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INNOVATIONS IN 12-VOLT

A LOOK AT WHAT SOME MAJOR MOBILE ELECTRONICS COMPANIES ARE OFFERING RETAILERS THIS SPRING **BY MICAH SHEVELOFF**

New-product highlights from **Panasonic** include the CQ-DF802U, a CD receiver that features the new Ghost display technology, which provides a higher level of security and style. The face of this new unit electronically disappears when powered off, turning completely black. Seven new source units from Panasonic will play MP3 files, and the entire new line of CD receivers will also play CD-RW. Panasonic has also introduced a new cosmetic design found only on a select few CD receivers. It



Panasonic's Bentley demo vehicle



MTX's Ford Escape demo vehicle

incorporates a slim front panel that is designed to sit more flush when installed in a dashboard, and it uses a new rotary control and higher-definition 3DDM display graphics. Additionally, Panasonic has launched its second generation of DVD Audio-ready speakers, featuring a Round Leaf tweeter that can extend up to 80kHz. The added performance is designed to support the increased audio frequency response of the DVD format. Panasonic is the first and only company to market a line of DVD Audio-ready speakers.

The **Xtant** line benefits from the debut of a new titanium finish found on the A-series of amplifiers. The new look complements an already exciting lineup for '02, highlighted by the arrival of the new Xtant demo vehicle, the Saturn Vue. The Vue is so new that Saturn had to provide Xtant with a prototype ver-

sion in order to ready the vehicle in time for the company's CES booth last month.

MTX is making several introductions this spring; some are on display in its new demo SUV, the Ford Escape. The company has announced the debut of coaxial speakers that feature injection-molded cones and NBR rubber surrounds. It has also introduced a line of Class D sub enclosures designed to match the correct impedance in configurations of two and three drivers, to the MTX Class D amplifiers. The Thunder 6000 and 8000 series of woofers will now feature dual-voice-coil

options for 2002, as well.

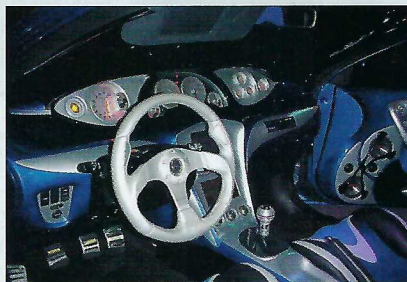
Coustic has introduced real carbon-fiber woofer cones for use on the CF woofers in 2002. Additionally, there's a buzz in 12-volt circles being generated by the elaborate signal-processing capabilities found on the new XM6 electronic crossover.

There are many new offerings from **Alpine** for 2002, and its latest demo vehicle, an Acura RSX, is drawing quite a bit of attention. It's the latest in a series of creations by installers Chris Yato and Steve Brown; the two teamed up with Wings West, a company specializing

in performance upgrades. In product news, the F#1 Status line of high-end components has two new family members: a three-way component speaker set called the SPX-Z18T, and a very high-fidelity four-channel amp that will not actually debut until later this year. The 2002 lineup will also include CD changers that also play CD-R/RW discs, and a new six-CD changer that also plays MP3-encoded material. Due to the recent popularity of MP3, Alpine has incorporated its DSP-based Media Xpander correction technology into all of its MP3-supported receivers and tuners for '02. The new model year will also see the debut of two PhantomFace DIN-size head units with 30% larger retractable faceplates and rotary controls.

JVC has taken an aggressive approach to capturing new market share with its '02 car audio line. A new ad campaign will include sports stars and artists such as Shaun Palmer, Nikki Sixx, Tantric, and Third Eye Blind. Additionally, JVC has announced a new marketing relationship with

Urban Decay Cosmetics in an effort to reach the vast population of potential female consumers. There are two CD receivers for 2002 that have been designed specifically to appeal to females. There are also signature series amps tagged with the same logo as the Shaun Palmer snowboard, and Nikki Sixx has been involved in the design and marketing of a 900-watt amp with his name

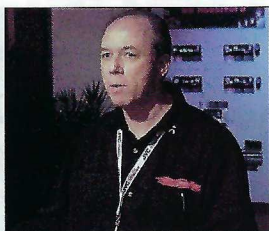


Alpine's Acura RSX demo vehicle interior

on the chassis. The mobile electronics line from JVC for 2002 includes multimedia-ready head units, and CD receivers that will play back CD, CD-R, CD-R/W, and MP3.

