

Mar./April 2007
Volume 6 Issue 2

Recent and Upcoming Events

Feb. 21 - 22

Audio Concepts
Dallas, TX
Dealer Show and Training
with John Giolas

March 1 - 2

Definitive Audio
Bellevue & Seattle, WA
Dealer Training
with John Giolas
and Jerron Marchant

March 8

Audio Visions South
Tampa, FL
Dealer Event
with Peter McGrath

March 17 - 18

Salon HiFi
and Home Cinema Show
Paris, France
Europe Audio Diffusion
Showing with
Peter McGrath

March 23-25

Overture
Wilmington, DE
Dealer Event
with Peter McGrath

April 20 - 21

Hi Fi Club
Mexico
Wilson Audio Open House
with Peter McGrath

WILSON[®] AUDIOFILES

The following article is reprinted in its entirety with permission from Great Britain's *hifi+* magazine. It originally appeared in issue 49. An electronic version of the magazine may be downloaded for a fee at www.hifiplus.com.

Music Matters



by Alan Sircom

Whatever happened to the white van? You know the one; the over-delivery of 'studio monitors' and an orderbook that must be emptied before the hour's out. A quick trip to the mug-a-matic cashpoint and you are relieved of a few hundred quid in exchange for a piece of chipboard covered in Fablon and 40p worth of drive units. It was a lucrative scam seen around the country a few years back, but you don't see the white van anymore. Why? Because it's cheaper to punt shonky goods on eBay these days; you don't even need to hire a van.

Recent years have seen a plethora of products emerge sporting high-end price tags. Some of these products live up to that price tag. Many don't. But, there they are, a profusion of new products from new names; they spring up, sell a few products, disappear and are replaced with another flood of new products and new names. And so the cycle of audio life continues.

Except the cycle of life has accelerated of late. Products, designed in Europe and built in the Far East have become the norm. Some companies that have a longstanding reputation have started designing locally and producing globally and will continue to do so; the future of these companies is reasonably assured, and in some cases, the move to Far Eastern manufacture comes with an improved build quality at a given price. These are not the manufacturers that are of concern.

But for every big name, there seem to be ten little companies that no one's ever heard of before. Their long-term stability is not assured. Some will be the next Arcom, some won't. The factory that built the product is immaterial. . . today it's making valve amps, tomorrow in-car GPS systems and so on. But the company specifying those products and having them built in that factory may only be around just long enough to sell the first batch of units. This is contrary to the high-end ethos as it stands today.

The problem is two-fold. If you buy a complex and expensive piece of electronics, you expect it to survive for some time. If it breaks down, you want the product repaired swiftly and preferably by someone who knows the unit. You also want a product with a good re-sale value, when time comes to upgrade or move on. Nei-

(Cont. on pg. 2 as "Music Matters")

Music Matters (Cont. from pg. 1)

