THE ONE-DEVICE CHALLENGE

How much can a homeowner control with a single automation device?

by Dennis Burger, Editor in Chief, HDLiving.com

Whole-home automation can get complicated quickly. But just how much can a homeowner control with a single automation device?

When that device is Control4's powerful HC-250 Home Controller, the short answer is, "A lot."

Over the past few years, a number of off-the-shelf, do-it-yourself smart hubs and subscription-based services from ISPs have begun to tantalize homeowners with the promise of complete home control. The truth of it, though, is that these DIY kits or subscription services rarely deliver on the promise they sell, at least not without the help of a number of add-on devices.

The same is true of many advanced home control platforms, as well. Rarely can you do much at all with just one box. Unless, of course, that box is the Control4 HC-250. With its powerful processor, unrivaled Control4 Operating System, and the ability to connect to and control all manner of third-party devices (over 7,000 of them) via wireless ZigBee and WiFi—as well as hard-wired Ethernet, infrared, relay, or two-way RS-232—the HC-250 delivers an incredibly versatile, flexible, customizable automation experience like no other.

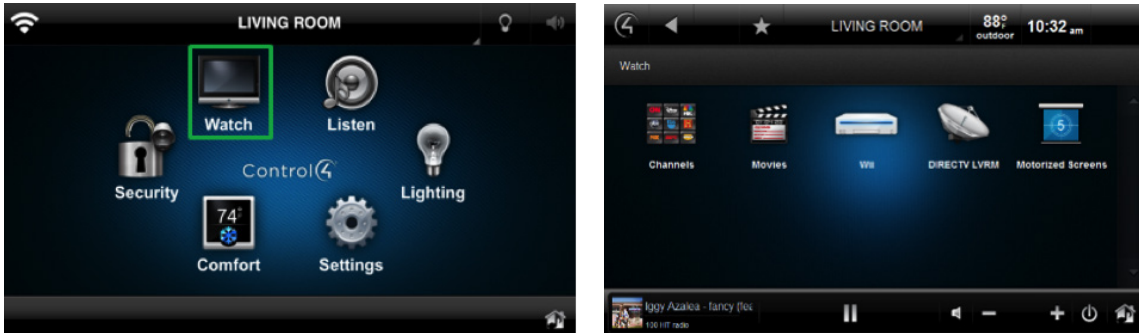## One Box, Plus A Free App for Home (not just device) Control

As you evaluate various "entry-level" automation solutions, you'll note that only the Control4 HC-250 delivers so much functionality, power, and value in a single device. Download the free Control4 app and add as many computers and iOS/Android smartphones and tablets, putting the power of your home completely in the palm of your hand. Work with your Dealer to personalize your automation system powered by the HC-250—all at a cost of just $750 US MRSP, plus installation fees, depending on how much of this little box's amazing potential you choose to tap into.

But enough with the generalities. Let's talk specifics What, exactly, can one little Control4 product do to enhance your home entertainment experience, your comfort, and the security of your home and family?

Watch: A single remote to control all your video gear & more

One of the biggest advantages of the Control4 HC-250 is its ability to take charge of all the devices in your home theater or media room: TV, projector, surround sound receiver, cable or satellite boxes, Blu-ray players, media streamers, gaming consoles, video servers—you name it. Most DIY or low-end home control devices ignore how important video entertainment is to most homeowners. And most mid-priced or high-end automation solutions require the purchase of additional equipment to provide unified control of the movie- and TV-watching experience.

Control4 does it all, though. Since the HC-250 sits on the same home network as the rest of your 'net-connected devices, it remains in constant communication with those devices and sends two-way control commands via WiFi or Ethernet. That includes satellite receivers from the most popular service providers, TiVo and other cable DVRs, TVs and AV receivers from a number of manufacturers, as well as popular media streamers.

Now, you can easily switch from device to device from one interface—without having to remember which button on your AV receiver corresponds to which component, or which input to select on your TV or projector. You'll also be able to easily browse and select from a list of your favorite TV channels or movies, straight from your tablet or smartphone, or even from the TV screen itself with the addition of a custom button.

