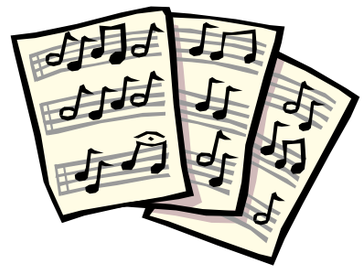
Just a Note



____ _from *INNOVATIONS* in Home Theater

May 2004 2nd Quarter Newsletter Vol. 4

HDTV Update

The number of stations broadcasting in High Definition has increased significantly since our last newsletter. Time Warner Cable now offers more than a dozen channels in High Definition, and DirecTV has eight available HD stations, plus an HD pay-per-view channel. Most prime-time shows on our local networks are also currently broadcast in HD: they can be accessed either through cable or by using an over-the-air HD antenna and a decoder. If you still have yet to experience the spectacle that is High Definition TV, we invite you to visit the store for a demonstration that you will not forget.

What's New?

We are excited to announce our newest product line: Vienna Acoustics loudspeakers. These hand-crafted speakers from Austria have literally set a new standard by which we now judge all other loudspeakers. They are guaranteed to make you dust off all your old CDs and listen to them as if for the first time. Even though this new line has barely been in our store for a month, their unmatched ability to clearly articulate even the most subtle nuances in any musical or theater application has already garnered them this weighty reputation! Their reception by our customers has been equally excellent thus far; if you have not yet heard these magnificent speakers, we invite you to stop by with your favorite CD or DVD for a brief demo. Mention this newsletter and receive 10% off any Vienna Acoustics speaker purchase thru 7/31/04.

Vienna also makes a line of thin (only 3½" deep!), more contemporarily styled speakers in their new Schönberg Series. These beautiful, brushed aluminum speakers are also extremely versatile in that they can be wall-mounted beside a plasma TV or projection screen, placed on a shelf like a conventional bookshelf speaker, or even stand freely by themselves for use as floorstanding speakers! Although they are very visually stunning, the most impressive aspect of these speakers is their sound: they are near sonic equals of their conventionally designed counterparts! The written word cannot do justice to the sonic qualities of any speaker; please come by the store so we can let the speakers to do the talking!

Speaking of plasmas, we have Pioneer's new 43" HD-ready TV on display. It utilizes card-based inputs to allow for compatibility with new digital video connections that may arise in the future. Many of you may have already seen the popular new line of table-top rear projection TVs using DLP technology. These sets are available in screen sizes from 43" to 61", but the exciting part about these display devices is their extremely slim cabinet size (the smallest set is a mere 15½" deep, and the largest only 19")! Since DLP doesn't suffer from "burn-in" or need periodic convergence, we foresee this technology as the next explosive item in the TV market.

What's on Sale?

All direct view (CRT) demo TVs are clearance priced at ½ off! These units have been properly calibrated, have very low hours (we only use them roughly once per week), and they all come with their full factory warranties!

We have also set up a "Clearance Corner" of sorts in our store which is home to bargains on open-box items, scratch & dent units, and other special clearance items which are typically marked down 35-75%! For example: Earthquake 10" sealed subwoofer – 55% off; Atlantic Technology THX-Select dipole surround speakers – 60% off; Earthquake Platine 5-speaker package – take ⅔ off!!

Oli's Corner

Lately, there's been a lot of buzz (and confusion) about the so-called "flat panel" plasma and LCD displays. Firstly, the term "flat panel" is far too ambiguous and confusing to be used in describing these TVs; while the screen on them is flat, the term is trying to identify the depth of the TV as being very slim in comparison to what we are used to seeing. We believe the term "thin panel" to be much more accurate in describing these exciting new display technologies, and it seems to infuse less confusion into an already confusing realm. Many myths regarding these sets have been formulated as of late, including: plasma TVs need their gas refilled every few years, their displays only last a couple of years before their pixels burn out, and that plasma TVs cannot incur burn-in.

Let's start from the top: plasma TVs do *not* require refilling of their gasses. In fact, this would be physically impossible to do! Plasmas are rated in half-lives, which means if a unit is rated for 25,000 hours; it will lose 50% of its brightness at that point: it does not actually burn out. Good quality plasmas will attain a half-life of 30,000 to 40,000 hours if properly calibrated. It is true that some pixels may go out completely, but if a pixel burns out, it's usually not noticeable from a normal viewing distance. Unfortunately, dead pixels can only be "remedied" by replacing the entire front panel. Read the warranty information carefully: most manufacturers will specify the acceptable number of dead pixels in a given TV. If this number is exceeded, they will typically repair or replace your TV, if it is still under warranty.

Next, we need to clarify that <u>all</u> CRT or plasma displays are prone to burn-in; DLP- and LCD-based sets are immune to this anomaly. The chance of burning an image into your screen is *greatly* reduced by setting the set's contrast back by 75% or lower and adjusting your brightness to, at most, 50%. Almost all TVs have their contrast and brightness levels set at 100% out of the box to help grab your eye at your local mass-merchant. Please be aware that leaving these settings at their stock levels will not only cause the picture to look distorted, but it will also reduce the lifespan of your TV!

Finally, while you may have noticed a recent computer retailer selling plasma TVs at or below the $3,000 price point, this is not a realistic price for a quality set. The unit in question cannot display HD, has many required items that are introduced later as hidden costs, and is actually a generic OEM unit from China (or a Republic thereof) that uses a technology that is over two years old! Please note that most of the established brands do not produce plasma TVs for less than about $4,500. Through a special buy-in, however, we can now offer a 42" ED plasma nicely equipped with speakers, a tuner, wall bracket, and a three year in-home warranty for only $3,895! See our in-store display for more details.

Final Thoughts

We enjoyed seeing many of you at the recent Home & Garden Show at the Alamodome. Mark your calendars for the Parade of Homes in the Dominion beginning September 4th!

-Oli Gulyas-
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