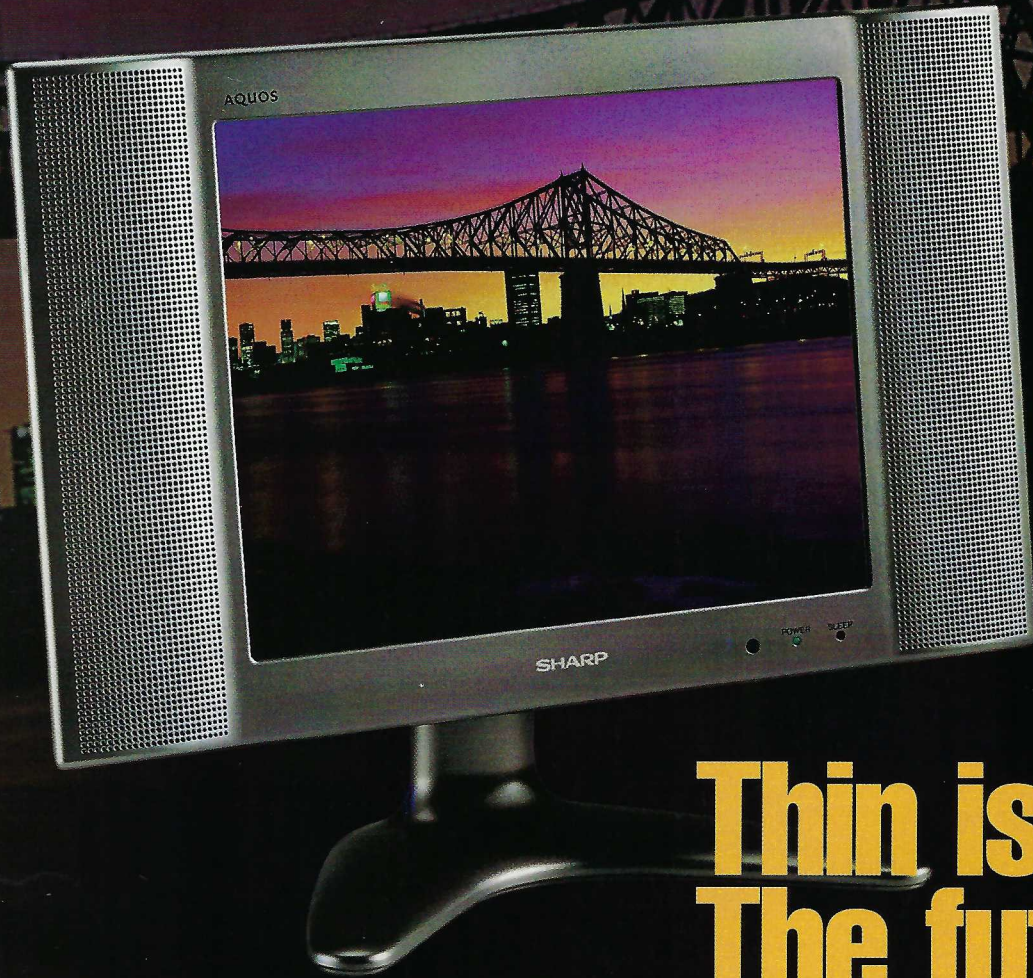


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**Thin is 'in':
The future of
video display**



WHAT'S HOT IN 12-VOLT

MANUFACTURERS OFFER THEIR PREDICTIONS ABOUT WHICH PRODUCTS WILL MAKE SUMMER SALES SIZZLE, WHILE MASTER INSTALLERS SHARE TIPS & TRICKS OF THE TRADE

BY MICAH SHEVELOFF

WISDOM FROM THE INSTALLATION BAY

Once the summer heat of July has descended upon us, 12-volt manufacturers have already established which of their products is this year's 'hit record.' Such trends may have an impact on future designs and determine which models will be dropped or continued through the following year. We have composed some comments from industry leaders, grading spring and summer sales and giving a preliminary indication of what's hot.

