



# INSIDE CI



**Enlightening times in Frankfurt, dark times on RyanAir, and high times at the CEDIA Awards, DAVE SLATER is back with another manic month Inside CI...**

After the lunacy I described last issue, it transpired that not only was it a mad March for me, but it was to spill over into mad April as well! I have been clocking up the miles as usual with a quick trip to the *Light + Build show in Frankfurt*. This expo is massive – 10 halls of lighting and building kit with all the big players in the business showing their new wares. Delta Light were there with a packed stand and a whole new range of LED fittings of great effect, and now that the colour temperatures are getting close to tungsten, I can really see these being a winner. LED technology brings a lot with it, the fittings run a lot cooler, the lamp life is greatly improved and the arcs of light are much more defined than tungsten.

Looking at how many manufacturers and distributors were at the show, I would have to say it still looks a lucrative business to be in. Lighting, if done correctly, can make a good install great. This year's theme for the whole show was fixed firmly on energy efficiency, with a special series of discussions running in parallel to the main event encouraging speakers to explore and explain the potential of regenerative energies. Let's face it you only have to look down your own street to see how consumers are already embracing energy alternatives such as solar to heat their water, so you'd be a fool not to pay attention.

I always find these lighting shows a key source of inspiration and innovation, and always return to DSE with a head full of ideas.

## CryinAir

One little complaint about the whole trip would have to be the tight way in which RyanAir operates – they charge you for everything! Luggage for hold: EXTRA, your seat assigned to you: EXTRA, food and drink on the plane: EXTRA, but worst of all was our 10kg cabin luggage allowance. However, the thing that did make me chuckle was that my colleague had picked up brochures from the show, taking his cabin luggage a massive, plane-destroying 2kg overweight. The strict and quite scary female weighing his bag told him he would have to pay extra, but looking at their display poster you could take on flight books to read as long as they were carried. So, you guessed it, he took all the brochures out of his bag and carried them five paces before putting them back into his bag! Yet another mad rule we have to put up with.

Safely back into the UK, I had a five minute turnaround to get on a train to Hampton Court Palace for the *CEDIA Awards*. The awards have grown on a year on year basis, with the quality of installs becoming mind-blowing. This year's proceedings were hosted by *Gadget Show* TV presenter Pollyanna

Woodward who did a wonderful job of keeping people engaged – a harder task than you might think with unlimited free wine for all on the tables! It was nice to see so many new companies putting their work forward and looking at the 88 page brochure which features all the winners, it can only be a good thing for your PR to have won.

The CEDIA team worked hard on this event and you could certainly tell, as the place was packed and there was a great vibe (and going by how many hits the story has had on *INSIDE CI*, it was a popular talking point), leaving only one problem: how are they going to top this year's event? I think some serious planning has to start early next year.

## Install a go-go

So, back into install mode, DSE have been playing with the new Vital range of multi-zone amps from Speakercraft. There are two versions of the amp, the Vital 1250 (£1300) and the Vital 850 (£1000), and the first thing I noticed was the quality of the amps delivered a big improvement over the previous 1235 and 835 models. The 1250 delivers twelve 50W channels of power, with the 850 offering the same 50W but into 8 channels. We have found that the 850 is a great solution for a four-room set-up making multi-room with quality sound affordable, and with the amps designed for custom install you get some nice little perks, such as assignable channels for left, right or mono setup and daisy chainable 12v triggers.

Another great product which landed on my desk is the PE Socket. This is a real get out of jail piece of kit for extending your network without having to rely on wireless or running a cat5. The PE2000av T 1000 socket is a really simple solution – you replace your socket with this unit and then replace the socket next to your router and – hey presto – you have a four port 10/100 base switch working across your mains cables and for just £111!

It offers cheap installation, as opposed to ripping up floor boards in retro fit locations, and with more kit needing internet connection like your Sky box, Xbox, Playstation, Apple TV and even your new LED TV, it can only be a good thing for retro fitting jobs. The PE Socket is available in the UK from Arktron.

Now onto the up and coming month of May, *Inside CI* will be hitting the road again visiting Custom Installers to see the state of the UK market. The last two trips have been a great success – it's always interesting to see what other CI companies are up to and, I have to say, the quality of dealer out there is amazing. We visited a company called Bespoke Home Cinema recently where we met MD Gifford Malcolm. Gifford has installed two home cinema demo rooms into his home and the attention to detail is amazing, something which takes me back to my early days of setting up DSE where we did something very similar to what Bespoke have done. I believe it always works well when you keep your business small and tight, it allows for you to control the quality and to keep the client happy, the personal touch of the MD being on-site has always worked for me in the past. It's worked for Bespoke so well that one of their cinema rooms was in the final running for a *CEDIA Award* and was only just piped at the post. But, looking at how Gifford runs his business I am sure he will have more stunning workup for consideration next year.

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