

# ROAM WHERE YOU WANT TO

*Niles' IntelliControl ICS multiroom audio system lets you choose your iPod tunes, satellite radio station, and other programming from any room.*

It's incredible to think that only a few years ago, we had no idea what music we were playing. When we hit the track skip or disc change buttons on our CD changers, we didn't know what was coming up—unless our memory was really good. Digital technology changed all that, though. Suddenly, we're scrolling through the menus on our iPods to select our favorite music. Or glancing at a display to see what tune is playing on Sirius satellite radio's Underground Garage channel.

Those who own multiroom audio systems don't have it as easy. Sure, they can connect music servers, iPods, and satellite radio tuners to their systems. But unless they invest in an extremely costly, complex Crestron or AMX touchscreen remote control system, they probably have to turn on the TV to see what's playing. Fine for the living room, but who wants to put a TV on the back porch of their country home just so they can pick out their favorite Chingy tunes?

Not me. I'd prefer just to get Niles' new IntelliControl ICS system. The ICS is among the first in a new crop of multiroom systems that displays metadata—information about a tune that is stored in a digital music file itself or in a separate database—on keypads and remotes.

The slim ICS iRemote includes a backlit LCD display that lets me pick tunes off my iPod and browse the offerings on XM and Sirius satellite radio. I can see exactly what's playing—and if I don't like it, I can easily find something else to listen to. And I don't need to

get up from my chair to do any of this. A round base communicates with the remote wirelessly through the ZigBee standard, and charges the remote's battery.

Niles also offers in-wall control options. There's the Contact in-wall color touchscreen; the Display, an in-wall keypad whose button layout and LCD screen are nearly identical to those found on the iRemote; and the Single, a tiny, single-gang keypad that doesn't have a display but does let you select a source and control volume.

The iRemote, the Display, and the Single each host a group of eight buttons that can give you instant access to your entertainment options. Niles includes hundreds of preprinted labels for these buttons. You might have your installer set up a Jazz button that provides instant access to Real Jazz, XM's traditional jazz channel. Or you might prefer to have the Jazz button start playing all the Miles Davis tunes stored on your iPod. About the only thing it can't do is call up Wynton Marsalis and arrange a performance at your home. The Contact touchscreen can provide the same functionality through its Favorites menu, although it's not as intuitive or inviting as the hard buttons on the other interfaces.

It's a pity that most ICS owners will never notice the GXR2, which is the "brain box" of the system. The GXR2 is the first modular multiroom controller I have seen. Like a desktop computer, it has slots that let you add functions as you desire.

**BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH**

*The Contact (previous spread), the Display (below right), and the iRemote (previous spread and right) all include displays that let you browse iPod tunes or radio stations, and see what's playing.*



The six slots accommodate up to six modules: your choice of iPod, XM, Sirius, AM/FM, AM/FM/HD, and Audio. The iPod interface has a cable that communicates with and charges your iPod. You can add a Niles SmartDock so your iPod is not flopping around in your equipment rack, or an extender kit that lets your iPod talk to the GXR2 from any room in your home. The GXR2 can accommodate several iPods at once if you add more iPod interface cards. The Audio card provides an analog stereo audio input for use with audio sources such as CD players and comput-

*The back panel of the GXR2 (below) reveals six slots on the right half that accommodate source modules. Left to right, the modules in this sample include audio, two AM/FM modules, a Sirius module, and an XM module.*

ers; an infrared output jack on the card lets you control the "legacy" audio device through the various ICS remotes, keypads, and touchscreens. You can add as many Audio cards as you need, too.

The GXR2 gives you 12 amp channels at 55 watts

per channel, and it connects to as many as 12 remotes, touchscreens, and keypads. So you can do stereo sound in six rooms, and one or two controllers per room. Plus, there's an expansion jack that lets you add another GXR2 for more audio sources and more rooms. What's lacking? Video distribution and home automation functions, and the Contact's screens can't be customized as some touchscreens can.

I suppose citing the specs and functions is necessary with any multiroom audio system, but what's more

important is what it's like to use the system. And the ICS is immensely pleasurable to use. It gives you all of today's best audio entertainment options in the palm of your hand, and like the iPod, makes them simple enough for anyone to access. Truly a multiroom audio system for the 21st century. [HE](#)



## DESCRIPTION

Modular multiroom audio electronics system, provides stereo audio for up to six rooms, interfaces with additional units to serve more rooms. XM, Sirius, AM/FM, iPod, and audio device modules available. Controlled through remote, in-wall touchscreen, and/or two in-wall keypad models

## POWER OUTPUT

12 channels, 55 watts per channel

## CONNECTIONS

**GXR2:** six four-conductor block connectors for stereo speaker output, six stereo analog audio outputs, six 3.5mm jacks for 12-volt trigger output, 12 RJ-45 connectors for control input, RJ-45 connector for expansion/programming, RCA input for paging module, 3.5mm jacks for page trigger in, global IR out, global 12-volt output, HT IR input, and HT sync input, six expansion slots

**XM/Sirius modules:** satellite antenna input, stereo analog audio output

**AM/FM module:** F-connector for FM antenna, spring clips for AM antenna, stereo analog audio output

**iPod module:** multipin connector for iPod cable, composite video output, stereo analog audio output

**Audio device module:** stereo analog audio input and output, composite video sync input, 3.5mm jacks for sync input, IR input, and IR output

## DIMENSIONS

**GXR2:** 5.75 x 17.38 x 18 inches (hwd)

**iRemote:** 9 x 2.5 x 1.25 inches (hwd)

**Remote base:** 1.56 x 5.38 inches (hd)

**Contact:** 5.07 x 5.75 x 2.5 inches (hwd)

**Display:** 5.07 x 5.75 x 2.5 inches (hwd)

**Single:** 4 x 1.75 x 1.63 inches (hwd)

## PRICE/CONTACT

**PRICE:** GXR2 \$2,799, iRemote \$799, Contact \$749, Display \$399, Single \$199, IM-iPod \$199, IM-Audio \$169, TM-Sirius \$599, TM-XM \$499, IM-Net \$249, TM-AM/FM \$249, TM-HD/R \$399

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