

Boom for a-v suppliers

Dubai and the Gulf region are experiencing a boom that is creating demand for a-v products and services in hotels, offices, shopping malls, visitor centres and residential accommodation. **Geny Caloisi** went to the PALME show to take a look at the market

DUBAI IS THE city of gold. The town of the future. The place where dreams can come true.

It is part of the United Arab Emirates, a country that didn't find its fortune by rubbing a magic lamp, but by finding oil in its back garden. But the government does not want to rely on oil for its future because it is a limited resource. Instead, the focus is on tourism and property development.

The city never sleeps now, with construction going on day and night, and it is fertile soil in which the a-v industry is starting to flourish.

All parties interested in the a-v industry gathered at this year's Professional Audio and Light Middle East (PALME) exhibition in Dubai on May 20-22. According to organiser IIR Worldwide, more than 7,000 visitors attended the three-day event. There were 272 exhibitors representing 800 companies at the fifth staging of PALME. The show was successful for exhibitors and visitors and allowed AV to question how things work in this part of the world and who is doing what.

BIGGER AND BETTER

Every new building in Dubai has to out smart its predecessor. Luxury, comfort and ease of use are essential.

Many of the residential properties are second homes for



their owners, so are empty for a good part of the year. Having an automated system that can manage the climate and security of the property when the owner is not there is becoming a must-have in new developments.

Mark Coombes, from Opus, has been in Dubai for five years and saw the property boom at its peak. 'A few years ago people would queue over night to buy a flat,' says Coombes. 'Estate agents would give buyers sometimes just 60 seconds to decide whether they wanted to buy the property or not. Once the deal was closed, they could double their money just by walking to the end of the queue and selling the property to the people that already knew that by the time they got to the desk there would be no more flats for them.'

But it's not just the residential market that is buying control systems – hotels, offices and developers are also strong customers.

DUBAILAND, THE NEW DISNEY

The developers' influence is obvious. For example, Dubailand, a member of Tatweer – which manages



Dubai's is fertile soil in which the a-v industry is starting to flourish – and the launch of Dubailand, shown left, can only help



ABOUT THE MARKETPLACE

THE NAME DUBAI can either refer to one of the seven emirates that constitute United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the eastern Arabian Peninsula, or that emirate's main city, sometimes called "Dubai city" to distinguish it from the emirate.

The modern emirate of Dubai was created with the formation of the United Arab Emirates in 1971. However, written accounts documenting the existence of the city have been around for at least 150 years prior to the formation of the UAE.

Dubai has the largest population and is the second-largest emirate by area, after

In its origins, Dubai was just a fishing town, which lived mainly off the commerce that came through its coast and the cultivation of pearls. Once oil was found – not in Dubai but in some of the other emirates – the cityscape started to grow at an incredible pace. However, revenues from petroleum and natural gas contribute to less than three per cent of Dubai's US\$46bn economy (2006). Most of the emirate's revenues are from the Jebel Ali free zone and, increasingly, from tourism and other service businesses. Dubai has attracted world-wide attention through innovative real-estate

projects and sports events.

Service industries such as IT and finance are flourishing with the establishment of a new Dubai International Financial Centre.

The government has set up 23 industry-specific free zones throughout the city. Dubai Internet City, combined with Dubai Media City as part of TECOM (Dubai Technology, Electronic Commerce and Media Free Zone Authority) is one such enclave whose tenants include IT firms such as EMC Corporation, Oracle Corporation, Microsoft, and IBM, and media organisations such as MBC, CNN, Reuters and AP.

a dynamic portfolio of Dubai Holding companies – has obtained the green light from Dubai Municipality for 16 of its master plans. The projects will create the world's most ambitious family entertainment destination in the middle of the desert.

The plans are that Dubailand will contain 45 mega-projects and more than 200 tourism, leisure and entertainment sub projects. On completion, the Dubailand theme park will be twice the size of the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, making it the biggest theme park in the world. Phase 1 of the Dubailand project will extend from 2007 to 2010 and the final phase will be completed between 2015 and 2018.

The development includes six themed areas, which focus on different aspects of the Dubailand experience. Each area, is called a 'World' and the family, attractions and experience worlds will have a mass of themed, large-scale attractions, using the latest technology for thrills and safety. The experience world alone will cover 145m sq and has a budget of AED 6.8bn for the 14 projects within it.

Other zones include a sports and outdoor world; an eco-tourism world, with a dinosaur theme park; a themed leisure and vacation world; a retail and entertainment world and a mix of entertainment and places to eat downtown.

Dubailand will be located 60 minutes from Abu Dhabi, 10 minutes from the Dubai Airport and 20 minutes from Sharjah.

Christie opens Dubai office

PROJECTION: TO BETTER support its customer relationships in the Middle East, Christie has set up an office in Dubai,



at the recently inaugurated Emirates Group Security HQ in the Dubai Airport Free Zone.

