

# Installation

www.installationeurope.com

AUDIO, VIDEO AND LIGHTING IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

EUROPE

CMP  
NOVEMBER  
2006  
€5

incorporating...

residential  
**systems**  
europe

Our monthly supplement  
for systems integration in  
the home environment



**Madrid calling**  
Spain's parliament gets a  
custom makeover



**Screen tests**  
Cinema systems under  
the spotlight



**Supporting role**  
The truth about furniture  
and mounts

## Shadow boxing

Spotting the trends in show lighting  
design and technology



### Show Command: Complete Control

Klark Teknik Show Command provides full control of loudspeaker system equalisation, management and routing from both dedicated hardware and intuitive software user interfaces.

Visit [www.klarkteknik.com](http://www.klarkteknik.com) for further information.



**KLARK TEKNIK**  
SIGNAL PROCESSING BY DEFINITION

There's much excitement about the advent of HD – tinged with disappointment that it is proving so slow to arrive – broadcasts are limited in number – and anticipation about the advent of HD-DVD and/or Blu-Ray. SIM2, the Italian projector manufacturer, is positioning itself slightly ahead of the curve with the recently announced Grand Cinema HT5000 – the first home theatre projector, according to SIM2 UK managing director Alan Roser, to feature three chip 1080p DLP technology.

Lionel Sherman is president of French home automation specialist Henri Intégrateur Domotique. "In the majority of cases, the client trusts his integrator – he knows that the integrator knows more than he does, and is prepared to be guided in terms of the best choices available within his budget. It's important that we don't just assume that we know

opposing point of view. "Disc will never die!" he proclaims. "For a start, most people's back catalogue is simply way too large for them to consider getting rid of it. Second, if you care about audio quality, you're not going to want to compromise by using the compression that's common with most servers."

Chris Janes puts the case for the defence. "Today's audio servers – like the Imerge S3000 SoundServer – deliver a level of audio quality well beyond what many people have ever experienced. Like any source: when it's connected to equally capable amplifiers and speakers, it does what all good hi-fi should do – it lets the music bypass your ears and enter your soul."

Perhaps Lionel Sherman has the most perceptive position: "It's not just for the whole host of practical reasons that disc-based entertainment will survive and prosper," he says.

minutes and the small amount of storage space it takes to download a music track is convenient enough," he says, "but we're still not close to that level of convenience when it comes to downloading good quality video." It will likely just be a matter of time.

In fact, it seems as if the way forward is an all-embracing one which includes not only networked attached storage and disc-based sources – but also portable devices. No-one in the industry believes that, for example, an iPod can ever be at the heart of a serious audio system (not just a function of its sound quality, but also the inherent problems likely to be caused by its portability) – but provision needs to be made for it within the system. The issue is not whether it can or should be integrated – it's how to do so seamlessly.

"The big issue is one of how you control a device like an iPod in an analogue

outstanding system, even if they don't entirely appreciate what it delivers. Integrators acknowledge that as a reality – even if they're not entirely comfortable with it. Business is, of course, business.

It's true that the majority of installers and integrators are, at heart, audiophile and videophiles – and, given the opportunity, would probably never compromise on quality. Compromise is, however, an inevitability – whether in terms of the available technology, in terms of the available budget, or in terms of delivering a system that the customer can actually use and feel comfortable with.

Chris Janes again. "The user interface is the number one concern for any integrated system," he says. "There is simply no point in setting up a system that the customer can't get to grips with intuitively, as it will quickly lose its appeal and lead to frustration and disappointment." For some integrators, optimum quality and optimum usability are at two ends of a scale: the art is to strike the right balance.

The enormous range of sources for entertainment in the home have perhaps been the primary driver for the residential systems industry. The fact that that range of sources is growing, and looks set to continue to grow, is unquestionably good news. As Tom Fenwick-Brown says:

"There has never been a better time for skilled, trained independent installers and integrators to capitalise on the opportunities presented by a market that continues to expand rapidly as a result of an ever more fantastic technology at ever more affordable prices. Our challenge, as a community, is to fully understand that technology and apply it to meet the needs our customers tell us they have." ■



## 'It's easy to forget the role that sentiment plays... We attach a significance to media that we can touch and feel that is hard to explain' Lionel Sherman, Henri Intégrateur Domotique

what he wants – there's no substitute for listening and understanding."

Any discussion of audio quality inevitably leads to a discussion about whether vinyl and compact disc have any future as sources – or whether the future is in solid state and/or hard disk-based storage and distribution. Unsurprisingly, Chris Janes, brand manager at Imerge, has a clear point of view. "There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we about to see a wholesale changeover from disc-based media to entertainment via network-attached storage," he says. "We're seeing spectacular growth in sales of sound and media servers – but it's the iPod that is really the writing on the wall for disk-based entertainment." He does go on, however, to say that he believes that "people are not simply going to bin their DVD or CD collections overnight."

Some are not so convinced about network-attached storage. "Vinyl is still my favourite," says Chris Adair. "CD still sounds better than most servers, which is strange: there's no reason why that should be the case given the high bit rate encoding that's possible."

And as convinced as Chris Janes may be that servers are the future, Joe Thurston is equally convinced of the

"We very easily forget, in our technology-driven industry, the role that sentiment plays. We attach a significance to media that we can touch and feel that is hard to explain, but that is none the less important for that."

The imponderable is, of course, the impact of music file download, and whether it moves out of its teenage niche and into the mainstream. Today's downloaders are happy enough to play their MP3 files on their PCs or their portable players, sacrificing audio quality for convenience (and affordability), and will occasionally burn them to CD. Will tomorrow's downloads end up on an audio server? And as Neil Fry points out: "The few

environment," says Jeremy Aston. "You can plug it in – but you can't easily control it remotely. What do you do for a user interface? Whether it's an iPod or a music server, you need to not just be able to control volume and skip tracks as you would do with a basic level of CD control – you need to be able to browse the content and manage playlists, for example, as well as all the basic play functions."

There are many who point out that any high end audiovisual system is as much about perception and lifestyle as it is about the true quality of the output, whether video or audio. For a sizeable proportion of customers, it's important that they 'know' they have an



The rush toward whole-house distribution enhances the appeal of servers – but at what cost in terms of quality?

www.awe-europe.co.uk  
www.cornflake.co.uk  
www.flamingbox.com  
www.henri.fr  
www.imerge.co.uk  
www.marantz.com  
www.realitylogic.com  
www.sim2.co.uk  
www.zeroplusuk.com