What's more, it doesn't just centralize the control of your AV devices in one gorgeous and intuitive user interface; it also allows those devices to communicate with one another, which opens up entirely new avenues of automagic. You could, for example, connect a motorize projection screen or TV lift to the HC-250's Relay connection, so that the instant you select "Watch TV" from the Control4 home interface, your screen instantly lowers from the ceiling or rises up from its credenza. In addition to the Relay, with a contact sensor, you could wire your theater door to the HC-250 and fire up your home theater system with no more effort than it takes to walk into the room.
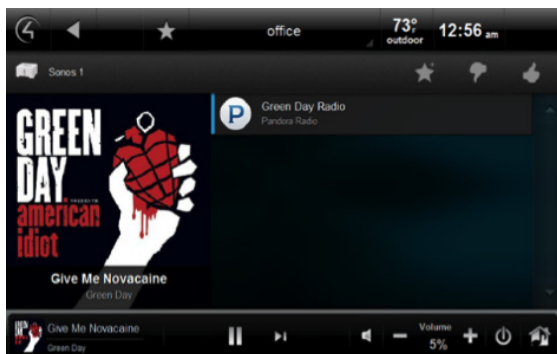
If you prefer to interact with your system on your big, bold TV screen instead of your phone or tablet, it's easy. The HC-250 has an HDMI output to display the Control4 GUI on your TV so you can check out movie titles, music, even your security cameras. Your Dealer creates a Custom TV button so the whole family can browse and control with you.

Listen: Enjoy streaming music throughout your home

The Control4 HC-250 is also a fully capable audio source in and of itself, with stereo analog audio outputs in addition to its HDMI connection. Plug the HC-250 into your AV receiver or sound system and you'll be able to tap into limitless hours of Internet radio, on-demand podcasts, and more, via built-in free TuneIn Internet Radio Service and Rhapsody* streaming music service. But that's just the start. You can also connect a USB or NAS (Network Attached Storage) device and enjoy your own personal music collection in an entirely new way. The HC-250 features integrated music server capabilities and metadata lookup services that provide rich cover art, song and artist info right on your smartphone, tablet or TV screen.
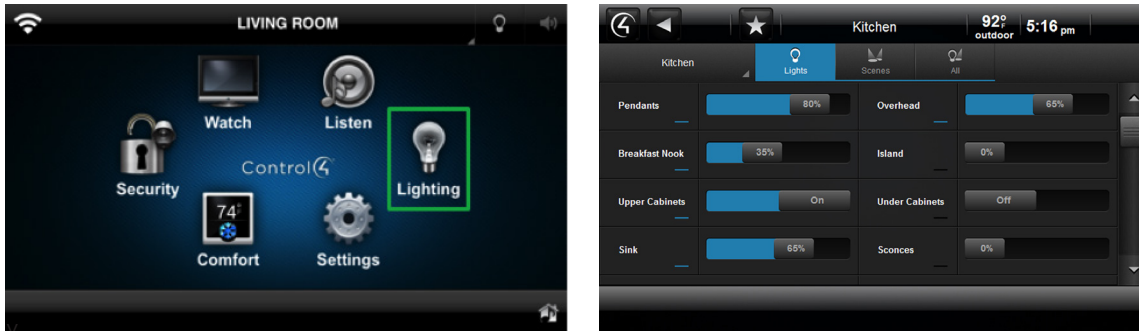

The same two-way IP control available to video devices also enhances the music listening experience with music players and servers like Sonos, Autonomic, Fusion Ovation, and many more. With your own music player connected to the Control4 system, you'll have instant access to all of its imbedded apps, including Pandora, Spotify, Sirius XM, iHeart Radio, and more, all from the same Listen screen, and all with the same bold and beautiful cover art display and onscreen controls.

*Service fee applies.

Lighting: Turn lights on or off automatically, no matter where you are

The HC-250 can also control a number of third-party party lighting solutions (as well as Control4 lighting with additional purchase) that you may already have in your home, via WiFi/Ethernet, ZigBee or serial connections: Philips Hue, Belkin WeMo, Lutron, DMX, HAI, iLight, Legrand, Vantage, Rako and Centralite. Set up scheduled events, or scenes, to turn lights on and off automatically, based on time of day, or at sunset and sunrise, or your personal lifestyle preferences (like...Goodbye), thanks to the built-in astronomical clock functionality. Want to edit a scene—it's easy to do so right from your tablet.
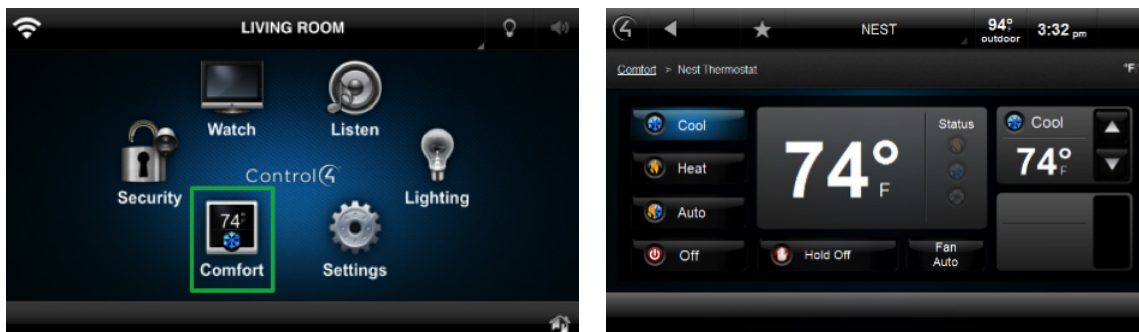

