

# The Essential Home Theatre Resource™

# WIDESCREEN

## REVIEW® NEWSLETTER

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## WELCOME!

Welcome back to *Widescreen Review's* monthly newsletter. In this issue you will find a wide assortment of home theatre news to suit your liking. So check out our attractions page and enjoy Issue 2. Keep in mind that this newsletter is free, so don't forget to sign up or send a copy to all of your friends. Thanks to all of you who participated in last month's readers' poll. If you have some time, answer this month's questions and enter a chance to win a prize! I would also like to say "Congratulations" to Harold A. McAllister, the contest winner of our June Readers' Poll. Thank you for your time and contribution to our poll. We will add another year to your current subscription, Harold.

Gary Reber  
Editor-In-Chief, *Widescreen Review*

## COMING SOON TO NEWSSTANDS

Here's a sneak peek into what's coming in Issue 111, August 2006 of *Widescreen Review*:

- Mike Marks' review of the Brillian 6580iFB03 1080p LCoS TV
- Doug Blackburn reviews the Audience, LLC AdeptResponse High-Resolution Power Conditioner
- An in-depth review of the Microsoft Xbox 360™ by Mike Marks
- The Digital Cinema Challenge Part II by Alen Koebel.
- The Future Of HDMI
- WSR University—DVD Mastering 101
- A New Viewing Experience
- Over 30 HD DVD and DVD picture and sound quality reviews.
- And more...



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# Bang & Olufsen Denmark Visit

Gary Reber

Last May I was invited to Denmark to visit Bang & Olufsen Audio/Visual a/s, one of four wholly owned subsidiaries that make up the Bang & Olufsen Group. I was part of a group of journalists invited to the Struer headquarters by Torben Ballegaard Sørensen, President and CEO of Bang & Olufsen a/s. The focus of the visit was to learn about the Bang & Olufsen product philosophy and core competencies, and to witness the unveiling of the BeoSystem 3.

The company, known worldwide as simply B&O, has developed a reputation for creating products, which are a unique combination of



performance excellence and stylish appeal, and represent a harmonious balance between technology and design.

Founded in 1925 by two young Danish engineers, Peter Bang and Svend Olufsen, the company manufactured radios in the attic of the Olufsen family manor, Quistrup, near the town of Struer in the north western part of Denmark. Their first product was the B&O Eliminator, which ran on electricity (difficult in the 1920s as the power fluctuated) and made batteries unnecessary. The company's main factories are still situated in Struer on the same site as the original family manor. The products to this day are still influenced by Bauhaus Functionalism, an influence that has become highly characteristic of Bang & Olufsen's design. Bauhaus is not merely a style, it is also an attitude to quality, consumer-friendliness, and aesthetics.

The word "Beo" is Bang & Olufsen's signature mark to designate products. The "Beo" product was the BeoLit introduced in 1939. In 1964, the company introduced the BeoMaster 900—the first, slim, flat elegant radios based on the new technology of transistors. Marketed "to those who discuss design and quality before price," the radio receiver became the "model" for most manufacturers in Europe and Japan.

So successful were B&O products that in 1978 the Museum of Modern Art in New York City held a special exhibition of Bang & Olufsen's products in its Permanent Design Collection. The Collection now exhibits 11 B&O products.

Many enthusiasts may remember the introduction in 1995 of the BeoSound 9000, a new unique six CD player with a built-in radio. Two years later, B&O introduced the BeoCenter AVS, the first in a series of A/V products that integrates all audio-visual functions into one product.

In 2002, B&O launched its first flat screen plasma display, followed by the BeoLab 5 loudspeaker system with acoustic lens technology and adaptive bass construction. The loudspeaker system uses patented digital ICEpower amplifier units, bass adaptation and control technologies, and exclusively licensed sound dispersion technologies. The BeoLab 5 system will be reviewed in a future issue of *Widescreen Review*.

## Bang & Olufsen Characteristics

The company philosophy is to make technology work in a way that adds value to their products in their everyday use. This is executed through in the choice of advanced components and refined materials, and design of the finished product that facilitates the simple everyday use of B&O products in the homes of their customers. Making well-designed electronic products that make advanced technology easy to live with has always been one of the core competencies of Bang & Olufsen.