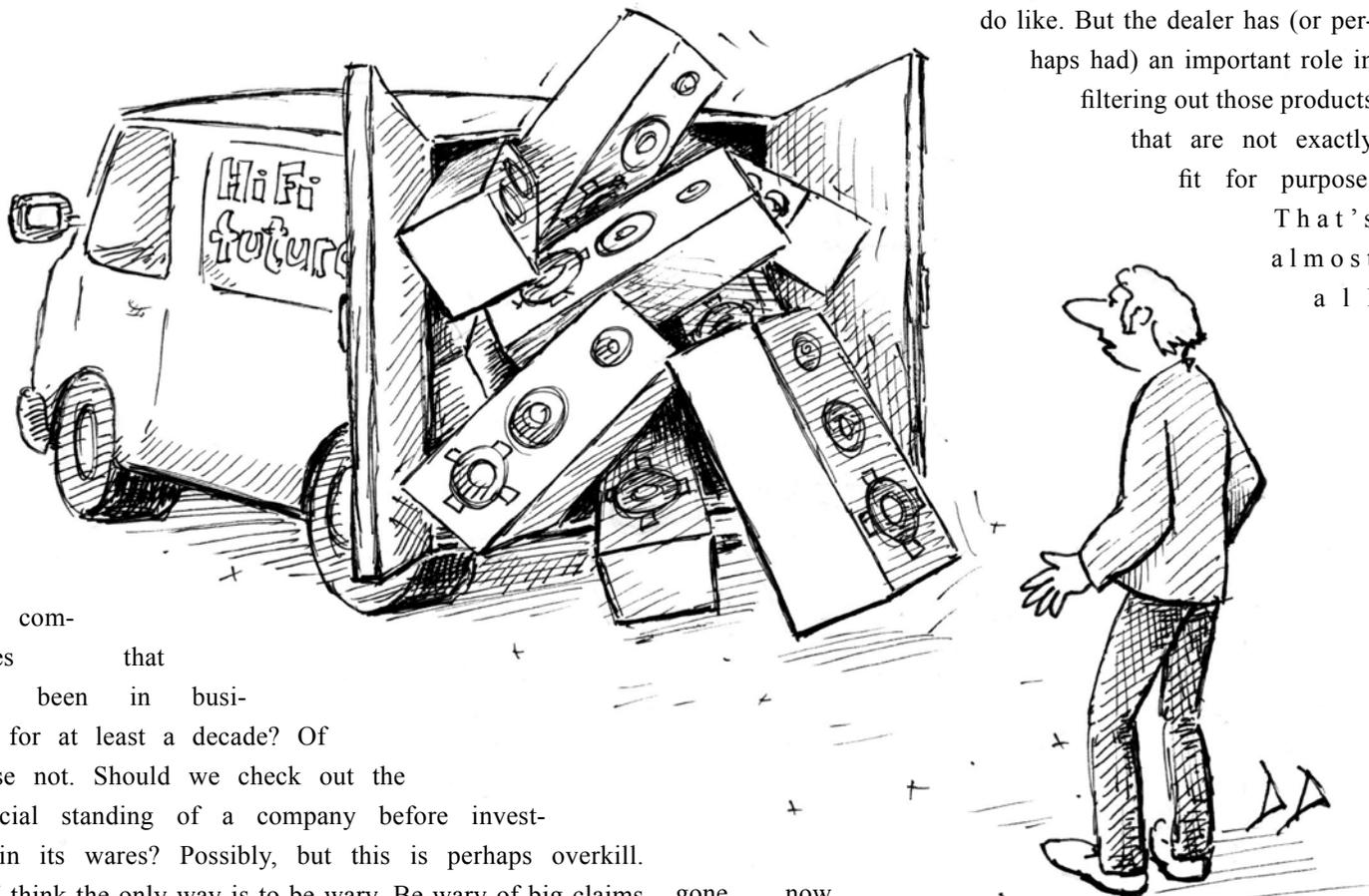
ther of which scenarios are possible if the product line disappeared without trace six months after first launching onto the market.

What should we do? Even the big companies were once small fry, and if a company gets too big for the market it can collapse on itself (so size and age of company is no guarantee of good, long-lived products). Should we take an uber-conservative stance and only buy (or review) products

Normally, these products would not make it past the dealer network, but the traditional hi-fi dealer is fast becoming less important in the hi-fi buying process. Dealers - or at least, good dealers - put together systems that they know work well in combination. They have a selection process; some selections you may not like. . . in which case, you should seek a better selection or in extremis, look out for a dealer that produces a sound you

do like. But the dealer has (or perhaps had) an important role in filtering out those products that are not exactly fit for purpose.

That's almost a l l



from companies that have been in business for at least a decade? Of course not. Should we check out the financial standing of a company before investing in its wares? Possibly, but this is perhaps overkill.

I think the only way is to be wary. Be wary of big claims and little products. Be especially wary of companies that only show computer-generated examples of the one and only product in the portfolio. Remember the old adage "If it seems too good to be true, it usually is". And, most important of all, be wary of things hyped up by people on the Internet.

