

HIFICRITIC

BRISTOL NOTES 27/2/09

Despite huge apprehension by organisers and exhibitors before the show started, visitors turned up in considerable numbers and the traditional queues formed up each day before the show opened. Overall sales figures were down, but only by eight per cent.

While it's probably true to say that there were no obvious show-stoppers, new products, especially loudspeakers, abounded.

Key examples included a trio of upmarket Definition-series Tannoys – elegant Dual Concentrics with wideband tweeters and deep-cryogenically treated crossovers.



Distributors Icon were using electronics from French brand Carat which it's introducing for the first time.

PMC's new PB1i has twin 165mm bass units to rival the performance of its EB1i in a much slimmer enclosure.



Wilson Benesch's updated A.C.T.60 now has a supertweeter, and uses 'buckyball' nanotubes for midrange enclosure reinforcement.

Leema's new top-of-the-line Xanda loudspeaker has a shapely enclosure housing no fewer than six drive units.



Monitor Audio has now added a two-and-a-half-way Platinum 200 floorstander between the 100 stand-mount and 300 three-way models.

Eclipse's new top of the line TD712z Mk2 now has a larger 'egg' enclosure and a more refined 'full range' driver.

Acoustic Energy's Radiance threesome features a dual-radius DXT waveguide around a top quality annular tweeter.



Proac introduced a D1 stand-mount and D18 floorstander, while Spondor has new A5 and A6 floorstanders.

Dynaudio has replaced its 'affordable' Audience series with a rather less affordable Excite range.

Swedish in-car specialist DLS was showing its home loudspeakers in the UK for the first time.

Good to see classic French brand Cabasse back in Britain after an absence of several years, with a big collection of stereo and AV models, many with co-axial drivers.

Compatriot Focal had a static display of its dramatic new third generation Grande Utopia EM, which an electromagnetically powered bass driver



The dc powered coil winding for the 16inch Focal EM series woofer.

Dali was demonstrating its new budget Lektor 2 in a very clever 'trompe d'oeil' room



Roksan has added a pretty stand-mount Kandy K2 with a ribbon tweeter



KEF brought a couple of new C-series budget models with high gloss front panels

On the electronics front, the Naim Uniti takes the single-boxer to a logical conclusion, adding streaming, internet radio and numerous digital inputs to the usual CD and FM/DAB radio with 50W/ch of power. Naim was also demonstrating a prototype high performance separate DAC.



Chord Electronics has a digital pre-amp with just one analogue input, but this Indigo handles all likely digital signals, including cordless, and incorporates Chord's advanced field programmable gate array FPGA DACs.

Cyrus has revamped its amplifiers, the new boards, circuitry and power supplies promising performance improvements.

Exposure has adapted its upmarket MCX design to create a less powerful but far less costly 3010 Mk2 pre- plus two mono power amp combination.

Peter Comeau's plan to put the classic Radford STA25 power amplifier back into production looks about to come to fruition.

Comeau's World Designs room was generally reckoned to be making some of the sweetest sounds in the show. Another room attracting praise was Splash Audio, a new distribution operation handling Renaissance electronics with Rountree speakers

Pure Sound is moving upmarket. A huge new L300 pre-amp with a 300B in its power supply will cost nearly £5,000; a matching power amp is promised.



Arcam showed a mock-up Blu-ray player at the show. When this does appear, probably later this year, it may well be the only truly European Blu-ray machine.

“Long time no see” was the inevitable reaction to finding Adrian Walker’s DPA (Deltec Precision Audio – remember it?) back in operation, with several new electronics products.

Modifying Rega tonearms is becoming an industry in its own right, especially since Rega changed the base and made bearing height adjustment more difficult. Michell has a neat new kit for those into VTA

adjustment. The Funk Firm has gone much further, discarding everything bar bearings and counterweight, and using its cross-reinforced carbon fibre tube for the arm proper.



There was much more, of course, but really Bristol 2009 was about a feeling of relief. Although there have already been casualties in the retail sector, the show provided some evidence that the industry is riding the storms currently sweeping through the financial sector.