The HQ is operated by Transguard Group, part of the Emirates Group, and uses display systems from Christie's command and control portfolio to create the hub of a new 24/7 security and surveillance operation at Dubai International Airport.

Christie's Dubai will make further investment in the local team, growing capability in all operational areas, including technical services, logistics, administration and sales.

WWW.CHRISTIEDIGITAL.COM

Dubai gets Creative

EVENTS: CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY has open an operating division to service its expanding client base in the Middle East and Gulf region.

The company has been active in the Gulf, from its London base, for several years. It supplied LED screens to major events such as the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix, as well as corporate events for local and

international production businesses.

Damien McGurn, a veteran of the region's event staging industry, will head the new venture as general manager. He will be joined by Mark Woodhouse, who moves to Dubai from CT London, as project director providing the interface with CT's systems and processes in the UK.

The initial equipment inventory will include the region's first fully-digital portable production unit (PPU), 10k and 20k DLP projectors, LED Screens, with fully-configured Barco Encore widescreen control systems and ancillary staging equipment.

'We have seen the events market in Dubai mature in recent years', said Charlie Whittock, md of CT London. 'There are many specialist production companies working alongside the established full-service equipment houses. We see a demand for the sophisticated and innovative service that CT is known for, from local customers and international event producers working in the area.'

WWW.CTLONDON.COM

Living the e-Home lifestyle with Domia automation

RESIDENTIAL: E-HOME AUTOMATION presented its new e-HomeDomia Lifestyle system, a smart living solution for homeowners and developers in the UAE, at PALME.

Developed in partnership with Intel Corporation, e-HomeDomia Lifestyle allows customers to control their home cost-effectively from anywhere in the world.

At the exhibition, the company was joined by European smart home developer Domia and Intel to show the latest Domia Harmony software.

'To control your home from a central point, either remotely or locally through a variety of multi-functional interfaces, is now an integral part of everyday contemporary living,' says Khalifa AAAljaziri, managing director of e-Home Automation. 'e-HomeDomia Lifestyle is superior to other smart-home products on the market as it provides a greater range of user interfaces – such as Vista MCE, mobile phone and web interfaces – than competitors.'

WWW.DOMIALIFESTYLE.COM

Gearhouse invests in HD with Christie's Roadster

EVENTS: GEARHOUSE STAGING Connections, a Dubai-based supplier of production services and presentation equipment to the corporate event and entertainment industry, has moved into the high-definition market by investing in a pair of Christie Roadster HD18K projectors.

Gearhouse managing director Peter McCann confirmed the purchase of the Christie projectors as part of an overall technology investment worth \$5m, which coincides with Gearhouse's move into a new 75,000 sq ft facility at Dubai Investment Park. The order also includes 200m2 of Lighthouse high-resolution LCD media displays and Vista Spyder video processing systems.

WWW.CHRISTIEDIGITAL.COM

WWW.GEARHOUSE-ARABIA.COM

Lighthouse eyes Dubai

GIANT SCREENS: LIGHTHOUSE Technologies sees the Middle East as an important emerging market and is broadening its presence in the area.

It is considering about opening an office in Dubai soon,

CEDIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS:

CEDIA was present at this year's PALME exhibition to talk to visitors about the benefits that its membership brings and handed out forms to potential new members in the region. CEDIA offered four, three-hour courses at the event: 'Home Cinema Design', 'Introduction To Systems Integration' and 'Residential Audio and Video Multiroom Systems'. There was also a one-day, project-management workshop, which provided a foundation of project management, paying particular attention to the initiating phase.

WWW.CEDIA.CO.UK

EXTRON EXHIBITS AND EDUCATES

SYSTEMS: PRESENT WITH

its traditional big blue stand and its much sought-after tweakers, Extron used the time at PALME for a double propose. On calmer moments at the show, the company took advantage and provided training and education for visitors to the stand and for engineers that use its products.

The company, which already has offices in Singapore, Tokyo, Holland and the US, is also planning to open offices in Dubai, with training rooms for dealers and integrators.

WWW.EXTRON.COM

SMART-E LOOKS FOR DISTRIBUTORS

RESIDENTIAL: SMART-E HAS found the Middle East a very promising market to expand into. With property expansion and demands for home automation, there is a market for its video/audio distribution equipment.

The company had a stand at PALME and commented that within the first day, the contacts it made were so good that it could have packed up the stand and gone.

The company was demonstrating new products within its SNX range of HD compatible multi-format video matrix switches and its SLX range of extenders.

THE LIGHTING TRADE

ACCORDING TO LOCAL newspaper *The Gulf Today*, Dubai's direct trade in lighting equipment rose by 16.6 per cent to DHS1.27bl in 2006. This reflects an expanding market for urban, architectural and retail lighting solutions across the region.