## Core Competencies

For more than 75 years, Bang & Olufsen has cultivated and exploited its strengths represented by eight core competence areas: quality, picture, sound, user interaction, design, inte-



gration, mechanical movements, materials, and finish. During our visit these core competencies were discussed and demonstrated. In a special facility, company representatives showed how they test picture reproduction under a variety of viewing conditions to be able to continuously improve the experience B&O offers their customers. In another session, the development of



the BeoLab 5 loudspeaker system with acoustic lens technology and adaptive bass construction was discussed and demonstrated, exhibiting the full-frequency "natural sound" of the system in a home theatre living laboratory.

Much discussion revolved around design of the user interaction of B&O products. The company excels at making technically complex products into something that is easy to understand and use. B&O products have always been intuitive to operate, even new and unfamiliar products. Design is a craft that is at the core of everything Bang & Olufsen manufactures. Even though internally the company is well versed in design, much emphasis is placed on working with freelance designers, who maintain a broad creative palette. Outside designers are involved as part of concept development all the way through implementation.

Seamless integration is another Bang & Olufsen core competency and is recognized throughout the world as the major pioneer in the industry. For B&O, integration is implemented in several ways: integration of several entertainment sources into one unit, linking different products to one another, integrating products of the future with products of the past, and integration of B&O products with non-Bang & Olufsen products to make life easier for the user.

Finally, Bang & Olufsen's approach to materials and finish are expressed in a design language found in mechanics—the materials, the surface, the finish and the shape, and the

look and the feel. This ultimately translates to the competence in manufacturing skills, internal and from partners. In addition, an internal focus on design using aluminum, different plastics, glass, rubber, zinc, cloth, steel, and wood are also part of the design vocabulary used in B&O products.



### BeoSystem 3

During my visit, company representatives unveiled the BeoSystem 3, a new home theatre master unit for plasma monitor, projector and projection screens, and all peripheral units. Billed as a "stage manager" the unit's modularity allows customization on every parameter—connectivity, picture quality, and sound staging. Designed to be experienced at its best with a BeoVision 4 plasma monitor, the unit is designed to interface with both terrestrial and satellite HDTV and HD DVD and Blu-ray Disc high-definition optical disc media.

"We are already famous for our picture quality, now with BeoSystem 3 we have raised the bar even higher," said Villy Hansen, Senior Product Manager, Bang & Olufsen. "The ability to move the sound stage to precisely your viewing position—whether monitor or projection screen—is innovative and unmatched by others, and what BeoSystem 3 does for peripheral unit connectivity offers protection against technology shifts in the future."

The unit is built on an all-digital platform, and both analog and digital signals are digitally optimized. "We describe BeoSystem 3 as 'fully HD,' meaning we have gone beyond the requirements of the 'HD-ready' standard," explained Hansen. "Color rendition and noise reduction is improved, and we can now selectively monitor and enhance the contrast for the actual content, creating an overall improvement in the perception of a 'true to life' picture."

The all-digital enhancements were demonstrated in which new sensor technology can measure the ambient light in the room at much lower intensities, and the new Dynamic Contrast feature makes it possible to selectively monitor

and enhance contrast. The system is capable of recognizing the type and specification of the Bang & Olufsen monitor it is connected to, and various parameters are fine tuned to optimize picture quality.

The system supports two optimal display viewing setups placed at different locations in the same room—for example a projection screen on one wall and a plasma monitor on another. The BeoSystem 3 features outputs for up to 12 loudspeakers and two independent subwoofers. Bang & Olufsen's PowerLink cable connections mean that all loudspeaker ports are neutral. Simply plug in the loudspeakers, and program the soundstage for the particular screen setup for up to seven loudspeakers and two subwoofers for each viewing situation. This means it is possible to move a 5.1 digital surround soundstage from one part of the room to another, depending on your seating position and screen setup.

All connections are made conveniently at the front of the BeoSystem 3 to eliminate what normally can be a confusing array of connections and cables. The cables are cleverly guided around the sides by the removal front cable cover.

The BeoSystem 3 remote control, the Beo 4, offers complete management of home theatre functions, also lighting and curtains, and can distribute sound and picture around the home with Bang & Olufsen's BeoLink system.

At the conclusion of my visit, I was treated to a Bang & Olufsen deluxe home theatre experience. The room housed a complete home theatre package, including a large cinema screen, light control, a digital projector, and BeoLab 5 loudspeaker system and subwoofers.

