



# CE PRODUCTS

FIELD TEST ■ EDITOR'S PICK ■ NEW PRODUCTS

## New dARTS Brand Delivers Total Audio System Package

BY ROBERT ARCHER

The dARTS active loudspeaker solutions include freestanding, architectural and one-offs.



**R**ECENTLY SPUN OUT FROM sister company Phase Technology, new MSE Audio brand dARTS comes from the prestigious Hecht family pedigree and their designs that include the development of the soft-dome tweeter.

Today, led by Ken Hecht, dARTS is available as a standalone brand of active loudspeaker solutions that includes a choice of freestanding, architectural and one-off custom products.

Utilizing Hecht's latest driver designs and speaker concepts, along with state-of-the-art amplification solutions, and a unique to dARTS version of the popular equalization Audyssey program, the brand is now available to the entire custom installation industry.

After accepting an invitation from Dave Silkin and Joe Smith of Long Island, N.Y.-based Digital Sales Group Metro (DSG Metro), I headed from Boston to Plainview, N.Y., to meet Hecht, Silkin, Smith and the dARTS team for a personal demonstration of DSG Metro's new showroom system.

### Features

Jacksonville, Fla.-based dARTS offers gloss-black finished in-room models, as well as architectural in-wall and in-ceiling solutions, and completely custom speakers to meet unique installation requirements.

For the showroom, Silkin and Smith configured a 7.2.4-channel object-based system that includes an Acurus Act 4 surround sound processor, Panamax power conditioner, Severtson 4K Thin Bezel 175-inch screen and Epson Pro Cinema 6040 4K projector.

As for the dARTS portion, DSG Metro installed a dARTS Theater DP4000IA v2 amplifier controllers, 660 in-wall system (DIW660LCR, DIW660SURR surrounds, DC660R in-ceiling speakers) and DCB115s subwoofers.

Hecht says the heart of the system is its amplifiers and processing. Utilizing 250 watts per channel of amplification, every driver has its own amplifier. The drivers are coupled to digital signals to eliminate the imprecision of analog conversion, Hecht says, and every driver is tuned to 0.5dB of

### SPECS

#### dARTS Audio System

- ▶ Available in variety of system configurations
- ▶ Freestanding (FS) feature gloss-black cabinets, and include floorstanding and bookshelf options
- ▶ Custom built (CB) are specially made for specific installations
- ▶ In-Wall (IW) mount flush into walls and ceilings
- ▶ Systems include outboard amplification and unique to dARTS Audyssey EQ

▶ MSRP vary depending on configuration; approximate MSRP of DSG Metro system is \$48,000

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reference response.

A unique, PC-based version of Audyssey equalization harnesses all this power and processing. "It's specifically designed for our responses and our speakers," explains Hecht. "That's how you make every seat in the room sound the same. We're taking the room out of the equation."

### Performance & Conclusions

As a bit of unplanned fortune I had arrived before Hecht and heard the system being played before it was calibrated, though I didn't realize that at the time. Not realizing I was hearing the "before" system, I was privately noting how impressed I was with its clarity and power.

After calibration — which can take an hour or two depending on how deep integrators want to go into the EQ — the system really sprung to life.

After listening to Hecht's staff run



The dARTS system delivers a professional-grade level of sound fidelity. Demos conducted in the DSG rep showroom in New York were so compelling they had the reviewer's ears bleeding.

through a Dolby Atmos demo disc I was really grabbed with the envelopment of the system. Turning the system over to me, and knowing that Silkin and Smith are music-first guys (Silkin is a professional bass player that happens to work in custom electronics) I decided to play the Jeff Beck *Performing This Week: Live at Ronnie Scott's* Blu-ray disc and Steve Morse's "Final Cut" CD. These respective recordings feature A-list bass players Tal Wilkenfeld and Billy Sheehan, along with drummers Vinnie Colaiuta and Mike Portnoy.

For one example of just how immersive the dARTS system was, we listened to the Beck track "People Get Ready" in stereo before realizing we needed to select the DTS-HD Master Audio soundtrack for true surround sound.

And actually, hearing the two-channel and multichannel versions of the song really highlighted the system. One key thing I listen for on that song is the kick drum; on a poorly designed system, the kick drum sounds bloated and sloppy. On the dARTS system, Colaiuta's kick drum was prominent, but not sloppy.

On "Cause We've Ended as Lovers," Wilkenfeld's bass solo was well defined with standout detail such as her little single-fret slide vibrato technique. This song also showed off the system's micro detail capabilities. The dARTS playback really revealed the nuances of Beck's playing such as the way he "slaps" his signature

model Fender Stratocaster's whammy bar with the meaty part of his hand to produce vibrato accents.

On the Morse CD, the system rendered nice separation between Portnoy's heavy-handed drumming and Sheehan's deep and spongy bass tone. Morse's guitar sat in the center of the room dripping with reverb and delay as if the guitar virtuoso were sitting in our room with his amp blazing away.

If you have customers that love to play music loudly, rest assured the dARTS had no problem with Morse, Sheehan and Portnoy's cover of Rush's instrumental "La Villa Strangiato." I measured the song's opening SPLs at 67dB, and as the engineer pushes the faders up on that track the volume tracked up to 78dB before reaching peaks approaching 100dB.

Shifting gears to the drum room scene in Dave Grohl's *Sound City* Blu-ray disc that documents the famed music studio of that name, I thought the system reproduced its impact with volume and weight.

I must also add that movie dialog sounded crisp and convincing. One clip that impressed me was from *Mad Max* on the Atmos disc. Compared to other demos I've experienced with this scene, it sounded fuller than I ever heard, including short reverb I caught for the first time. Also, the dynamics of the cars thrashing through the sand further proved the system's dynamics.

As you can tell, I was completely knocked out by the system. Skeptics might

say the packaged system is expensive, and it's hard to disagree that it's not a big investment (the DSG showroom was around \$48K). I'll counter by saying it would be even more money to pull together a system of similar performance from disparate pieces.

The dARTS system delivers a professional-grade level of sound fidelity, volume and engineering that is hard to beat. Thankfully for New York and Long Island-based dealers, Silkin, Smith and the DSG Metro staff are making the system available for integrators to use for client demonstrations.

I highly recommend dealers try out the dARTS system out for themselves if they can. It will win you over, too. 🎧

## CE PRO VERDICT

### dARTS Audio System

**PROS:** Array of configurations available; system sounds good uncalibrated, after calibration smoothness, dynamics and transients all improve; dealers will appreciate unique version of Audyssey room EQ software

**CONS:** Experience installing "professional-grade" systems is beneficial; dealers should educate themselves on value of dARTS products to help customers fully understand system capabilities