What Is Lighting Control?

At Beyond Audio, we get a lot of people coming to us for home theater and home automation systems. Now we love designing and installing these systems and they bring a lot of happiness, but the system that gives clients the most enjoyment and value is lighting control.
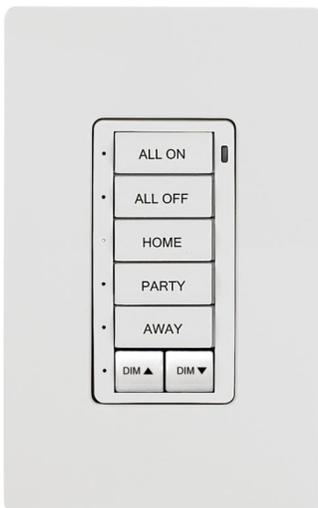
It is not new anymore; in fact I did lighting control back in 1993, but only now is it starting to go main stream. Pricing has come down, systems can start small and grow as needed, and there is a lot more choices than even a few years ago.

What is Lighting Control?

Lighting control is the control of the various "loads" of light but instead of a single light switch controlling a single light or set of lights (the load), a single button can control whatever lights you wish.
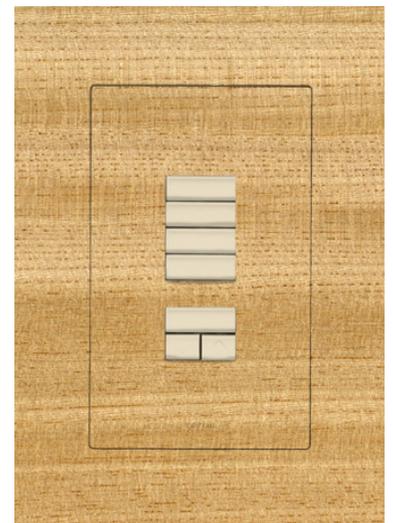
You walk into a room, press 1 button and a lighting "scene" is activated. An entire room or set of rooms lighting is set to a pre-determined level, ideal for whatever you are about to do. Turn the kitchen lights on full brightness, dim the lighting in the dining room to just the right level, and adjust the music, lower the motorized blinds or turn on the fireplace.

If you think about a larger home; when you walk into a common area (kitchen, living room, great room), you are presented with a bank of switches on a wall. One switch may control the ceiling lights, one switch controls the wall sconces, another controls the pendant lights and yet another controls the exterior lights in the foyer. Add fireplace controls and ceiling fans, plus Audio / Video and it gets messy and cumbersome.

Reduce Wall Clutter with a single, simple to understand keypad

Some can be built into woodwork or stone for an even nicer aesthetic

What Are The Benefits of Lighting Control?

We have never had a client that decided to install a lighting control system in one home that did not install a system in their next home. People really like these systems! Here are a few specific benefits:

Energy savings — One of the features that gets used the most is the "All Off" button, located near exit doors and usually in the master bedroom. Instead of going around the house turning off lights and hoping you don't miss any, the lighting control system allows you to turn off all of the lights with a single button press. Easy to see where this saves money. The lighting control app on your smart phone allows you to make sure the lights are off from anywhere.

Convenience — When you arrive home, instead of turning on a light in the entry way and then walking down the hall and turning on another light, then turning off the light behind you etc. the lighting control system can detect that the garage door was opened and automatically turn on BOTH loads of light, lighting a pathway through the house, and automatically turn off the lighting load nearest the garage. This is especially convenient when you have your hands full.

The latest systems have the ability to automatically sense your smart phone, then perform all manner of tasks automatically - based on proximity, time of day, day of the week and more.

Aesthetics — We've all seen homes that have banks of wall switches, this looks cluttered downright ugly. A single control keypad replaces 4, 6 or even 8 regular switches, and the buttons are engraved, and some are even back lit so you can operate the lighting at night with ease. Even house guests can easily figure out the system with no instructions required.

Security — Some of the better lighting control systems automatically record your actual usage so when we program a vacation or away button, the system reproduces and randomises these actions making it appear that someone is home. We can also have this feature activated with the lighting dimmed down somewhat to save some energy.

If you hear a noise at night, a single button beside the bed can turn on just the exterior lights, and if the alarm goes off the system can flash your exterior lights. These both scare away intruders, and helps direct security personnel to your home.

How Much Does Lighting Control Cost?

While lighting control used to be a technology that was only found in high-end custom homes, today it is available to almost anyone. The cost will of course vary greatly based on the size of the home and the number of light to be controlled. The "brains" of a lighting control system and the related work required starts around $ 1,000.and then each switch, is under$ 200 including installation.

We have lighting control systems to be among the most reliable systems we offer, and they are easily scaled to meet your needs. Start with the home theatre or great room and expand as desired.

We have installed systems by Crestron, LiteTouch (Now Savant), Control 4 and Lutron. All Lighting Control Systems claim to be the finest / most advanced / best value and more. Call us for a professional evaluation of your needs and to learn the important differences between the systems.