Rob Lopez, Panasonic:

The Panasonic CY-VMD9000U in-dash monitor with DVD (MSRP: \$1,999) is a DIN-sized monitor that

incorporates a DVD drive on board. The unit can be used as a stand-alone video system, or with either of two hideaway tuner/amp packs that are available. Lopez explained that the more expensive of the two-tuner/amp units is the CA-TU9000U, which incorporates five channels of amplification

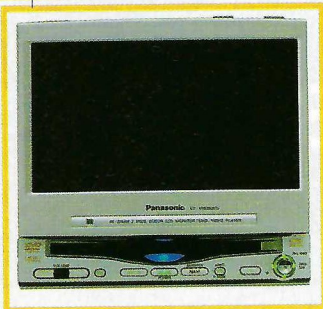
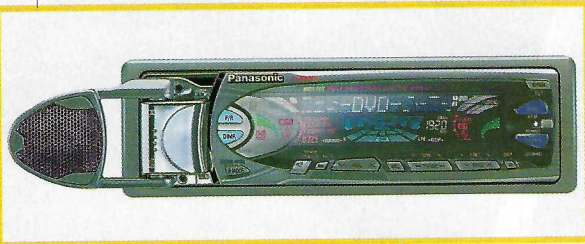
and both Dolby and DTS processing. "We expected these units to sell well. However, I was surprised at the growing interest in multi-channel processing amongst consumers," added Lopez. "The step-up tuner/amp with the Dolby and DTS has far outsold the basic unit, which simply provides AM/FM/ and amplification.

Another unit that has generated excitement for consumers is the Panasonic CQ-DVR909U all-in-one DVD receiver. With an

DAVID RIVERA, PRESIDENT, FISHMAN AUDIO, MIRAMAR, FLORIDA



Rivera, a specialist in custom fabrication, was bursting with excitement about a new sculptable plastic he is using. The material is see-through, can be molded to virtually any shape, and can be used to create amazing cosmetic effects. Rivera pointed out that this is a new application for the material, so he has had to do hours of experimentation in order to master the techniques necessary to artfully apply the plastic. Additionally, he is using a moldable rubber material, like that found in handle grips, to create inserts that have a tactile feel on certain custom pieces he has fabricated. Rivera has also created a system where he can blend aluminum and Plexiglas pieces, buffing them in such a way that you cannot see where one ends and the other begins.

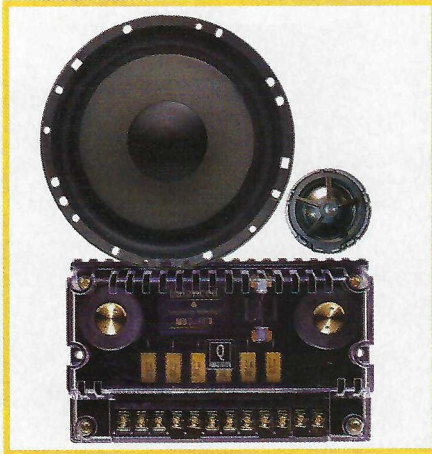


Panasonic's CQ-DVR909U all-in-one DVD receiver (above), and the CY-VMD9000U in-dash monitor with DVD (left)

MSRP of \$1,499, consumers are amazed that they can purchase a tuner, CD player, DVD-Audio and DVD-Video player with Dolby, DTS, an on-board center channel, and a five-channel amp. "We have created an entirely new category with this feature group," says Lopez. "We see the DVD receiver replacing the CD receiver as the head unit of the future." Sales of the CQ-DVR909U have been excellent, he says. Panasonic also offers a complete entertainment package in a box, called the PKG-DVD1. Included is an overhead console with monitor, a DVD video/CD audio player, and two sets of wireless headphones. MSRP on the complete sys-



tem is \$1,599, and Lopez indicated that sales have been outrageous. The final category of mobile electronics products that Panasonic has seen do very well this summer has been the range of CD receivers featuring their 3D DOT Matrix display. "The display is cool because it is menu-driven, highly interactive, and the consumer can personalize the unit via the display options. We have seen overwhelming sales of this category because these features appeal to the car audio-buying demographic," said Lopez. MSRP ranges from \$349 to \$1,599.