These control capabilities extend to natural lighting as well. The HC-250 can connect to window shades from Lutron, Mechoshade, Somfy, Performance Concepts, Electronic Solutions, and more, so technically you can even control the sun from the same app interface you use to fire up the home theater system. And you can personalize your shade control experience exactly the same way you can your lighting, using scheduled events to raise or lower shades at sunup or sundown, or when you turn on the TV during the day, or even as part of more complex lighting control scenes that can be triggered with a single touch.

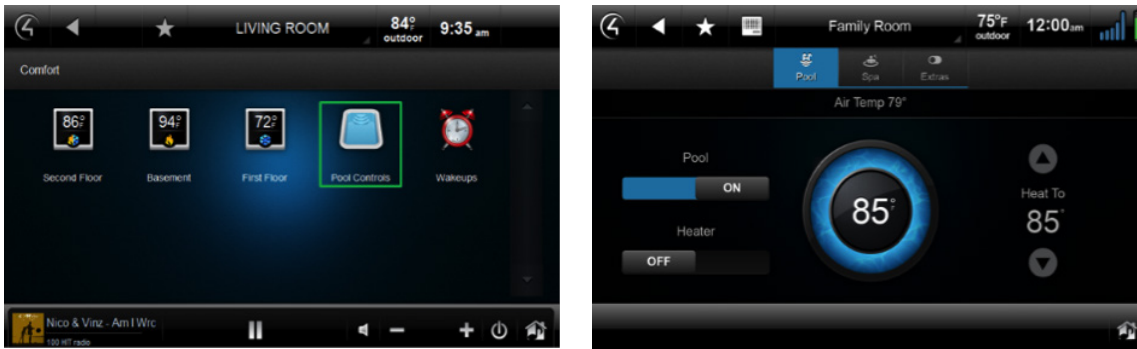## Comfort: A new level of comfort throughout the home

Temperature Control

The capabilities of today's smart, connected thermostats are pretty amazing in their own right. But connect your Nest, ecobee, Honeywell, HAI/Leviton or Radio Thermostat to a Control4 HC-250 and you'll unlock a new level of comfort for your home. Not only can you use the Control4 interface to intelligently adjust your thermostat's programming to your busy schedule, but the HC-250 can also use information received from the thermostat to trigger "automagic" events in and around the home. If things are a little too toasty on a summer day, for example, your shades might lower automatically. Or if the temperature is above a certain threshold, simply turning on the TV in the den could automatically turn on the ceiling fan.
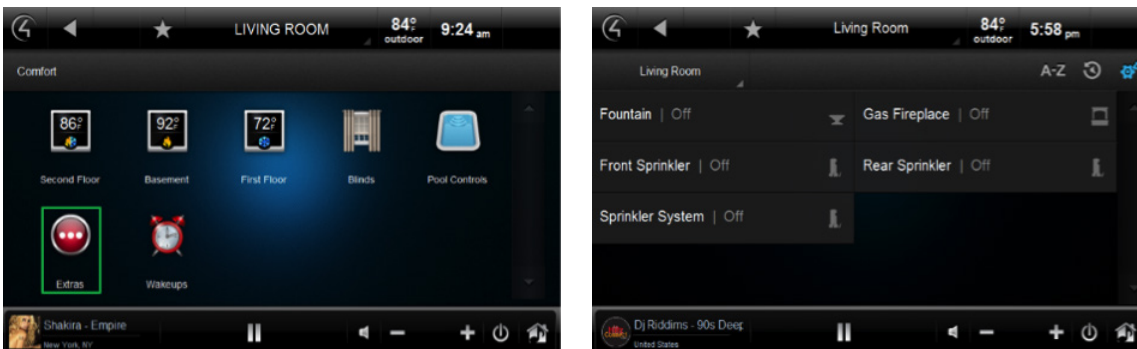
Pool and Spa

