

Palm Expo India 2017

Now in its 17th year, Palm Expo India holds a mirror to the region's rapidly expanding entertainment industry. **PAA** looks at how the show is faring



Registration queues went round the block on the first day

THE FIGURES LOOK GOOD. ACCORDING TO SHOW ORGANISER Asia Business and Conferences (ABEC), the level of both exhibitors and visitors at Palm Expo India was this year up by around 20%. And the show's footprint – now 27,000m² – certainly seemed expanded.

ABEC's decision to split the audio and lighting/staging exhibits has resulted in clearly-defined halls for each. However, many in the audio hall seemed to interpret this as a licence to actually produce audio as speakers were regularly cranked up to ear-shattering volumes.

Yamaha Music India was showcasing its own brand together with **Nexo** in Halls 2B and 2C, with dedicated zones in one hall for instruments and consoles, Nexo line arrays and speakers. Meanwhile the adjoining hall showcased the equipment in a live setup, to great effect. Nearby Demo Qubes numbered four this year as **RCF**, **LAX**, **Roland** and **Bose** took advantage of a proper space in which to unleash the decibels.

Harman, which was hosting the Live Arena for the eighth year, had taken over the entire Hall 6 for the first time. 'We believe a demo needs to be in a properly treated, curated environment,' explained Prashant Govindan, director, professional division, Harman International (India). 'Line arrays are meant for live performances so we want good, real-life content to be played.'

However, not all initiatives fared so well, with the open-air line array demo receiving a visit from the authorities following complaints from neighbouring offices and residential buildings.



Adam Hall's Chandan Mahtani with KEI director Sanjay Chawla



Ohm's Gareth Coleman



The Yamaha and Nexo demo halls



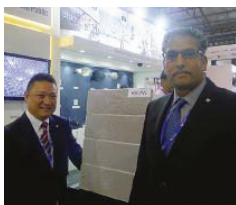
The Stonewater and Precision Devices teams on the PD booth



Sun Infonet's Neeraj Chandra and Allen & Heath's Chris Pyne showcase dLive to attendees

Eventually the demos were allowed to continue in short bursts, angering those who'd invested time and money to take part. ABEC was promising compensation, meanwhile blaming the Bombay Exhibition Centre for moving the demo site without authorisation. Whatever the excuse, the debacle highlighted the shortcomings of the venue.

However, most people seemed satisfied, in particular overseas exhibitors returning after some time. 'I was here in 2006 and the show is very different,' said Rune Jacobsen, newly appointed VP of sales at **Dynaudio**, who was on the stand of distributor The Inventory. 'I think we are finally seeing India mature. Today it's more clear who does what. At my first Palm there were



Daisuke Imagawa had travelled from TOA HQ in Japan to support S Raghuram and the TOA India team



Amphion's Michael Di Stasio (right) with Dipanshu Mitra from Ansata



A large team from Shure had come to assist distributor Sun Infonet with demos and the South Asian launch of Axient



Beatbox Entertainment director Suchit Ahuja

parallel importers, but now things are more settled, with proper dealers and distributors.'

'It's my first time in a good many years, and it's been a fantastic show,' added **DiGiCo's** VP of sales Ian Staddon from the Hi-Tech Audio stand. 'The quality of the exhibitors and exhibition is really high and the market has matured. There are good quality visitors who know more about what they're looking at.'

'The exhibition has been getting better each year,' agreed **KV2 Audio's** Alex Pagliani. 'The booths are more professionally done, the exhibition is better run and the halls and the outdoor areas are nicer. A big part of this is because of the development of the industry and for us it's an important exhibition.'

Naveen Sridhar, from **beyerdynamic** India has been coming to Palm for 10 years. 'It's much more organised these days, and the quality of visitors is increasing,' he commented.

Others questioned the relevance of attendees to their business. 'The crowd we see pouring in doesn't represent the sort of visitors we are looking for,' said Sunny Chhibber from Acoustic Arts.

