

Review

Hands On: NuVo Renovia Powerline Multiroom Audio System Easy audio networking with unlimited listening choices



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January 20, 2011 | by [Arlen Schweiger](#)

The NuVo Technologies Renovia is a retrofit-friendly multiroom audio system that sends music signals digitally through your home's electrical lines. That means there's less hole cutting and wire pulling than some systems. Renovia is compatible with multiple sources, including your own stored digital music, so the combination of easy installation and vast amounts of music makes for an appealing offer. So when they offered to let me try it out, I couldn't refuse.

I was drawn to prospect of tapping into my 15,00-plus stored tunes and countless cloud-based songs in multiple rooms. But the thought of having custom electronics pros deal with my quirky 1950s ranch house made me skeptical. NuVo says that with its retrofit-friendly Renovia, "even the most complex installations are clean, quick and easy."

Thanks to dead outlets, a combination of plaster and drywall, unusually shallow stud bays and messy blow-in attic insulation, my home didn't make things clean or easy for senior programmer Rob Frost and lead installer Brad Coutu of New England-based Russ Towers Media Solutions.

Owner Russ Towers designed a four-zone setup to put the system's main output components- loudspeaker, OLED touch pad and zone amplifier- in the master bedroom, my daughter's room, family room and kitchen.

[\(Click here to view photos of the installation.\)](#)

He suggested single-point stereo in-wall speakers and standard touchpads in every space except the family room, where he envisioned dual in-ceiling speakers and the full-color master OLED controller.

Rob and Brad arrived at 8:30 am. to begin work, and it soon became apparent that the flexibility of both the Renovia system and the pros were a major plus. The first business with this power-line-based system is testing the outlets the amplifiers will plug into, as a key in its retro-friendliness is the use of a home's existing wires.

Like Wi-Fi, the "signal strength" of your power can diminish the farther you get from the main circuit breaker, which is the ideal placement for Renovia's two head-end components, the hub and Music Port Server. I had a free dual outlet by the breaker in which to power those units, and Rob set up an iPod dock there, too.

Signal strength was 94 percent in the child's bedroom, for example, and 100 percent in the dining room, which sits above the breaker. (Brad suggested moving the kitchen zone into the adjacent dining room to stay away from the furnace room below.) In the master bedroom, though, one outlet was dead, and the next, despite powering a clock and lamp, would not give a readout. The installers hit that curveball by relocating the zone amplifier (the amp uses cat 5 wiring to connect to the touch pad, which links to speakers via speaker wire) to a strong outlet and routing Cat 5 through the basement to the entry wall. One problem discovered after cutting into the wall: it was 3.5 inches deep, while the NuVo speaker was about 3.75 inches. Rob chiseled drywall to create a snug fit, but we decided to turn the in-walls into in-ceilings for the dining room and the child's bedroom. It meant more time wiring in the attic.

When the install was complete we listened to my docked iPod while Rob walked through highlights, such as keeping a host controller "locked" so guests can't change tunes, using a PARTY mode to turn everything on, creating presets and playlists for family members, switching sources among rooms, calibrating speakers, and engaging the sleep timer.

Because the OLED touchpad mimic the iPod menu, I plan to create and use playlists more-like one for children's music and one for my wife's exercise tunes, as she'll no longer need to wear earbuds while working out in the bedroom. The Music Port, meanwhile, serves up "the sizzle," as Russ enthuses with web-based streaming of Pandora, Radio Time and Sirius XM along with built-in 320 gigabytes of storage. The only hard part is deciding when to turn the system off.



Installation, including labor: roughly \$10,000
System design and installation: Russ Towers
Media Solutions, Bedford, NH, 603-488-1425

Specs

Powerline-based HomePlug 1.0 system
Distributes six sources, up to eight zones
Can include: Renovia System Hub, Music Port Server, Freestanding Zone Amplifiers, OLED Touchpad, iPod Docking Port
Class D digital Amplifier
AM/FM, Sirius XM tuners, home networked media, Pandora, RadioTime, iPod dock, Music Port
Four touchpad faceplates available
www.nuvotechnologies.com

Pros

Low-profile freestanding zone amplifiers
Limitless music choices
Full-color OLED touchpad
Great for retrofit installations

Cons

Place to hide the amplifier.
Navigation of iPod menu on touchpad can be cumbersome.
Powerline strength in larger homes may vary.



[Arlen Schweiger](#) - Managing editor of Electronic House Magazine
Arlen contributes product news items to electronichouse.com along with his role on the print publication. Got a tip? Send it along!

Notes by F van Rooyen, AV Specialists, South Africa

The signal strength that the reviewer mentions in para 7 & 8 above is the signal strength of the 'carrier' signal in the existing electrical wiring of the existing home measured at a plug point. With NuVo's Site Analysis tool, each intended zone can be checked regardless of the size of the existing house. Any plug or electrical point reading 69% or higher signal strength can be utilised as a zone up to a maximum of 8 zones per Renovia Hub. _