Good music needs a LeadingEdge

music matters

By Alan Sircom

Last issue, I presented a pragmatic 'four feet' rule of establishing a good system; an appropriate system, appropriately accessorised and installed, for a room that is appropriately treated. Get these in balance and good sound is more or less guaranteed. Unbalance one of these and luck comes into play more and more.

Here's what I mean. Room treatment can transform a system, but too little in the wrong places and you might as well not use room treatment whatsoever, while use too much and you risk strangling the life out of a room. This is – or at least, should be – the reason you go to a specialist dealer; a good dealer can create an appropriately-designed system for you and your room, know how to install it to get the best from it and fine-tune it to extract still more. And we aren't the only people to think that way.

Vertex AQ is a popular buzzword round these parts. Actually, there are a number of companies that might never publicly admit as much, who place Vertex AQ's devices under the "damn it, they work" cognitive dissonance banner. But recently, Vertex AQ's Steve Elford (*pictured right*) has been working with Kaiser Acoustics in Germany to create the LeadingEdge product line. Vertex AQ's power and cable products remain the same, but the Ken Barlow (sorry, Kinabalu) platform has been replaced by an upgraded LeadingEdge version, that can build into a stand system.

More interesting though, the LeadingEdge brand also includes acoustic panels. Very different to the standard acoustic panels, the LeadingEdge panels actually begin to act where bass traps end, at the midband and beyond. They vary in size from mini panels designed to quieten down the space around the individual components, to large back-to-back D-shaped panels the size of old Quad Electrostatic loudspeakers.

Unlike absorbent bass traps, the LE panels have an array of tiny perforations along the veneered wooden front panel. Behind these 'micro-perf' holes, the panels have a paper honeycomb, which form small air chambers to act as a series of tiny Helmholtz resonators.

The idea is not new, but it is new to domestic audio environments. Eagle-eyed frequent fliers might have noticed the inside of the engine cowlings are covered in little perforations (to both lower noise and reduce air turbulence before it hits the front turbine) and those who have sat in large modern conference halls may have noticed the ones that don't echo have perforated acoustic panels along the walls and ceilings.

I'm not going to talk specifics, because currently Steve Dickinson has a set of LE panels in for assessment, but Steve, Roy Gregory and I all attended a session discussing the LE equipment recently, and the results (in Roy's room) were exceptionally impressive.

The LE and Vertex AQ equipment dove-tail beautifully, and interestingly when demonstrated in shows, on a variety of systems, the system always receives high praise. It fits perfectly into that four-foot foundation discussed earlier too.

I love it when a plan comes together. +