"We have entered into collaboration with a number of partners to ensure the best possible screen, light control, and projector for our home cinema, said Torben Ballegaard Sørensen. "These partners supply the most advanced products in their respective fields: the digital projector is based on an entirely new digital technology from Samsung; the light control system is from Lutron Electronics, and the screen is supplied by Stewart Filmscreen."

The Samsung-Joe Kane-inspired SP-H700 DLP projector has been optimized for Bang &

Olufsen. The screen component is a Stewart Filmscreen GrayHawk Reference Screen, also inspired by Joe Kane, a *Widescreen Review* Contributing Video Editor. The system was quite impressive in picture and sound performance.

"We are very pleased to be able to offer our customers a technology of this high quality. It will be included as a basis module in a Bang & Olufsen projector that is under development. The projector is simply the best that can be bought, and together with our sound systems, offers a fantastic home cinema experience," said Sørensen.

Lutron's Bang & Olufsen keypads allow convenient control of lighting from a B&O Beo4 remote control, allowing the lights to be raised and lowered, preset scenes to be selected, and shades and blinds to be controlled.

Twenty selected Bang & Olufsen retailers across Europe can already offer the complete home theatre package. Up to 50 Bang & Olufsen retailers will be able to sell these home theatre solutions before the end of the year, and within the next two to three years up to half of the B&O-qualified B1 shops among the 1,500 retailers in more than 60 countries will offer this solution.



### Conclusion

The company continues its long legacy of designing and introducing innovative consumer electronics products that are honest and uncomplicated in their communication with end users and make advanced technology easy to live with. Bang & Olufsen continues to be recognized worldwide as a prestigious brand, applying high-performance technologies to offer superb listening and viewing experiences, and a renowned design tradition with superb craftsmanship and careful choice of quality materials.

For further information, please visit <http://www.bang-olufsen.com>. ■



## READERS' POLL

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Submit your answers and you will be entered in a drawing to win a FREE Special Edition DVD!!!

- 1) What did you think of our "Made In The USA" section in Issue #110?
- 2) Would you like to see more "special sections" in *Widescreen Review* or do you prefer seeing the same format each month?
- 3) Are there any columns we no longer do that you miss seeing? If so, which one(s)?

Click here or visit [http://www.widescreenreview.com/wsr\\_poll](http://www.widescreenreview.com/wsr_poll) to submit your answers. Alternatively, you can email [nate@widescreenreview.com](mailto:nate@widescreenreview.com) to submit your answers and enter the contest. Contest rules are available on the website.

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Check out the conference program [here](#).

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**Entertainment Packaging Summit: "Making the Case for Packaged Media"**  
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Check out the conference program [here](#).

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**Plus:**

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- ◆ DVD Awards with Leonard Maltin
- ◆ Alex Packaging Awards
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For more information about the conference, awards programs, exhibiting information, or to learn more about the 2006 Entertainment Media Expo, visit [www.entertainmentmediaexpo.com](http://www.entertainmentmediaexpo.com).

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# A World Going "Scope"—The 2.35:1 Imaging Trend In Home Cinema Part II

Shawn Kelly, President  
Panamorph, Inc., [www.panamorph.com](http://www.panamorph.com)

In part I of this series we explained how home theatre projection systems are rapidly being upgraded with new high-performance anamorphic lenses and advanced scaling—providing 33 percent higher resolution and more than 20 percent higher brightness for those 80 percent of blockbuster movies filmed in the ultra-wide CinemaScopeÆ format of 2.35:1 or higher (see the June, 2006 *WSR* Newsletter #1). Adding a moveable anamorphic lens to a 16:9 projection system for a "constant width" (CW) system is certainly the easiest way to achieve this enhancement. Nonetheless, using a permanently installed lens with electronic scaling and a 2.35:1 screen for a "constant height" (CH) system is actually the faster growing trend. While both approaches will give you the best 2.35:1 performance from your projection system, CH 2.35:1 can be accomplished without the expense of a motorized anamorphic lens, properly delivering all formats at the convenient push of a button on your projector or scaler remote. And more importantly, for many people the CH approach quite simply delivers the more cinematic experience of the classic movie theatre. The pre-show content ends. The lights go down. The theatre gets quiet. Curtains open to the side. It all builds up the anticipation—drawing us in and immersing us into the panoramic world of the director.

