Alex & Rob's Ultimate Media Depot (and house): The User Guide

About this document

This document was prepared for the benefit of babysitters, home exchange visitors, grandparents, houseguests and other innocent civilians who might need to make use of the tech in our house. We're sharing this document online so that other geeks might use this documentation as a first draft for their own home tech manual, or simply to figure out how to use Plex!

> *– Alexandra Samuel, www.alexandrasamuel.com*
> *July 2011*

Welcome to our house

We hope you enjoy your stay. Here are just a few things you need to know to make the most of your time here, and to navigate one or two of the little quirks this place has.

The wireless network: You can, depending on conditions and where you happen to be in the house, hit several WiFi networks. Our network is **networkONE** and the password is *notPassword* We also have a second network, **networkTWO** which isn't compatible with as many devices – but the password is *notPasswordEither* if you want to try it.

The living room television/videogames/computer: The instructions on how to use the living room TV are attached. The various components (computer, PlayStation, Wii) are in the cupboard next to the TV, towards the window (except for the cable box/video recorder, which is on the 3rd floor loft directly above the TV).

We don't have a DVD player but you can use either the Mac Mini computer or the PlayStation to watch DVDs (the PlayStation plays Blu-Ray discs as well as regular DVDs). We have tons of movies and TV shows already on the computer and digital video recorder.

We use the Mac Mini as our stereo; there are shelf speakers you can turn on to listen to music via iTunes while the TV is off. All the gaming remotes, games etc are in the baskets on the shelves above the game consoles..

Phone: The phone on the table is a base station that powers all the handsets in the house. Line 2 is our business line so we'd prefer if you didn't answer it (that way calls get forwarded to our cell phones). Line 1 is our home line (604.ourtel) and if you don't answer that it will go to voicemail. You'll notice that while all the handsets will work to use, they are particular about which charging station they go in – just be aware that if a handset isn't charging, you probably need to switch it from the base station charger to the satellite charger in the kitchen, or vice versa.

Bedroom TV: The bedroom TV is connected to a cable box that works the same as the living room cable box.

About our TV

Our TV is connected to 5 devices:

1. a cable box/digital video recorder

2. a Mac Mini (for watching DVDs, listening to music or watching downloaded movies/TV shows)

3. a PlayStation

4. a Wii

5. an Xbox with Kinect

All of these are in the cupboard next to the TV (except for the cable box/video recorder, which is on the 3rd floor loft directly above the TV). When the PlayStation, Xbox or Wii are in use please leave the cupboard door open so they don't overheat. Turn them off before closing the cupboard.

Wii, Playstation and XBox remotes are in the baskets above that cupboard; there are also a couple of Playstation remotes plugged in in a basket under the coffee table. There is also a DVD case full of games. There is only 1 Xbox remote because we just use that for Kinect games. Extra batteries are in the baskets where you find the remotes, or else in a shoebox labeled "batteries" in the cupboard nearest the front door.

TV remotes, and the keyboard for controlling the computer, are usually on the shelf in our coffee table. If they aren't there, try the shelf beside the TV (where all the hard drives are).

If you run into trouble with the TV the instruction manuals are in a box labeled "TV & Game Manuals", stacked on top of the bookcase with all the gaming stuff.

Watching TV with the cable box

This remote is the only remote you need to watch TV. It turns on the TV and controls the cable box. Leave the cable box on all the time (so that the video recorder will work) and just turn the TV on & off. Instructions on how to use these are on the next page. The manuals for the remote & TV are on the shelf next to the TV, near the baskets that hold all the remotes.

When you are using the remote to control the TV, point it at the TV the normal way. When you are using it to control the cable box, hold it so it's pointing up (towards the 3rd floor) and it will work much better.

The TV and CBL button
tell the remote to control the TV
or the cable box. The notes in red
are for commands to use in TV mode.
Blue is for CBL mode.
You don't have to press CBL or TV
before each command, only when you
are switching modes.

To turn on the TV: press the TV button,
and then the power button.

Press CBL and then the GUIDE
button to see a TV guide. Use the
arrow keys to select a show to
watch. Press OK/SELECT to choose
the one you want.

Press the CBL button and then
the LIST button to see the list of
programs already taped.
Press OK/SELECT to choose
the one you want.

To switch between the TV,
the Wii, the Playstation & the Mac Mini,
press the TV button up top (to control the TV)
and then the VIDEO SOURCE button. Press the
video source button repeatedly to scroll through
the different input options.

Using the computer to watch movies or listen to music

On the shelf next to the TV, next to the hard drives, is a cordless mouse. Once you've switched the video source on the TV to "Mac Mini," you can use this mouse to control the computer. It doesn't need to be on a surface – wave it in the air at the TV. It takes a little getting used to. Note that the mouse needs to be on (there is a switch on it) and charged (so we leave it in the charging station most of the time.)
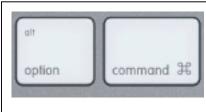
This launches Safari, the web browser.

This launches Plex, our super amazing media server for TV & movies.

Plex

This launches iTunes, where you will find our music collection and a few movies.

Your best bet for watching TV & movies is to launch Plex. Once you launch Plex you are best off using the wireless keyboard to control it. Basically all you need to use are:

- Option-command-P to launch Plex*

- the up & down arrow keys to navigate

- the enter/return key to select the item you want

- the delete key OR the escape key to go back

to launch Plex

hold these two keys down simultaneously while pressing "P"

- the plus sign if the sound isn't working (try hitting the volume up key on the top right of the keyboard first; if that doesn't work, try the + symbol)

- If you get stuck just hit command-Q to quit Plex.

- Command-F to make the Plex window smaller (and then Command-F to make it full screen again).

- Command-Tab to toggle between Plex & other open apps on the computer (just keep hitting Command-Tab to jump through the list of open apps)

- For an intro to Plex watch this video: http://bit.ly/plexcast

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* Hotkey launch made possible by installing Apptivate: http://www.apptivateapp.com/

Plex keyboard controls (for reference – we don't know most of these)

From the Plex wiki: http://wiki.plexapp.com/index.php/Keyboard

backslash	Switch between fullscreen and minimized views.
Command-F	Switch between fullscreen and windowed mode
backspace	Go up a folder to the parent folder.
C	Pops up a contextual menu
comma	Skip to the previous item in a playlist.
Command+Q	Shutdown program and return to desktop
down	Move down off a control.
end	Shutdown program and return to desktop
escape	Go back to the previous menu screen.
F	Toggle the fastforward speed between normal play, 2x, 4x, 8x, 16x, and 32x.
I	Show the information about the currently highlighted item, or currently playing item.
left	Move left off a control.
M	Show player controls
minus	Decrease the volume of playback.
p	Play the selected item (or folder of items), or unpause a paused item.
pagedown	Scroll down on page in a list, thumb, or text view.
pageup	Scroll up on page in a list, thumb, or text view.
period	Skip to the next item in a playlist.
plus	Increase the volume of playback.
Q	Queue the item to the current playlist
R	Toggle the rewind speed between normal play, 2x, 4x, 8x, 16x, and 32x.
return	Select a button, or an item from a list of thumb view.
right	Move right off a control.
S	Toggles shutdown menu
space	Pause the currently playing item.
tab	Toggles fullscreen modes (either visualisation or video playback)
up	Move up off a control.
X	Stop the currently playing item.
Shift+Letter	Jump directly to that letter in any view.