The MB Quart QSD216 automotive component loudspeaker system

Keith Lehmann, MB Quart:

"Our \$1,500 QSD216 automotive component loudspeaker system is in high demand. We're not very surprised however, because due to the uncertainties at retail, the upgrade portion of the market has dropped severely, leaving the entry level

and high end to account for the majority of loudspeaker sales. The low end of the market rises and falls with temperature, but retailers will continue to enjoy consistent activity at the high end as long as their product mix includes high-end products and their sales staff is qualified and confident enough to

close the high-end sale."



Kicker's Spike speaker guards, for square Solobaric L7s, and in their round version (above)

Steve Irby, Stillwater Designs:

"The hottest products for Kicker this summer are our new entry-level Comp woofers — introduced at CES, and our high-end square subwoofers, the Solobaric L7s. We've heard from our dealers that what's moving is the lower-priced products and the higher-priced products. There seems to be less activity in the mid-priced area, and we concur. Overall, the subwoofer category is showing strong growth for us this season. Another product that's hot for Kicker is our new Spike speaker guards. These aggressive, cast-aluminum grilles come in square (for the Solobaric L7s) and round for our other

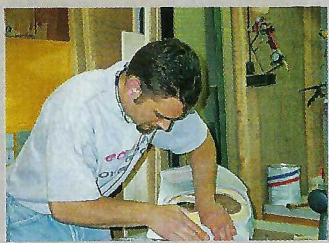
drivers. They are also compatible with some woofers from other manufacturers. The Spike grilles have become an extremely popular accessory this year, and we attribute their success to their radical looks and reasonable price."

Ed Mims, Cerwin Vega:

"Our new HED line of speakers and woofers has been red hot this summer, because we have targeted very aggressive price-points.

WISDOM FROM THE INSTALLATION BAY

CHRIS POUND, INSTALLATION MANAGER, TWEETER, ETC., NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT



Pound, working on a speaker pod

"There are a couple of Fiberglas mats that I have found to be exceptional in car-audio-type applications," says Pound. The first is a uniquely strong combination of 24-oz. woven stitched mat and 15-oz. chopped mat, called a Roving mat. Pound uses this material to strengthen subwoofer enclosures, especially with the ever-increasing output capability of today's woofers. The second type is called a Double Bias, and is actually two layers of chopped mat stitched together. Pound explained that the combination of strength and flexibility make this mat great for use in odd shapes and corners. Pound added that the Roving mat is superior for covering large, flat areas because of its amazing rigidity.

Another respected Tweeter Installer, Ainslie Fukuda, shared a fabrication tip

with Pound, who makes use of it regularly. When constructing kick panels or door pods, Pound utilizes this technique instead of the traditional method that requires numerous ring jigs and stapled hardboard strips. The technique Fukuda uses involves a top jig, an insert panel, and a bottom jig. The smaller insert panel is sandwiched between the top and bottom jigs, like an Oreo cookie. This creates a space between the two "cookies" and the smaller insert ring (the "cream filling"). After applying mold release to the jigs and drilling holes through the entire assembly, Duraglass is smeared in the space around the perimeter of the assembly. Once it cures, the "cookie" is disassembled, and the result is a perfectly sized Bond-O ring! This process saves considerable time versus the traditional method, making custom work attainable for a larger group of consumers.



A wooden top and bottom jig surround a Bond-O ring built using Fukuda's "technique"



Many of the HED products are priced in the mainstream of our retailer's promotional activity," explained Mims. The Cerwin



Vega HED line consists of woofers ranging in size from 8" to 15", four sets of component speakers, and five sets of multi-elements (coaxial). "We had expected the HED line to do incredibly well, and we haven't been disappointed," added Mims. Many of the multi-element and component speakers in the HED series replaced an existing line from Cerwin Vega called Stealth. The new models bring improved performance and a higher degree of cosmetic appeal to the marketplace. As an example of the value and aggressive pricing, consumers can purchase a dual voice coil Cerwin Vega HED 12" woofer for \$119 MSRP.