Clarion has announced that it is making a dramatic change in its distribution channels beginning in 2002, with a focus on the independent retailer. "These steps are imperative to increasing our worth to the specialist dealers," says Frank Pierce, vice president of sales at Clarion. The multimedia product line for '02 will include a motorized, fold-out, touch-panel LCD monitor (VRX925VD), and a Sirius-satellite-ready, Pro Audio CD receiver with DVD changer controls and a unique motorized, black anodized aluminum face that moves to reveal a hidden display (DXZ925). Clarion has also announced that its long-awaited Joyride navigation multimedia product will ship in 2002.

New **Sirius Satellite Radio** CEO Joe Clayton is vowing to the industry that he will help Sirius make the transition "from a vision concept to a premier entertainment company. We've raised \$158 million in gross proceeds, which provides funding through 2003," he asserted at Sirius's CES press event, saying his company's satellite radio service was "the next great CE product." He rebuffed criticism of the company as an also-ran, saying that "being second to introduce [after XM] is not a factor — a few months won't make any difference. Consumer awareness is still low enough — and I'm not disappointed to have just one competitor." Citing origi-

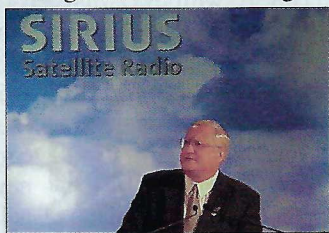


JVC's Tom Caronia

nality as a fundamental difference between Sirius and XM, Clayton stated, "We're not 'recycled' radio." He made the remarks during the announcement of Sirius' preliminary rollout schedule, currently under way through Feb.

14. Clayton also spoke about a series of multiple advertising and service-pricing tactics that would be tested on a market-per-market basis, and he unveiled a model of a 65-foot Ferris wheel which will spin full-size cars, each showcasing different music genres on Sirius' "Rhythm of the Road" tour.

Meanwhile, **XM Satellite Radio** CEO Hugh Panero pointed out that last year, XM was merely a "PowerPoint presentation," and in one year, the company has turned concept into reality, having successfully launched the service and signed up over 30,000 subscribers within the first 60 days. Panero was optimistic that the initial sales momentum



Joe Clayton, new Sirius CEO

was an indicator that the public would pay for better-quality, commercial-free radio programming. Additionally, General Motors has announced that XM-ready receivers will be factory equipment in 23 car models, providing a great opportunity to expose even more of the public to the concept of a subscription-based satellite radio service.



Ray Windsor, Audiobahn

Audiobahn is creating some excitement by introducing a series of rack-mount electronics for the auto-

otive environment. There is a selection of 10 amps, as well as a line driver, a bass driver, a 40-band EQ and a three-way crossover, all available as rack-mount components. Additionally, Audiobahn has created a new look with a cast "flame" woofer basket, made of cast aluminum. The new baskets are available on 10", 12", and 15" woofer sizes, and are chrome-plated.

AAMP of America is offering a bevy of incentives to its Stinger dealers, the sweetest of which is the "King of Sting" grand prize awarding a five-day trip for two to Jamaica. Other sales incentives include Stinger-branded clothing and Florida vacations.

Among the new products this spring from **Sony Mobile** are the MEX-5DI color TFT-screen head unit, with CD-R/RW and MP3 playback, flip-out faceplate and motorized CD tray, and the MEX-HD1 hard drive head unit, with storage for up to 165 hours of music, 8x ripping speed, Memory Stick compatibility, and a flip-out



The Kenwood rear-entertainment video screen

faceplate with motorized CD tray.

Kenwood is introducing several new products this spring. Among the most notable is the Music Keg, a high-capacity digital music storage and playback mobile audio system that's said to bridge the gap between desktop and vehicle music environments. The Music Keg features 10GB of storage capacity, and the necessary software to record, organize, and play MP3, WMA, and WAV music files. The Music Keg is designed to work with all 1999-and-later Kenwood head units that offer CD changer controls and CD text capability. Powered with technology developed by a California-based company called PhatNoise, the system includes a

USB cradle, the 10GB cartridge, and the typically trunk-mounted Music Keg. Kenwood has also introduced several products in the head unit, sub, amp and video categories. The 2002 lineup features 14 CD receivers. Four of the new units are capable of playing MP3, and 10 are Sirius Satellite-ready. New video offerings include a 10-disc DVD changer, three stand-alone LCD color video screens, and a DVD-based navigation system.