The HC-250 can also connect to and communicate with pool and spa systems from manufacturers like Jandy and Hayward, allowing you to perfectly tweak temperature setting and even control the jets, all from your mobile device whether you're home or on your way from the office.
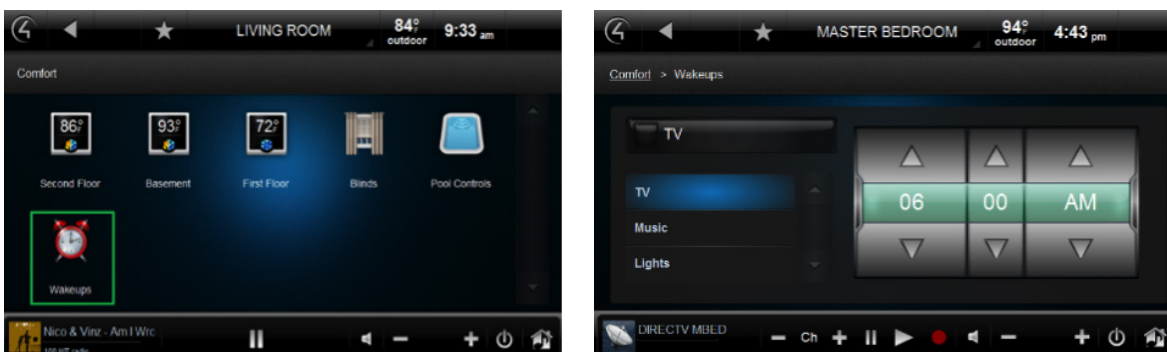
Creature Comforts

You can also tap into the HC-250's relay connection to control creature-comfort devices, as well, including gas fireplaces, fountains, overhead fans, and so forth. But, of course, there's no more comfortable place in the home than your own bed, and while Control4 can't do much to make it any comfier, the HC-250 can make the process of leaving it in the morning a little more bearable thanks to its integrated Wakeup capabilities. In fact, the HC-250 can turn your entire home into a personalized alarm clock that rouses you from slumber as gently—or as briskly—as you'd like.
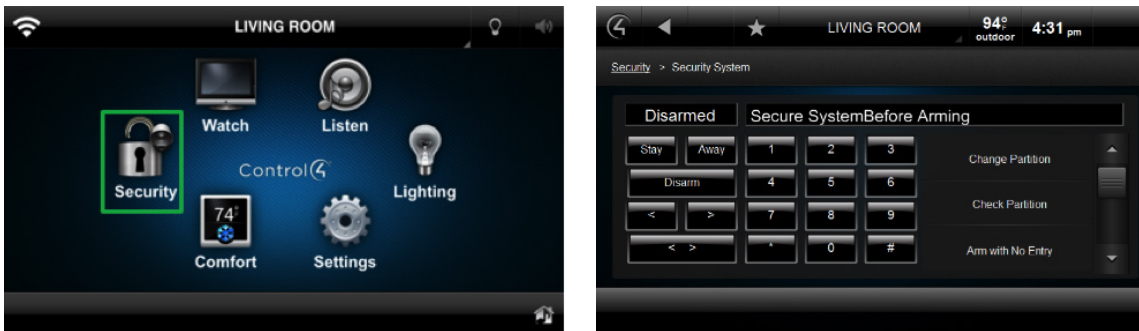
Personalize Your Experience

Maybe you'd like your bedroom lights to start slowly ramping up half an hour before you need to pry yourself out of bed. Maybe you'd like your TV to automatically tune to your favorite morning show. Or perhaps you need a high-octane playlist to knock you out of the sheets at sunrise. Simply select the Wakeup icon from your Control4 app when you're turning in for the night, and you can select not only the time, but also the way in which you'd like to be awoken the next morning.
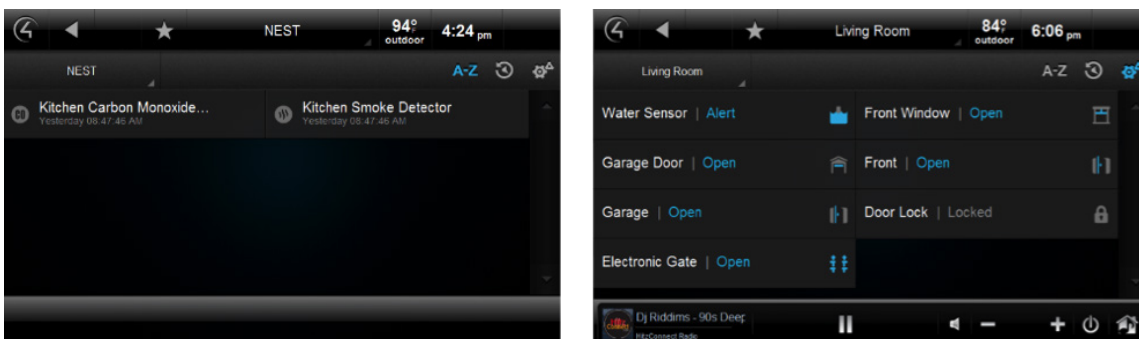
Security: Enjoy peace of mind with automation

If home security is important to you, chances are good that you already have a monitored security system. What you may not have known is that with a single, simple connection, the Control4 HC-250 can communicate with common security systems from DSC, Napco, GE, ELK, HAI, and Honeywell to provide an enhanced level of security and control.