This CH 2.35:1 system concept gives us two things to think about. First, we need both scaling modes I and II, which may require an external scaler if these modes are not in your projector (see [www.panamorph.com](http://www.panamorph.com)). Of course, many home theatre systems use compatible scalers anyway for other reasons, so this may not be an issue at all. Second, non-2.35:1 content will be displayed with fewer pixels in the horizontal direction. However, this may not be as much of an issue as you might think. If you are thinking of a CH 2.35:1 system in the first place, it is because you place the greatest importance on the high-performance, immersive 2.35:1 cinema experience. Well, in this case, 16:9 movies (and other formats) not only use fewer pixels, they may also be less appealing because they are smaller. One solution is to simply turn off mode II scaling, resulting in all non-2.35:1 content being horizontally stretched to use 33 percent more pixels and brightness,

while also creating a more panoramic effect. Now even your native 16:9 content will be shown beautifully framed on your 2.35:1 screen with the full performance of your projection system. Of course, this will mean everything (and everyone) in the movie will be wider than normal. However, some scalers and projectors also have a "non-linear" stretch mode where the center of the image is left substantially undisturbed, and only the left and right edges get the most stretching. And since a 2.35:1 format means these distorted edges are out in your peripheral vision, this "pseudo-scope" mode may actually be good enough to satisfy your desire for maximum performance while serving to expand your library of 2.35:1 experiences at the same time.

Even if you don't want to use a pseudo-wide



Panamorph's new U150 Anamorphic lens. Panamorph, Inc. is the world's leading manufacturer of high-performance anamorphic lenses for home cinema installations, providing consumer and professional lenses for both fixed and multi-aspect projection systems. For more information visit [www.panamorph.com](http://www.panamorph.com).

mode, you can be comforted by the fact that using fewer pixels in the horizontal direction for non-2.35:1 content is still not that much of a tradeoff compared to the benefits of fixed-lens CH 2.35:1 imaging. You see, while using an anamorphic lens delivers a dramatic performance enhancement by increasing vertical resolution, home theatre enthusiasts have noted for years that it's much more difficult to see increases or decreases in horizontal resolution. Certainly the number of pixels over a given distance is the same in both directions. However, the wide screen format just naturally makes us feel that there is already a lot more detail in the

horizontal direction than in the more limited view of the vertical direction. So it's the perceived lack of vertical detail that has us appreciating vertical enhancements that much more.

This greater need for vertical enhancements over horizontal is not just based on format perceptions. Movies are almost constantly in motion, even if slight, and that motion is far more often in the horizontal direction than the vertical. Cars are moving, people are walking, the camera is panning, etc. Each pixel in our projected image is bringing us one little piece of the picture at any given time. However, if the scene is moving, then each pixel is actually giving us a slightly different snapshot, effectively providing image detail that is far more revealing than that of a static image. Pause a frame on your DVD player and look at an object, then press play and see how much more detail you can pick up if it is slowly moving. And since the greatest motion is predominantly in the horizontal direction, the relative lack of detail in the vertical direction becomes emphasized, making any enhancement in that direction far more noticeable.

To be clear, most people that are true 2.35:1 fans are ecstatic about the opportunity to convert to 2.35:1 screens and are not in the least troubled by non-2.35:1 content being shown with fewer horizontal pixels. But if you are still concerned about these smaller formats, remember that ultimately, if you are happy with the quality of your 2.35:1 image, you are going to be just as happy with every other format. Why? Here's the key. Fundamentally, the actual visual resolution—the number of pixels per unit area—is identical for all formats. So the bottom line is that you are getting a spectacular improvement in the experience of watching over 80 percent of all blockbuster movies for a much smaller compromise in resolution of all the smaller formats. So if that immersive blockbuster movie experience is what you are looking for, the CH 2.35:1 approach is for you. It's the one system that truly brings the cinema experience home. ■

**Panamorph™**

# One Installer's Opinion Dear Cousin Annie...

## Terry Paullin

This is a true account. I have a real cousin, Ann K., who lives about 2,500 miles east of my place. She, too, has enjoyed a later life career in journalism, writing about what she really enjoys, interior decorating. She always has a kind word for me and my columns, often commenting on my style, humor and word-smiting, avoiding appraisal on content. I always thought it was her (forgive me, Ann) non-technical nature that was responsible for her silence on the "meat" of what I write about, but about a month ago, the truth came out.

She wrote: "How can you be so passionate about this stuff? There is nothing good on TV anymore, and there is so much violence and gratuitous bad language (out of Hollywood), that I haven't gone to a movie in years." My knee-jerk e-mail reply was, "It's that kind of comment, expressed by you and thousands like you, that has been the bane of my existence in recent times."