Bob Law, Kenwood:

Kenwood reports that sales of middle-range and high-end products have been stronger than at the entry level, especially in the mobile video, head unit, and sub-woofer categories. Kenwood has brought several CD/MP3 head units to the marketplace, and retailers cannot get their hands on enough of them, says Law. The KDC-MP8017 is an AM/FM/CD/MP3 player with the Dmask face and a 47 watt x 4-channel internal power amplifier. The KDC-MP8017 retails for \$360.

Another success story is the Kenwood Excelon KVT-910DVD, which is a flagship mobile entertainment center retailing at \$2,800. The KDC-910DVD provides a motorized 6.5" high-resolution LCD, and complete touch-screen control, including the functions of



Part of Cerwin Vega's HED series are the HED-8 woofer (left) and the HED-1693 multi-element driver (above)

the soon-to-be-released Kenwood navigation system. The KDC-910DVD also comes with a TV tuner. Also within the Excelon line, Kenwood has introduced a sleek and elegant AM/FM/CD/MP3 player that is Sirius satellite ready, called the Z828. The unit features a 47 watt x 4-channel internal amplifier and carries a retail price of \$700.

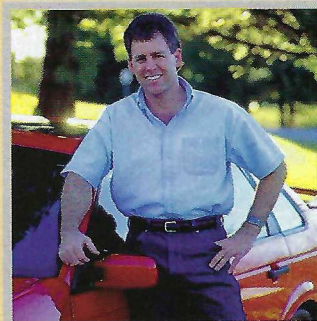
Steve Witt, Alpine:

Alpine has seen the sales of several units do quite well this season, including some new categories for the brand. The TMX-R680 is a 6.8" active-matrix LCD screen for rear-seat entertainment. The unit incorporates a system called SmartView, which allows the screen to be set at an optimum viewing angle. The LCD is motorized and operates via a remote control, and is capable of a 30° swing to each side. There is an IR receiver built in for wireless headphones, as well as two inputs for wired headphones. The TMX-R680 has a retail price of \$1,000. More traditionally for Alpine, sales have been brisk in the head unit category as well. The CDA-7875 is a CD player with a modern silver finish and blue display, appealing to the younger demographic. The unit also boasts a 60-watt x 4-channel internal amplifier and Alpine's Bass Engine Plus. Witt added that the Bass Engine Plus allows a level of control and flexibility for the consumer that is really helping to drive sales. The CDA-7875 also has a motorized SwingFace that can be removed for safekeeping, and is XM Satellite-ready. The CDA-7875 retails for \$450. Another model doing very well in 2001 is the SWR-1240D, a 12" woofer designed to produce big bass from a small enclosure. "This woofer provides consumers with awesome perfor-

WISDOM FROM THE INSTALLATION BAY

ROB PUTMAN, PRESIDENT, SOUNDGATE, SHERIDAN, WYOMING

Putman reports that his company has created a new interface device designed to allow installers to replace a factory head unit in any car with an ONSTAR system. "The STARMOD 1 is the first



adapter that enables the installer to properly interface the ONSTAR system so that none of the critical safety features are compromised. If there is an accident, the monitoring center must be able to communicate with the driver of the car, and the STARMOD 1 makes this possible." Additionally, the device can be wired to mute the stereo system when the ONSTAR is activated. "Almost every



2002 GM vehicle will ship from the factory with ONSTAR," says Putman, who clearly sees a growing need for such an interface.



mance and value," Witt added. The SWR-1240D retails for \$220. From the new "x" series speakers, the