However, as India continues to boom, and with a population hungry for entertainment, it's almost a given that Palm Expo 2018 will be bigger than ever.



Dena Tsui with the new double 12-inch speaker from Audiocenter



Outline's Giorgio Biffi (right) with Gaurav Malvai from new distributor Global Pro Audio Management



Jurgen Eicker of Nova with Rajesh Sadaranghani from Rivera International



Frank Andrewartha from Quest Engineering introduced the Q1K compact amp on the Sun Infonet stand



Rasesh Parekh and Kekul Sheth of IES



Weifa Trussing



Sonodyne stand party



Harman's Prashant Govindan with drummer Ranjit Barot and Ankush Agarwal



Karan Nagpal from Sontone with P.Audio's Howard Chen

Are international performances on the rise in India?

Hot on the heels of Justin Bieber's one-off concert in Mumbai, Palm Expo India organiser Asian Business and Conferences was flagging up the increase in international acts playing across the subcontinent. But does the industry agree that international touring is on the rise?

'A few years back there was a surge of foreign acts, then it slowed down. But I think it's starting to come back again. For an international artist the venue is very important, then you need to have the right staff and world-class equipment available locally. We now have access to all the big brands, and they are capable of supporting local rental companies putting on the bigger tours. Our RF experts will travel to support wireless gear on shows. The market is maturing, but venues still leave something to be desired.' **Vipin Pungalia**, sales and marketing director, **Sennheiser Electronics India**.

'A reduction in entertainment tax would encourage more international acts, as the ticket price is still very high. Overseas, artists can perform multiple gigs, but I think we are still far away from that. Cultural changes are needed which probably won't come until the next generation.' **Karan Nagpal**, director, **Sonotone**.

'The only reason why big acts weren't coming before is because the previous government enforced a ridiculous entertainment tax but I think that this has now been fixed so we should see more coming through.' **Clifford Pereira**, sales and customer support, **Genelec**.

'I don't really see that many more international artists coming, though I think it's been fairly consistent. The scene

here is still nowhere close to Europe or America. I think it's easy for the industry to gear up for these productions now, but the rest of it is down to bureaucracy: permissions, organisation and policing. Even if our industry isn't quite ready now, I think it could be very quickly. There is support here for the bigger brands.' **Sunny Chhibber**, director, **Acoustic Arts**.

'People are expecting the taxes to come down, and then the show investors will start to come. It's still not fixed but it's much better than before. The promoters working on the Bieber show found that they could make a profit from the event.' **Shiv Sood**, director, **Sound Team**.

'I would say there are more international acts coming here now. The equipment required is more readily available, the level of expertise is much higher and people have more confidence that they're going to get a good result. We're also seeing Indian artists and freelance engineers going abroad and being exposed to new equipment and ways of working, bringing that back and making those demands on the rental companies.' **Peter Owen**, sales manager, **L-Acoustics**.

'There have been some international artists coming in the last few years, but many of the big artists are still skipping India in their touring schedule, or fitting one or two

nights in on their way east. We have some of the highest entertainment taxes in the world, which drive ticket prices up. However, the industry can now provide what is needed for international productions. We have one of the highest concentrations of JBL product available for rent anywhere in the world – the Justin Bieber show had a complete JBL rider and also Martin Professional lights.' **Prashant Govindan**, director, professional division, **Harman International (India)**.

'As the economy has grown there are more and more people in India now who can afford tickets for international bands. However, there are still problems with permissions and legislation, such as having to shut down at 10.30pm in most places. I think it's improving in some cities but not at the pace that we'd like.' **Vikram Shetty**, director of marketing, **Stonewater**.

2017 Dates:	1 – 3 June
2018 Dates:	31 May – 2 June
Venue:	Bombay Exhibition Centre
Total exhibitors:	225
Attendance:	27,191
Contact:	www.palmexpo.in



Digital Intercom, Analogue Partyline and Cue Light Systems



www.asl-inter.com