The level playing field that is online has no memory, no past, no future. It lives in an ever-present now. So, when a new product by a fly-by-night manufacturer emerges, the Internet hype makes it appear every bit as legitimate as products built by companies with decades long reputations for strong, solid build quality and legendary service. And, if you get caught out by one of these soon-gone companies, you are just as quickly forgotten as the products you bought.

gone now.

Dealers have to stock a broad selection of products in an effort to compete with online sources. Still worse, those dealers who have enough integrity to filter out these drive-by products are the very ones that get the most criticism for being restrictive in their stocking policy.

It's not a good time to be a high-end hi-fi dealer. They are beset by online discounters (although less than the middle market dealers, who have seen their business severely affected by online sales) and marked increases in retail rents. Those little hi-fi guys are vanishing, others are working out of their homes. And now, we expect this endangered species to stock products that they know are at best semi-supportable?

Here's what I propose. Avoid those who stock everything,

and be prepared for not getting your way if you want to audition 95 different brands of amplifier. It's a pointless exercise anyway; if you have a 'shortlist' of more than half a dozen products, you'll end up so confused by different performance criteria that the chances are you'll end up with nothing at all. But most importantly, go listen. It's becoming harder and harder to get good demonstrations, but the demonstration is the cornerstone of modern hi-fi.

Long ago I used to work in hi-fi retail. Around that time, a certain magazine awards issue were of great importance (far more than today), and could make or break products. One year, it just so happened that the store I worked in stocked the award winning CD player, amplifier and speaker - all good products singly, but in combi-

nation, the sound of the three bordered on the abominable (something the magazine itself was at pains to point out in print). Nevertheless, when the awards issue hit the streets, the phone rang constantly asking after these three products and the best possible price we could give. Trying to tell people that the system wasn't a good match frequently fell on deaf ears. Surprisingly, one person even said, "Look pal, I want to buy the system, not listen to it!"

That attitude is alive and well and living in cyber space. Unfortunately, you can't get demonstrations online, which means that people are buying products, or even whole systems, unheard. Which is like trying on a suit blindfold - and just as effective.

WATT/Puppy System 8 has received

Grand Prix 2006

from Stereo Sound, a high-end audio magazine published in Japan.

Wilson Audio is pleased to announce the Wilson WATT/Puppy has earned



The following excerpts are from Issue 49 of *hifi+*, which is published in the United Kingdom. The magazine may be downloaded for a fee at www.hifiplus.com.

“Wilson Audio WATT/Puppy System 8 Loudspeaker”

by Alan Sircom

“This is the big one. Even after decades, the Wilson Audio WATT/Puppy is the force to be reckoned with in high-end loudspeaking. Like the Quad Electrostatic, it's a benchmark by which all other speakers are judged.

“...To roll out that tired old cliché, this is evolution rather than revolution. But it's a pretty big evolution, up with opposable thumbs and growing a set of lungs.

“...Each successive WATT/Puppy sounds awesome; it's just somehow the Wilson wizards manage to slather on another layer of awe on top of each new model.

“...System 8 sort of completes the circle, making this a more rounded speaker, still capable of great analysis of disc and system, but in a more fluid way, that brings it in line with the sort of entertainment opportunities afforded by the Duette.

“...Ben Harper's *Fight for Your Mind* shows what the System 8 is really capable of. It reveals that glorious mid-range; no longer larger than life or forward, but open and honest sounding. There are sounds

that are harder to define on some systems, which come through clear here. For instance, in the back of the right channel throughout the title track is a percussion instrument. In most cases it could be a tambourine, could be something African or South American, could even be someone shaking milk bottle tops. Fact is, in the opening bars, it's too far back in the mix to be immediately recognisable. Except on the System 8. Here, it's immediately, instantly recognisable as sleigh bells. It could be nothing else... how could I be so stupid? Even when it's the only instrument in the mix, it's indistinct on most speakers compared to the sound of the Wilson.

“...The loudspeaker is entirely neutral when it comes to timing, in that it doesn't impose or enforce a specific timing on the music, but neither does it slug the life out of the music. If something's upbeat, it will play it upbeat. If it's played down, it will play down.

