built on trust.

“We’re not one of these firms that offer six different speaker lines, four different TV lines, six different receiver lines,” Williams said. “I’m very picky about our vendors and the products we use. Picking these vendors comes down to two things: customer service and reliability. Product has to be reliable, first and foremost. The second portion is that if we do have issues out in the field, can I call these companies and have someone physically pick up the phone to get the issue fixed and help the client out.”

GREEN GADGETS

A growing concern for many, energy management is becoming the next big thing in



the technology and home automation landscape. Relatively new in residential markets, Encore realized the growth in environmentally conscious initiatives and, using its already tried and tested platform worked alongside Crestron Electronics to bring it to the forefront.

“What they’ve been able to do internally with their business and providing products to guys like myself, we can now turn around and offer that to the client,” Williams said. “With any new technology, it has to be proven, it has to be able to work and it has to be reliable.”

Still at its novelty stage to many clients who don’t see the value in managing their energy consumption, executing the ideas and implementing them into projects means convincing people to think long-term, not short-term.

“We can gauge any sort of energy through the course of a day, a week, a month, a year,” Williams said. “So the client can see anything that’s connected to the energy management system in terms of how much power they’ve used, lighting control and how much energy they’re actually physically saving, it’s pretty incredible.”

“It’s fairly new, but I think it’s really going to start catching on here in the next five years,” he continued. “It’s easier to install and the price of monitoring the system is becoming cheaper and cheaper and the prices will continue to drop.”

THE FUTURE

Having already found success in their local area, the next step for the Sterling, VA-based firm is to expand to other areas across the United States and other metropolitan areas. Looking at the bigger picture, from Charlotte to Atlanta and North Carolina, Williams is targeting specific clients with a penchant for

doing what Encore Custom A/V does best.

“I’m looking for the client in targeted markets who’s building a custom home and wants to build a quarter-million dollar theatre room or have a large scale automation system, but there’s no one locally that has the resources or staff to successfully facilitate the entire project,” Williams said.

Expanding horizons and taking risks is nothing new for Williams and his team. Moving forward, Encore aims to forever change how we experience home entertainment and how far technology can take us.



