

INSIDE CI



With heart troubles, all the latest technology and a wish for the CI industry to be a little sexier it can only be DAVE SLATER with his latest intriguing instalment of his regular column...

I really don't know where all the time is going. After the *Home Technology Event*, life stood still for about 3 weeks as the human dynamo, known to you as Dave Slater, was struck down with a virus which attacked my heart. This stopped me travelling the globe to bring you news from *IFA* and more importantly *CEDIA US*, but don't worry I have still had my ear to the ground and also a team of workers beavering away being my eyes and ears.

It seems that there has been a plethora of new products hitting the shows, Epson has joined the 3D crowd with their EH-TW 9000 projector, and it is full of new technology creating a bright and crisp image. With contrast ratio of 200,000:1 and with bright 3D technology, the image can cope with you donning your 3D glasses without you losing as much of the brightness as the competition's projectors. The technology does not end there, Epson has also included wireless connections for full HD source kit to talk to the projector without wires. With the projector retailing below £3000 it's a nice price point for your entry level home cinema install.

Projection has moved on even further with 4K being the next step forward from HD 1080p. The Sony VW1000ES 4K projector model has been designed to meet the needs of custom installers, with over 4 times the resolution of HDTV. As well as handling native 4K images, the VW1000ES features an exclusive 4K up-scaler that will dramatically enhance SD or HD images, which is a great plus point especially for me as I have hundreds of Blu-ray disks that I have not viewed yet. Within one day of trying to digest the buzz from the Sony camp, JVC has also announced three new models that are also 4K supporting resolutions of up to 3480x2160. The models in the JVC range will be the DLA-X90R, DLA-X70R and DLA-X30, JVC has also re-designed the 3D glasses making them lighter and rechargeable. So reviewing the last two shows, I do believe that the industry is in for some really exciting times ahead, I just cannot wait to upgrade my projector to 4k technology- it looks stunning.

TiVo is the go

If you are a great fan of DVRs, then you will like what TiVo has on show with the new TiVo Premiere Elite. This nice box of tricks has 4 built in tuners allowing you to record 4 programs while being able to watch a fifth channel (just what I have needed for years in my house). With this amount of recording going on, I am pleased to see a 2 terabyte internal hard disk included, which will give a whopping 300 hours of HD recording. Another great plus for custom installers is the support for control systems with code for Crestron, Control4 and RTI via RS232 and networking capability which is great for content streaming from popular sources such as Pandora.

Another name to pay attention to is Extra Vegetables. I have been a fan of their working for a while now and if you don't know what they do, you need to check them out, especially if you use Control 4 as they produce handy little apps and drivers that make your life a lot easier. They recently launched their new app called "Start Here", which is a great interface that enables you to put a little bit of customisation on the front end of Control 4 GUI allowing you to build a powerful control system for commercial board rooms, hotels and even domestic applications.

Evoque a response

I love innovative ways of show casing our industry, and the 8th of September was certainly one night to remember. I was invited to a launch of the new iconic Range Rover Evoque; the champagne was flowing, canapés a plenty, cars covered over with black silk and a band playing in the background. The stage was set, black curtains draped down from the ceiling, the principal dealer was on the microphone trying to get his words out without making too many mistakes, reading from a speech that Landrover did not want him to deviate from. He finished speaking and turned to the curtain, you could hear the dry ice machines kick in, but just like with most technology nothing happened and the well-rehearsed opening was moving into a new unknown territory, well no one minded too much as by now we were looking at the new Range Rover in awe.

If only we could make our industry as sexy as the car industry, if only we could have customers waiting on a list to pay full retail for our services - if only! With Meridian being the new choice for in-car sound by the guys at Landrover, it made perfect sense to have a premier dealer at the showroom and that is what 27 Meridian dealers did. With over 20,000 cars pre-ordered so far, it looks like Landrover have a winner and with this event being the start of a long-term collaboration between Meridian Premium Partners and Land Rover showrooms, it can only be a good platform for the dealers to connect with the right clients. A good night was had by all and I was so impressed with the car I was tempted to get rid of the wife's car and buy one.

Doctor's orders

With yet another visit to the quacks, I have been giving the all clear to fly, so I am off to Paris with a colleague to *Maison & Objet* on a buying mission. I find that these design shows are becoming more important to us custom installers. Some of our best work comes from design practices and also some of our added value products are now bought direct from the manufacturers and, sometimes with 50% margins to play with, it can only help the old profit margin. This is my first trip to the French based show but I have been told it is important in the designer's calendar and the networking is important to me. It's been a goal of mine to bridge the gap between designers and system integrators as a lot of the time designers don't understand the technology and will favour leaving it out of the proposal to the client. Ah well, here I am signing off for another month, fingers crossed I will be back up to full speed when I have my heart replaced by the latest I7 quad processor from Intel, and a big thank you to all my friends in the industry who have wished me well.

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