Adel AL Ashram, senior manager, statistics department, Dubai World's Shared Services was reported as saying that the substantial development witnessed in the retail, commercial and residential sectors is creating the need for an enormous amount of sophisticated lighting equipment and solutions.

but the market needs a bit of education on what is best for it, reflects Jerome Lim, Lighthouse regional manager for Australia, India, Middle East and South East Asia.

'Some LEDs that are sold here at a cheaper price are not fit for purpose. Poor-quality screens can't take the heat and break down', he says.

During PALME, Lighthouse announced a US \$5n deal with Staging Connections, the event and exhibition services group, which has its Middle East subsidiary Gearhouse Staging Connections in Dubai. The company purchased 200m2 of its R16i/o-II 16mm indoor/outdoor LED screen for use in the region.

WWW.LIGHTHOUSE-TECH.COM

AMX in the Middle East

CONTROL SYSTEMS: DUBAI-BASED control systems vendor AMX-me is focused mainly on the hospitality and corporate markets. It has carried out large projects including the seven-star Hotel, the Burj Al Arab.

Wadih Skaf, AMX-me managing director, is happy with the way the brand is expanding in the Middle East. 'There is now more awareness here about what AMX offers than there is in Europe or the US.'

He said that there is not as much money in Europe as in the Middle East to carry out projects like the ones currently being developed.

A popular application is the AMX Amenities Solution. This allows users to select, request and reserve services quickly and effortlessly from an AMX Modero Touch Panel. Users can connect to the concierge desk, valet service, room service, a list of scheduled activities and news headlines. It also offers the option to upgrade to a fully management system: one-touch control of lighting, audio/video, HVAC and security.

WWW.AMXME.COM

Big business for Barco

DISPLAYS: BARCO HAS had an office in the Dubai media city for five years. Middle East sales director Andreas Brockschmidt says there is a Vegas-style market in the area.

Dubai Mall, due to be finished this year, will be fitted with Barco screens that will be used to inform and entertain visitors. Claimed to be the world's largest shopping mall, Dubai Mall is expected to set new standards for consumer experiences in retail environments.

The Euro 24m-contract with Emaar includes 571m2 of LED and is Barco's largest deal for a fully integrated, creative LED solution.

The Dubai Mall will host more than 1,200 outlets, taking in excess of 336,000m2 of retail space, and will include a world-class aquarium, fashion show arena, gold souk and Olympic-size ice rink. The Mall will officially open this September.

WWW.BARCO.COM

Dubai boosts Opus sales

RESIDENTIAL: OPUS TECHNOLOGIES, a manufacturer of multi-room entertainment systems for the residential market, announced a doubling in business for the financial year April 2006-2007.

James Johnson Flint, ceo of Opus Technologies, said: 'The real-estate market in the UAE is unlike any other in terms of its size and innovative nature. We have seen a tremendous growth in demand for our products – something which mirrors the region's growing understanding

and appreciation of smart-home technology.

'The prevailing issues are not only how technology can add value for the customer, but also how it can differentiate one development from another in an extremely competitive market.'

Opus' project list includes installations in some of Dubai's most prestigious developments. The company's multi-room home systems have been pre-wired across The Palm Jumeirah and are available to every purchaser of Nakheel's Signature Villas, Garden Villas and Canal Cove



Townhouses. One of the region's most luxurious residential buildings, Le Rêve, also has Opus multi-room as standard. Several developments are also in the process of installing the system including The Tiara Residences, Oceana Residence, The World Trade Centre Residence and, most recently, DEC Towers.

But the route to market in Dubai is different to other places, said Opus regional manager Mark Coombes. Opus does not sell directly to the developer that will use the control system. However, it does go to the customer first and presents its products. Once the needs have been assessed, Opus appoints a dealer to provide the goods.

WWW.OPUS-TECHNOLOGIES.AE

Meyer Sound at PALME

AUDIO: MEYER SOUND premiered its UPJunior ultracompact VariO loudspeaker and MJF-212A high-power stage monitor at PALME. Meanwhile, its senior technical seminar instructor, Mauricio 'Magu' Ramirez, brought a taste of Meyer Sound's international education programme to the show, giving a special presentation on the MAPP Online Pro acoustical prediction software.

The company used the event as a training platform and regularly demonstrated its Matrix3 audio show control system, including SpaceMap multichannel panning and Wild Tracks hard disk playback.

Meyer Sound's digital processing and software products were represented by the Galileo loudspeaker management system, with Compass control software, the SIM 3 audio analyzer, Matrix3, and MAPP Online Pro.

WWW.MEYERSOUND.COM

Every Room Connected

CONTROL SYSTEMS: CRESTRON, which has had an office in Dubai for the past four years, demonstrated its 'Every Room Connected' philosophy at PALME. It also showed new products which included its Media Processing System (MPS), the latest generation of facility-wide network control software (RoomView 7.0) and the latest Isys i/O Wi-Fi touchpanel the TPMC-8X. All are of keen interest to a-v integrators working in the Middle East commercial and residential sectors.

WWW.CRESTRON.COM