“...Deep bass lines are taut, deep and controlled, yet when played for droning effect on a disc, your eyes start to vibrate. Second, this small sound made big is

just so much more musically integrated than before. Things just snap into focus all the more, music takes on that boppy, small box speaker sound, but with the added bonus of big speaker scale and energy. So, the speaker can cope with Rachmaninov-level dynamic range and damn-the-torpedos-full-speed-ahead techno, without favouring one over the other. It's a win-win situation.

“...This sound projects somewhat into the room, but gives a sublime depth to the sound, and musical instruments within that soundstage sound as if they are entirely natural and in the room with you.

“...it's a design that keeps drawing on developments in design from above (and now below) and just keeps on getting better. From the outside, the changes are subtle, almost invisible, but under the skin, major surgery has taken place and the results aren't just renewed vigour. I expected the audio equivalent of a hip replacement, what I got was the bionic man!”



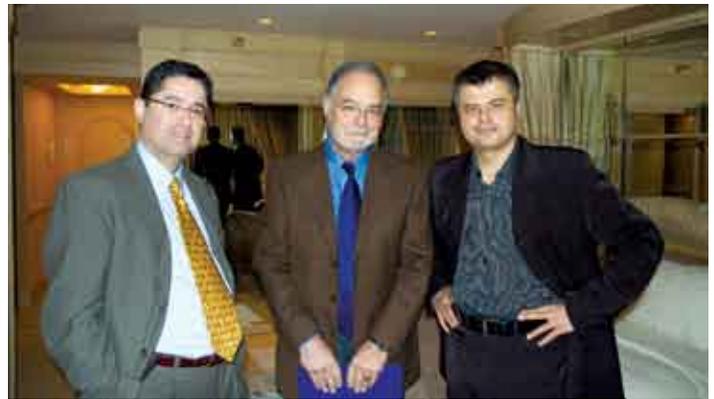
For the Wilson Audio Sales team, CES actually begins months in advance of January. Demos must be planned and prepared, speakers built both for our display and for other vendors using our loudspeakers, schedules coordinated with dealers and distributors, and travel plans and reservations made. By the time Trent Workman, Andrea Workman, Daryl Wilson, Jerron Marchant, and John Giolas arrived in Las Vegas, well over 1000 man hours have already been spent on CES.



The Wilson team helped perfect the setup of WATT/Puppy System 8s for LAMM Industries, Esoteric, and Boulder Electronics. After that, they turned their attention to fine-tuning the Desert Silver Wilson Audio display of two passive WATCH Dogs and a pair of Duettes in their near-boundary mode. Once the Duette setup was complete, the team choreographed the demo and picks the music that will be played.



Jerron Marchant; John Barnes of Audio Unlimited, Denver; Walt Rising of NYSS Home Theater, Middletown, NY; Carl Jerrits of Audio Unlimited, Denver; Scott Gorsche of Aurant, Salt Lake City; (from left on couch) and Brian Child, Danny Moreno and Steve Gudac also of Aurant listened as Daryl Wilson demonstrated the new WATCH Dog Controller.



John Giolas, Peter McGrath, Denis Krmio of Audiocinema Art in Croatia. The Wilson team is very intent on making the Wilson CES experience educational. CES is a great time for dealers to gain ideas in demonstrating Wilson products for clients as each year Wilson Audio presents new products or emphasizes a key focus in the original product design idea.



Trent Workman met with Patrick Hsu of Jadis Electronics Limited, Wilson Audio's new distributor in Hong Kong and China.



Jerron Marchant, Trent Workman, Daryl Wilson, and Setiadi Loing of Sinar Mas in Indonesia.

CES Playlist 2007
Soundtrack from *Albino Aligator*
Brian Bromberg
"Carry on My Wayward Son"
Wood
Vienna Teng
"1 BR/1BA"
Dreaming through the Noise
Jackson Brown
"Walking Slow"
Late for the Sky
Bonnie Raitt
"The Bed I Made"
Souls Alike