

»SOUND BITE

● **Prism Sound** has begun shipping its new multichannel Orpheus FireWire computer interface. "Orpheus is the end result of several years of intensive R&D," comments Graham Boswell, sales and marketing director of Prism Sound. "Our starting point was that we wanted to be able to make a computer-based FireWire interface at a price point that would be attractive to serious project studio owners and professionals, but without sacrificing many of the features and the quality of our top-of-the-range products, like the ADA-8XR." www.prismsound.com

● **TL Audio** has announced that PEK AG will be the exclusive distributor for its products in Switzerland. Both parties are said to be "excited" about the future of this partnership and for the growth of the brand in this region. The appointment coincides with the launch of TL Audio's newest range, the Ebony Series, beginning to ship worldwide, plus the arrival of the innovative Fat Track mixer. TL Audio's Sarah Yule comments "PEK are a great company and we can do great business together". <http://www.pek.ch>
<http://www.tlaudio.co.uk>

GERMANY

Black Cube Linear squaring up to pro-audio market

The exclusive use of Lehmann Audio headphone amplifiers at recent international expos by several pro-audio companies marks another step in the fast growing reputation of the Black Cube Linear range. **Marc Maes** investigates

Lehmann Audio was launched in 1988 by audio engineer Norbert Lehmann – he entered the audio market with the development of a phono stage which is used by studios and manufacturers both in Germany and abroad. Ortofon, a market leader in the field of turntable cartridges, is using Lehmann's phono preamplifiers exclusively during final manufacturing tests.

In 2003, Norbert Lehmann launched his own line of high-end headphone amplifiers offering a solution for reference quality headphone reproduction.

The headphone amplifier is available in three versions: the Black Cube

Linear with asymmetric line in/out and selectable gain, the Black Cube Linear Pro with symmetric inputs, and the Black Cube Linear USB offering asymmetric in/out and a standard USB connector, allowing both analogue and USB access – the device automatically detects the USB signal.

All audio connectors including the Neutrik phone jacks come with gold plated contacts, each Black Cube is equipped with a smooth running 27 mm ALPS high grade volume control.

"The more you listen to a headphone, the more differences you hear," Lehmann explains, "and where a less experienced user will be able to



Lehmann Audio's Black Cube headphone amplifier

distinguish the nuances in bass and treble with different brands of headphones, we attach some importance

to a very low noise floor and meticulous reconstruction of soundstage details. The key element here is that



we use top class components and special magnetically and statically shielded power transformers to get the best quality.”

In 2005, Lehmann was invited to supply the Black Cube Linear to Sennheiser for use with their dynamic headphones during the IFA fair – as a direct result, some of the Sennheiser distributors decided to include the product in their range. Also Ultrason, manufacturers of high class headphones and active in over 50 countries have been using Black Cube Linear since three years for demonstrations in the high end market niche.

In 2006, the company doubled its 2005 units sales, illustrating the success of the amplifier and Lehmann Audio noted a growth of 60% in turnover – prospects for 2007 are equally good.

“The issue of a headphone amplifier could become an important theme for a small company like Lehmann Audio,” Lehmann continues, “because most of the ‘mass market’ manufacturers don’t have a headphone amp in their range – I was convinced to be able to play a role on a high quality level, and the Black Cube Linear does.”

Lehmann says that, since 2003, his company put nearly 1,000 headphone amplifiers in the market, but that he remains in final control. “I take on the research and development for the Lehmann products – together with a colleague with technical background we develop the items which will then be assembled by a company

experienced in pro audio electronics – I also attach quite some importance to the fact that the whole process takes place in Germany.”

The fact that Lehmann Audio is a modest size company, with freelance workers for logistics, packaging of equipment and instructions is an advantage for his clients, who appreciate the direct contact between users and manufacturer. “With Norbert Lehmann we get direct feedback from the guy who built the amplifier – what else would you want?,” echoes Maarten De Boer, manager of the well-reputed The Masters mastering studio in Bontebok, the Netherlands.

“The direct contact between professional users and the manufacturers has deemed away over the years. Actually, we make special kind of use of the Black Cube Linear amplifier because we use it as monitor controller for our mastering studio. Crystal clear sound, excellent make and the direct



Inside the Black Cube: colourful components offering genuine colour not noise

feedback are crucial here.”

“I do quite a lot of classical recording work, and wanted to have a headphone amplifier that I could rely on. The

problem with headphone matrixes in consoles, or headphone amplifiers in general is that they tend to distort with higher volume levels, they colour the sound quite a lot and I needed a point of reference,” adds Steven Maes, engineer with Belgian studio Motor Music. “Also, with a digital workstation like Pro Tools or an HD recording-set, headphones are the only monitoring device we have with classical recordings. When I found Lehmann Audio on the internet, my decision was rapidly made, and the Black Cube Linear sounds great, it’s a basic element in the flight case when we record outside Motor Music.”

www.lehmannaudio.de

www.phonostage.com

www.headphone-amplifier.com



Lehmann Audio’s Black Cube Linear: used for monitoring while mastering

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Focusrite’s new ISA828 is now available. The eight channel 192kHz A-D converter is the first audio A-D converter to utilise Burr-Brown Pro Audio Amplifiers and flagship PCM4220 A-D converter chips. Specifications include a dynamic range of 122dB and jitter less than 250 picoseconds. The 25 pin D-Type connector allows seamless integration with ProTools HD, hard-disk recorders and desks. www.focusrite.com

Rainbow Post has a new website. The Soho-based post-production facility’s online presence now includes video examples of the team’s recent projects, graphics and composing, as well as news about latest projects. It also offers direct access to Rainbow’s client FTP site, and features downloadable video and audio HD production advice. www.rainbowpost.com.

Studiocare is the latest ICON dealer for Digidesign, and first to take the new D-Control ES into stock. This completes Studiocare’s line up of ProTools control surfaces. Studiocare has launched a new website, including an online store which is to set to be the UK’s first dedicated to an extensive range of high end professional audio, live sound and broadcast equipment. www.studiocare.com