Now Ann, it turns out, is well above average in intellect and common sense, which caused me to ponder her position a little harder. She (and thousands like her) really deserve a better answer. After some reflection, I found that I could imagine how some otherwise enlightened Earthlings, deprived of the A/V wonderfulness that I experience daily, could have such a jaundice view. So it is to Ann and those countless thousands in her camp that I offer yet another attempt to rationalize the "passion" that makes me a Home Theatre Evangelist. While this readership has undoubtedly "got it," you may just want to reaffirm your commitment or pass this on to uncle Fred, who is still on the fence.

Let me start with the assertion that I believe is truer today than ever before, indeed more true than even last year when, in this space, I opined a similar advocacy piece, "Practicing Medicine...And Other Matters" (Issue 97, June 2005). That assertion...A HOME THEATRE IS THE SINGLE BEST INVESTMENT AN INDIVIDUAL CAN MAKE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THEMSELVES AND HIS/HER FAMILY!

I'm not talking about a \$100,000 dedicated

room here, replete with velvet curtains and popcorn machine (although for some that DOES add to the experience), I'm talking about any area in the house that can offer comfortable seating to a half-dozen people, display a large image in high-definition, and is supported with six-channel sound.

How does it "better the family?" With the possible exception of the Internet, no other mediums can offer the educational value and palette for artistic expression than the combined offering of cable television and motion pictures on DVD have. Were it not for those conduits, many people would never see much of the world's great destinations, hear the many diverse views expressed by a wide variety of opinion leaders, or experience another kind of "reality," that which has been a reflection of our collective daily lives since the first frame of film was projected onto the silver screen, a hundred years ago.

Sure, there is a lot of junk thrown in the mix, but that is for you and me to sort out. Anytime there is such a powerful channel into people's minds, there will be a wide distribution of those who wish to use it and the content they wish to fill it with—witness: the Internet. Take out the bottom three quartiles (easily done, in most cases, with the click of a button), and what we are left with is thought-provoking dramas, movies, and documentaries from world-class writers and directors expressing a breadth of ideas and opinions greater than anytime before in our history.

Drop "down" now to the second quartile, still above average in the great, Gaussian distribution curve of cultural edification. I consider this segment "mindless" entertainment, in the kindest sense of the word. It's stuff that just makes you laugh; sitcom or movie. It's action flicks ala 007. It could be a sports contest and a concert video. It's the extremely well-executed drama serial (i.e., HBO's *Sopranos*, *Deadwood*, and *Rome*) that gives us something to look forward to and gets us through the week. It could be a "feel-good" movie that provides the excuse for a

family gathering. No profound, heart-wrenching message, just an hour or two of pure escapism—a medicine we need a good sized dose of from time to time.

How about cultural legacy? Thanks to widespread adoption of DVD technology, we can relive the likes of *I Love Lucy*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Burns And Allen*, the prime entertainment that influenced our parents and early "boomers." Add to that, revisiting with our children, motion pictures captured on a 5-inch disc from before "talkies" through carefully restored classics like *Citizen Kane*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *Doctor Zhivago*.

Now consider this icing on the cake. For well under the price of that Alaskan Cruise you were considering, you can enjoy all the aforementioned content in its finest original audio and video mastered form in the comfort of your own home and on your schedule—an opportunity, I should mention, our parents never had on this scale.

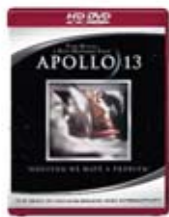
Yes, dear cousin, I am VERY passionate about this home theatre world I live in, in part, because almost anyone can partake. Whether it's a meaningful dialogue, a "happy" movie, a moment of humor, an episodic drama, an educational documentary, or just plain escapism after a hard day, it's all there and available on demand in eye-popping color and high-resolution detail like never before. Like any other evangelist, Ann, I can't imagine living without it, and I deeply regret there are those currently doing so because they have yet to discover this magical world. Sadly, we are all getting older, and the "opportunity forgone" can never truly be recouped.

The truly good news is, for "family," I work for room, board, and cheeseburgers! ■

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Terry Paullin of Front Row Cinema can be reached at 925 371 4409 or frontrowcn@aol.com.

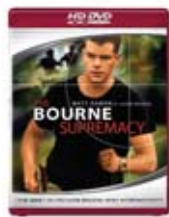




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