

HIFI NEWS

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**&
RECORD REVIEW**

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THREE-WAY AMP BATTLE

SONY, MARANTZ, HARMAN KARDON

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DIGITAL BROADCAST LAUNCH
LAST CHANCE FOR DCC?**



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Restek showed 'probably the world's most expensive stack system'

CR Developments (header shot, opposite page) blossomed out this year with a stunning room set

source. Pluto's new 12A is something of an entry-level LP spinner for the firm; it costs only £4130. The Harvey electronics seem deliciously underpriced for imports: a basic all-valve pre-amp for £641 and a 15W triode power amp for £1204.

Italy also supported the show in force, with **Unison Research** unveiling the gorgeous Mystery One tube pre-amp before the home market got to see it. Also in use were the Smart 845 monoblocks and those



Music Labs typified the quality of audio equipment from Down Under

dreamware integrations, the single-ended Performance One SE and the ultimate in single-chassis bliss, the 845 Absolute. **Monrio** can now offer a CD transport and the 18B converter, plus the new 'Cento HP' dual-mono high current power amplifier and the MC-200S 60W integrated amplifier (£950). Probably the best news on the Monrio front is an affordable (circa £650) integrated amplifier, the 40W MOSFET MJ. **Opera** loudspeakers completed the display with the new Callas Gold (£950) — it uses the hot new ScanSpeak silk dome tweeter, ART wiring, and a solid mahogany or ash

cabinet — and the Caruso (£2250), driven by Unison Research's single-ended valve amplifiers. Reference quality music on CD was supplied by another Italian firm, Foné.

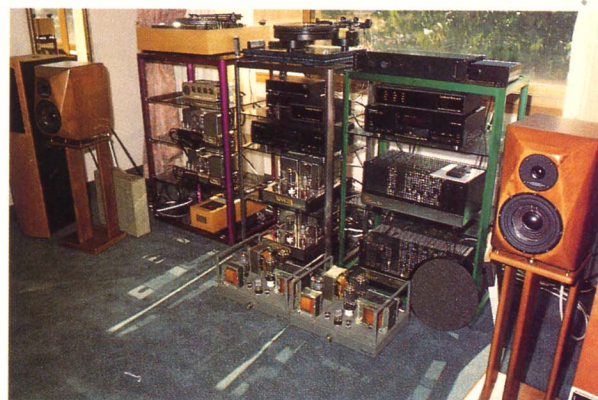
Milanese company **ATD** was in the **Mellotone** room with the CD-Drive-1, styled in the form of a turntable, complete with stand alone H-DAC-1 converter. Also shown was the revised Pataacustica Kappa 2++ speaker system, designed specifically to work with the new generation of low-powered valve amps; sensitivity is 91dB/1w/1m. **ART** continues to dominate the Italian accessory scene with its superb cables and the evergreen graphite blocks. **Musical Technology** showed for the first time in the UK its true dual-mono C2 valve line control unit, MOSFET power amplifiers and the new Phono Unit, suitable for m-m and m-c cartridges. The new 40W pure class A mono amp MA4 delivers 110W into 1 ohm.

Pathos is one of the hottest of the new Italian brands, and they wowed everyone in Las Vegas with the prettiest tube-hybrid integrated amp ever seen, the Twin Towers. Launched at Ramada was a new monoblock, the InPower, also using twin triodes for the input stage. Operation is pure Class A, all the wiring is pure silver, power has not yet been stated and the styling is enough to make you cry.

Australia provided the show with exhibitors eager to enter Europe, including **Audio Labs of Melbourne**. This company's Music Labs catalogue includes the ML 815 MkII and ML 825 MkII Class A power amplifiers, with balanced and single-ended inputs, good for 150W/ch and 250W/ch respectively. The ML 8 MkII is the matching line level pre-amp, with four inputs and an ALPS volume pot; a phono stage is set to follow. **Note Perfect Loudspeakers** is a new company producing three beautifully-finished models: the Symphony, the Concert and the Virtuoso. Top model costs £3000 in Australia, so do your maths to figure out the bad news. I've got my eye on the Virtuoso, a compact truncated pyramid with front and rear-firing tweeters. **Leading Edge Audio** was demonstrating its range of electronics including the DAC 3, the PA2M Power amps and the LSB pre-amp. **Osborn** loudspeakers, from Victoria, showed a floorstander, the Epitome MkII, with optional Epitome sub-woofer, the Eclipse floorstander and the Titan, a sweet mini measuring 250x280x455mm and using a familiar-looking Kevlar inverted dome tweeter...

But the Hi-Fi Show is a British phenomenon, so the bulk of the exhibitors — manufacturers and importers — were UK-based. Alphabetically, they included the following.

Aanvil Audio demonstrated the handsome, cubist Audio Physic Adyton and launched the new Audio Physic Spark floorstanding loudspeaker and improved Virgo, heard with the UK-made LFD DAC3. The Virgo is a particularly delicious solution to the floorstanding dilemma



One of HFN/RR's own events was Chris Beeching's 'vintage versus modern' system demonstration

because it's deep enough to provide the cabinet volume but the front baffle is only a handspan wide. The lateral thinking comes from the side-firing woofers.

Absolute Sounds, as ever with a multitude of rooms identifiable by the queues outside 'em, displayed a selection of goodies from a vast catalogue including such makes as Air Tangent, Audio Research, PS Audio, Sonus Faber, Theta Digital and others, with killer scoops in abundance. This importer was able to command the first-ever public hearing of the new, entry-level **Wilson WITT** loudspeaker, the new **Copland** 288 CD-player and **Krell's** long-awaited, full remote control, 150W/ch integrated amp — one of the most talked-about debuts at the show. And it's no wonder: at £2500, it represents the entry level for that brand.

Aeon Acoustics' handsome 'Signet' is a sloped-back, tiny floorstander with a big sound. It uses the company's unique 'starform' drivers, distinguished by the relief patterns in the cones, spiral tubes which improve the compressional qualities of the cones which are made by pressure-bonding two styrene halves together. The drivers are light yet rigid, and benefit from a larger surface area.

Alchemist, already enjoying great success with the 30W Axiom and **N e m e s i s**



Greenwall's two-way horn speakers are exquisitely sculptured masterpieces