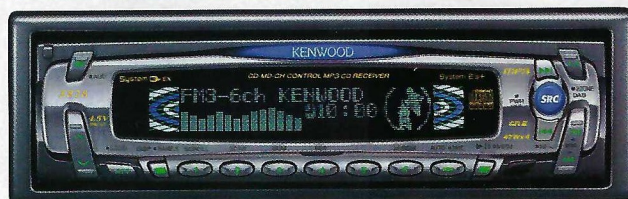
SPX-177A has also been popular this season. The 6.5" components set is about "sound, sound, sound," reports Witt, and also steps on some pretty impressive competition at its price point. The SPX-177A retails for \$450 per pair. Lastly, Alpine has had tremendous success with its Mobile Multimedia stations, and the CVA-1003 is no different. The CVA-1003 has an internal 45-watt x 4-channel amplifier, Alpine's Bass Engine technology, and is XM Satellite-ready. The CVA-1003 was designed to offer consumers a retractable 6.5" screen to



Alpine's TMX-R680 (above), a 6.8" active-matrix LCD screen that uses SmartView, which permits the screen to be set at an optimum viewing angle



Kenwood's KVT-910DVD mobile entertainment center (above, left) and the Sirius-Satellite-ready Z828 AM/FM/CD/MP3 player (above, right)

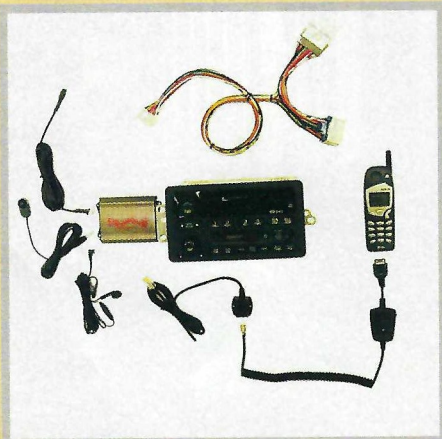


control an Alpine navigation system along with all of the basics for a great audio system, at a lower price than last year's offering. The CVA-1003 retails for \$1,100.

WISDOM FROM THE INSTALLATION BAY

GARY BIGGS, INSTALLATION INSTRUCTOR, STILLWATER DESIGNS

"I am very impressed with a new stretchable mold fabric available from Select Products," says Biggs. The mold fabric is thick and retains its shape nicely, making the fabrication of custom pieces a less frustrating task. Once the thick fabric is stretched over the desired area, resin can be applied. "I use a paint brush to apply the resin, and then a Bond-O spreader to force the resin deep into the fabric, making a 1/4"-thick layer," explained Biggs. "I then use a polyester primer (sprayable Bond-O), also applying a thick layer into all of the imperfections in the surface of the resin. This saves enormous amounts of sanding time, reducing the cost of the custom work and making it an option for many more consumers than before, while still retaining profitability for the retailer." Robert Garza, president of Select Products, commented that his company makes available a two-part instructional video tape illustrating how the mold fabric, spray poly, and other fabrication products are properly used.



PIE's Speakeasy system

Speakeasy. The Speakeasy is a universal hands-free cell phone adapter that uses an FM-modulator, an earphone, and an external microphone to convert any factory car radio into a safety-enhancing hands-free kit. The motorist can hear a caller through the vehicle's audio system, or simply press a privacy button to use the provided earphone. The Speakeasy is also capable of muting the audio system when the phone is in use, and the device will charge the battery on most models of cellular phones. There are numerous "docking ports" available for the Speakeasy, providing a safe resting place for the phone while it is in use.

Biggs is also excited about a new device available from Precision Interface Electronics called the

Amazingly, this year's group of mobile electronics hot-sellers is a sure indicator as to how dramatically the 12-volt business has changed in recent years. Manufacturers have created trends and been forced to keep up with consumer demand for more excitement and wilder technology. Personalized displays, DVD-based navigation systems, MP3 players, and rear-seat video have all taken charge to drive a rapidly changing industry and keep retailers busy through the heat of the summer. 🚩