

Broadband Sounds

How home networks can make beautiful music.

With the proper in-home network, downloaded music can be enjoyed in any room of the house.



Most people order broadband Internet access for the benefit of always-on, high-speed electronic mail. But that same broadband pipe is capable of streaming songs to your PC from thousands of top-name artists. And recent trends indicate that an insatiable demand for whole-house audio distribution is just around the corner.

Add it all up, and you get the next killer application for home broadband networks.

With the proper in-home network setup, streamed (or downloaded) music can be enjoyed in any room of the house. So how can you turn your home into an audio entertainment Mecca?

Digital Stereo Setup

For starters, you'll need a broadband Internet connection and a computer running Microsoft XP or the new XP Media Center Edition. (See May's review of the HP Media Center on page 42.) You'll also need a whole-house multisource/multizone distribution system such as those available from Russound, Xantech, Niles, M&S, Sonance, Audio Design Associates, and more. And last but not least, you'll need a wired or wireless network-connected digital audio receiver such as the Turtle Beach AudioTron, the Sony RoomLink or the HP

Digital Media Receiver 5000.

The broadband Internet connection can be hooked up to your computer via a router and a switch. (For more details on router and switch products, see the Net Insider column in the March issue.) This computer can serve as the primary device for ripping and storing your entire CD collection. Using Windows Media Player, a software utility that ships with Microsoft XP, you can record each of your



Motorola's simplefi is a digital audio receiver that connects wirelessly to your PC.

music CDs to the computer's hard drive. These songs become the audio content that the digital audio receiver discovers on your home network.

Let the Music Play

The digital audio receiver sends these songs to the whole-house audio system, so you can enjoy the music on your computer's hard drive in any room of the house that has been wired and equipped with the appro-





Satellite Radio. The station selection on the new XM PCR radios can even be controlled from your computer.

Light Up Your Life

Once you've experienced the pleasure of "always-on, instant-on/off" audio entertainment in any room, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. Just as the 1930s saw the introduction of electricity into the home to light up each room, the

digital decade of the 2000s will mark the beginning of the use of a broadband Internet connection to deliver audio entertainment throughout the home. **EH**

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appropriate speakers. For example, if your master bedroom has in-wall speakers and a wall-mounted keypad such as is usually packaged with the audio distribution system, you could use that keypad to control the volume of the music stored on your office computer. An additional feature of many of these keypads is that you can select among different audio sources for any given room or zone (a zone can be made up of several rooms).

Additional audio sources for each room could include online music services. You may already own an extensive music collection but don't have all the albums you'd like to hear. Services like www.listen.com and www.musicmatch.com have subscription plans (up to \$10 per month) that let you stream popular and current artists. With Listen.com, you can even record many of these songs for a slight additional fee or create your own radio stations playing music from your favorite artists.

If you stream this broadband content to a computer located near the whole-house audio distribution system, you can connect the computer's sound output card to one of the inputs of the whole-house audio distribution system. Now you can enjoy live streamed music in each room simply by toggling the room's keypad source select button to the streamed audio source.

Other sources you could add to the whole-house audio system might include a CD player, an AM/FM tuner, or a satellite-based music receiver like those from XM