A clear focal point at **Rockford Fosgate** is the new Type RF amplifier line, shipping in mid-February. The seven-model range uses ultra-high-performance

MOSFETs interfaced with Rockford's MEHSA substrates. It also features an inner plenum designed, says the company, to optimize the fan-cooled heat

sink, which results in bettered heat dissipation through forced convection. It also adopts the same Transnova topology used in Hafler recording-studio amps. The company has also upped both power and performance specs on its signature Punch and Power Series amp lines.

Pioneer introduction highlights include the Model DEH-P90HDD, a single-CD player outfitted with a 10GB hard-disk drive for in-car use. The unit is also equipped with Memory Stick capability and an integrated Gracenote CDDB database. Further, it is MP3- and XM Satellite Radio-ready (\$2,000). Pioneer's variety of XM-service-compatible products includes the GEX-P900M tuner, the GEX-FM903XM universal FM-modulated tuner, the DEH-P3370M head unit/tuner package and the AN-90XM antenna.

Eclipse takes the wraps off the most recent evolution of its voice-recognition command system — E-

COM III. Voice-control functions include volume level, band selection, CD track, cell phone operation and both CD mapping and GPS nav system functions, and the system's speed, memory and overall capabilities have been

increased. Its next-generation single-DIN mobile video offerings include: the AV8012 6.5" video multizone/CD/E-COM/receiver; the AV8022, which adds DVD and MP3 capabilities; and the AV8032 which adds 5.1 Dolby Digital and DTS capabilities.

JBL has released its Power Series subs. The range includes 10" and 12" single-voice-coil and 10" and 12" dual-voice-coil models. JBL says a crucial differentiating point about the series is that the models provide high-voltage sensitivity, like every other low DCR woofer, along with low-frequency extension,

making more bass regardless of the enclosure type used.

Kicker has introduced a Solo-Baric L5 square subwoofer in order to capture consumers in search of a lower-priced alternative to the already successful Solo-Baric L7. The L5 is built around a high-gauge steel basket and features Perimeter Venting for optimum cooling. The ultra-length dual voice coils are available in 2 or 4 ohms. The new L5 is available in 8", 10", 12", and 15" sizes. Kicker has also added two very shallow mid-bass drivers to its Resolution line for 2002. The 6" driver is only 2" deep, and the 8" mid-bass is only 2.25" in depth. Additionally, seven new models of KX-series amplifiers will debut in 2002, ranging from 60 to 400 watts per channel.

Memphis has announced the introduction of both the Mojo amp and the Mojo sub, available in 12" and 15" sizes. Designed for SPL competition, the amp produces



Memphis' Mojo amp

2,400 watts into a 2-ohm load. The Mojo woofers contain dual 2-ohm voice coils. Additionally, Memphis brought out the

Power Reference subwoofers, a more affordable speaker available in 10", 12", and 15" sizes. The Power Reference series comes either with single or dual 4-ohm voice coils.

Streetwires has revamped its product line. New items include the CBR44A power and ground distribution block/fuse holder and the ZN6 interconnect cables. Streetwires has also introduced a line of stiffening capacitors used for stabilizing voltage levels to amp power supplies.

New offerings from **JL Audio** this season include the W6v2 subwoofer, which uses technology found in the W7 driver at a more mainstream price-point. The W6v2 has dual 4-ohm voice coils. The TR and VR segments of the Evolution series of loudspeakers were also redesigned. And two HO bandpass enclosures are being introduced, as well as two W7 enclosures.

At **Cerwin Vega**, spring brings with it the introduction of the V-Mag Unified Component mobile audio speaker line. The company says the line provides the best of two worlds — the performance of separate components, with the convenience of a point-source configuration. Models include: the V-Mag 402 4" two-way; the V-Mag 502 5 1/4" two-way; and the V-Mag 602 6 1/2" two-way.

Lightning Audio's new Strike amplifier line has five models: three two-channel and two four-channel. Scheduled to ship in March, the line, targeted at specialists, says the company, features high-current design with low-impedance stability, new, double-sided fiberglass composite PCBs and a more efficient heatsink design.



Dan McLeod, Rockford