

The BADA AGM: at the Royal Institute of British Architects

20-07-2009

BADA (British Audio Dealers Association):
Affiliate member HIFICRITIC reports:

A first for BADA, proceedings began with a well attended press conference to announce the successful completion of the Demcraft dealer training scheme which following a bit of arm twisting for doubters and laggards, achieved a remarkable 100% participation by members, with over 400 participants trained in the best practice for fair, pre-sale product demonstrations and comparisons. At a premium, non BADA members were also welcomed and a number took up the opportunity.

As retiring BADA officer Malcolm Blockley was heard to remark, 'It was like herding cats. But once they were in the bag, and had completed the course, they were all purring nicely'

Demcraft continues for new entrants and dealer staff while BADA continues its climb to professionalism announcing three further courses. As BADA chairman Simon Byles (Infidelity) explained, Demcraft is partnered by Salescraft (run by Malcolm Galloway), which is running well and includes guidance on sale of goods and purchasers rights. This training is important because it gives demonstrators the confidence and constructive attitude to help make customers feel at home and thus get the most out of the buying experience.

Simon announced two new courses, the first, Visioncraft (developed and run by Terry Murphy) which seeks to cut through the minefield that is modern TV systems HD variations and connectivity, again so that customers will get confident, informed advice.

The second is 'Marketing For Retailers' by Ian Williams of Jericho Marketing, where the challenges of marrying the internet with in store selling make an appearance, with clarity on how internet

visitors will actually come and visit for demonstrations and that only a proportion desire no service and just the lowest price.

The AGM presentations included one by Claire Newsome, Haymarket publishing, on the progress of their Whathifi web site. I was truly impressed by some of her stats, 0.5 million users, average visit duration about 10 minutes, with many lingering 30 minutes. What about 7 million page views per month, no wonder this initiative this has brought positive revenue creation for the group. A recent survey brought out some interesting highlights, for hi fi separates 18% of readers had demonstrations before purchase and 25 % would like them, so there is some pent up demand here. In this recession 58% said they wanted to buy more product and 64% said the downturn would not affect their spend on Home theatre stuff. The internet seems to be dominant at driving sales growth, but a good proportion is nevertheless linked back to trusted independent retailers in sound and vision rather than the non specialist multiples and chains.

While Simon Foy of GFK presented data for overall UK consumer electronics sales June 08 to June 09, including the current recession, and there were some Hi Fi elements buried within the detailed mass of data. GFK have become expert at comparing with past events, revealing trends and elucidating which sales sectors are falling and which are rising. A survey of customer confidence found it a '-39%', the lowest since this index was reported, but however by June 09 the consensus opinion was that the worst was over and confidence was rising again.

While the CE market as a whole was 5% down year on year, again sales are beginning to rise towards the end of the survey period.

While laptop sales fell substantially by value, probably due to all those phone company giveaways, analogue turntable sales were up 21% by value, and only in part from those Sunday paper USB home record models. While peripheral to Hi Fi, and despite the downturn, docking stations were up massive 64% and several Hi Fi manufacturers are benefitting here. The Dock market is now worth £90M UK retail and this amazing rate of growth has been continuing for several years now. Can our business wean the dock owners with their 'my first hi fi', on to serious separates?

While sales of audio systems as a whole are down 4%, speakers over £1k a pair are stable and surround sound packages over £1500 are actually growing. Bluray players more than doubled over the year while the larger flat screens also did well despite their higher cost.

Anything with DAB in it is growing; this suggested was the expected run down to the eventual, mooted analogue radio switch off. (See HIFICRITIC forum traffic on this) Sales of DAB products have now reached 9m units overall and the push is now to increase the automotive penetration. Internet radio accounts for a steady 8% of radio equipped product sales. The growth area for cables is the £30 HDMI product, not really surprising since non come in the box!

Finally Simon Byles was at pains to point out that BADA was growing in reach and experience and wished to throw off the last vestige of that club image of which it was accused by some dealers a few years ago. BADA wishes for inclusivity for the majority of UK audio dealers, for the benefit of the industry and customers who can get information and support, and for the press who support and encourage this drive to a better overall service for hi fi purchasers.

Martin Colloms

HIFICRITIC

{BADA was formed in 1982 and is the UK retailer's trade association, with 80 high end shops and 20 associate members. To be a member they must meet the standards set by the association, including Demcraft training and commit to ongoing training and improvement}

www.bada.co.uk