With your security system and the HC-250 working in tandem, you can view the status of all the sensors around your home. And if you opt for the Control4 yearly 4Sight subscription service, ($100/year) you can keep tabs on your home from anywhere in the world via a secure 3G/4G connection, and arm or disarm your system at the touch of a button, from just around the corner or halfway across the globe. Furthermore, with your security and Control4 systems in constant communication with one another, your home isn't merely more secure; it's a lot smarter. Contact sensors on your doors, for example, can be used to trigger automated lighting events. Glass breaks or motion sensors can trigger automated email alerts.

The HC-250 also integrates with Nest Protect Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Detectors. So in the unfortunate event of a fire, you won't merely be aroused in the middle of the night by alarms; your Control4 system could also gently illuminate a safe escape route for you and your family, and flash the outside lights so there's no mistaking your home when the firetrucks arrive.

Security camera integration via IP (Ethernet or WiFi) is another fantastic capability of the HC-250, right out of the box. The Control4 system ships with drivers for a number of third-party IP cameras, including those from Channel Vision, Lilin, Grandstream, IC Realtime, Panasonic, QNAP, Wirepath, Digital Watchdog and Y-Cam, just to name a few.

You can also use the IP video streaming capabilities that make this security camera integration possible for all sorts of other convenient, lifestyle enhancing uses. For instance, you may want to add public or private video feeds from the Internet so that they are easily accessible from the Control4 user interface. Perhaps you'd like to keep tabs on local traffic cams while you're getting ready to leave the house in the morning. Or maybe you're a weather junkie who likes to keep an eye on forecasts or maps. The HC-250 can integrate all of these and more, right alongside your own private security camera feeds, all available for viewing on your TV screen, your portable devices, or your computer.

Customize Your System

One of the great things about the Control4 user interface is that it can be personalized to meet the specific lifestyle or entertainment needs of your family. It is easy for your dealer to create buttons that serve as shortcuts to execute multiple control or automation events with a single tap.

For example, you might want to create a custom button for a child in the home and personalize it with her name, allowing her to easily select her favorite TV channel or music playlist and turn on all of the necessary gear to play it back.

Or, for the adults in the home, you might choose to have Goodnight, Home, Away and Party buttons created. The Goodnight button, for example, could turn off all the lights, shut down all of the entertainment systems, adjust the thermostat, close the garage door, lock the front and back door, and arm the security system in Home mode. The Party button, on the other hand, might light up the front of the house, queue up your favorite dance playlists on the sound system, and tell your freezer to start producing extra ice on the double.

And Much, Much More

The examples given above are a mere sampling of the sorts of things that you can control and automate with a single controller from Control4.

But just because one device can do all of this doesn't mean you're limited to one device forever. The beauty of Control4 is in its incredible scalability. You can start with a single HC-250 and the free mobile control apps, and grow your system as budgets allow. Here are some ideas:

The Control4 SR-250 System Remote is usually the first Control4 add-on that most homeowners opt for. In addition to allowing you to pull up the Control4 user interface on a connnect TV with a mere press of the big red "4" button, it also gives you access to more than 40 programmable hard buttons for quick and easy navigation and volume control of your cable or satellite box, media players, AV receiver, and more. The handheld System Remote is also two-way communication device that enables you to browse music, adjust temperature, controls lights, etc., directly from its backlit OLED display screen.

There are also any number of other Control4 devices that can be added to your system over time, as budget allows, including a System Remote Charging Station, so you never have to worry about dead batteries in the SR-250; the Wireless Music Bridge, which allows you to access streaming audio from your smartphone, tablet or touch screens. Smart lighting, to automate and control lighting throughout the house, Door Station Intercoms, smart door locks, whole home audio and video distribution systems... the list goes on and on.

But none of these add-ons are necessary for you to take your first step into the world of truly personalized, powerful and reliable smart homeautomation. For that, all you need is a single Control4 HC-250.

What other control system affords you this much control, this much convenience, this much peace of mind, with just one affordable SKU?