



Picture by John Turfen

WORLD

Dante: a divine future?

With a flurry of corporate- and technology-related announcements in recent months, Audinate seems to be going places. CEO Lee Ellison tells **David Davies** about educating OEMs and Dante's future in the context of AVB

Editor's comment

Dave Robinson

"I'M SORRY, DAVE," said Rob Speight in a phone-call to *PSNE* just before press time, "But I just can't find anyone to tell you what you want to hear!"

I'd set Rob the task of following up a story that first appeared on our sister title *Music Week's* website: to what, given that in 2011 more festivals may be cancelled than in any previous year, what might be the ramifications for the wider pro-audio live sector? But despite his best efforts, Rob couldn't find anyone who was wholly negative about the story. Or even a little bit negative, actually. It was positive reactions all round from the PA companies. Read his report on p37.

What I've always found about this industry is how resilient it seems to be to the vicissitudes of the wider economy. Things might appear to be worsening, but everyone keeps calm and carries on. Again, David Davies' cover story points to choppy waters ahead, but the pro-audio community will undoubtedly just knuckle down and get on with the job.

Back to the subject of festivals, I must mention the terrible pictures we've seen over the last few weeks from Pukkelpop Belgium, Ottawa and Indiana of stage disasters in freak weather conditions. I hope that organisers everywhere are reviewing how to deal with such extreme situations in future. Festivals and other outdoor events need to come with the highest level of safety built-in.

On a final positive note, it was a pleasure to attend WOMAD this year for the first time. Derrick Zieba's enthusiasm for this fantastically well-organised festival leaps off pages 42-43. 🍀

It's been a rare month recently when the inbox has failed to 'ping' with at least one press release from Audinate senior marketing manager Ervin Grinberg. Technologically and organisationally, the impression has been of a company very much in motion: the past 12 weeks alone have seen details of a forthcoming synchronised routing enabler called Netspander, a control module from Crest Audio, significant appointments to the directors' and technical advisory boards, and an inaugural Taiwanese OEM partnership with UNIKA Professional Audio.

The common denominator in all these developments, of course, is the Australia-headquartered company's patented Dante solution. Spun out of National ICT Australia (NICTA) in 2006 after three years of R&D by its founders into the transportation of high-quality audio and media over standard TCP/IP networks, Audinate beats the drum for a technology that employs standard IT networks to facilitate Ethernet-based digital media networking.

Ease of configuration, sample accurate timing with 'inaudibly' low latency, and the ability to achieve integration with pre-existing networks are among the cited benefits of Dante, which has attracted nearly 45 OEM licensees to date. Across the industry, many of the biggest names are utilising Dante, with recent projects including the launch of a Lab.gruppen PLM-based, Dante-enabled Turbosound amplifier (20000DP) to power the latter's new Flashline Line Array system.

Reflecting on the technology's increasingly high-profile ascent, Audinate CEO Lee Ellison tells *PSNE*: "We have done a terrific job of educating OEMs that Dante is a high-performance solution for digital networking. These OEMs are now hearing from their customers that they want to see Dante in their products. This year our focus has been on communicating this to design consultants, system installation contractors and end-users regarding the benefits to Dante, from ease of installation to using common IP approaches that exist today."

Given Ellison's belief that Dante is now "getting close to achieving a network effect tipping point", it's hardly surprising that organisational developments have been equally plentiful of late. A newly

established Technical Advisory Board (TAB) provides feedback on market opportunities and draws on the expertise of former Polycom executive Ed Ellett and Dave Lebolt, ex-Apple and -Avid. Most recently, in August, it was announced that one of pro-AV's most distinguished executives – former Avid CEO and Roku president/COO David Krall – had been elected to chair the directorial board.

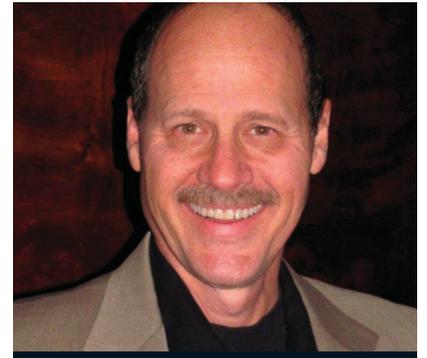
"David's diverse background in developing companies that are in the start-up high-growth phase, as well as large publically-traded companies, will be a major benefit for Audinate moving forward," says Ellison, adding of TAB's Ellett and Lebolt that "you couldn't ask for industry veterans with better backgrounds to help guide us to success".

All well and good – but Dante's progress cannot be assessed in isolation from the rest of the networking revolution. In particular, its future role must be seen in the context of a groundswell of interest in the AVB (Audio/Video Bridging) networking standards, which are promoted and supported by the AVnu Alliance – of which Audinate became a member in March 2010.

The emerging AVB standard, says Ellison, "offers great promise", but it's clear he expects the technology's market fruition to take quite some time. As observers of AVB will be aware, it "requires a new breed of switches, and this will take several years [to be] proliferated into every switch".

Accommodating varying rates of transition across the industry is likely to be crucial – in which case, Ellison has good news. "Audinate's Dante solution will provide our customers with the ability to use standard switches if AVB is not supported in the switch, or use 'Dante AVB' with AVnu-compliant AVB switches," he explains. "In all cases, you will have all the Dante value-added features that ride on top of the lower AVB layers. Dante will support either Layer 2 1722 transport or Layer 3 1733 transport, making it the most flexible AVB solution."

Meanwhile, new technologies continue to arrive on the market, although Ellison doesn't sound overly troubled by the rise of another much-talked-about solution: "We do not really see RAVENNA as a rival. Our customers have told us they see RAVENNA as an equipment vendor selling and supporting its



Lee Ellison, Audinate CEO: "AVB has great promise"

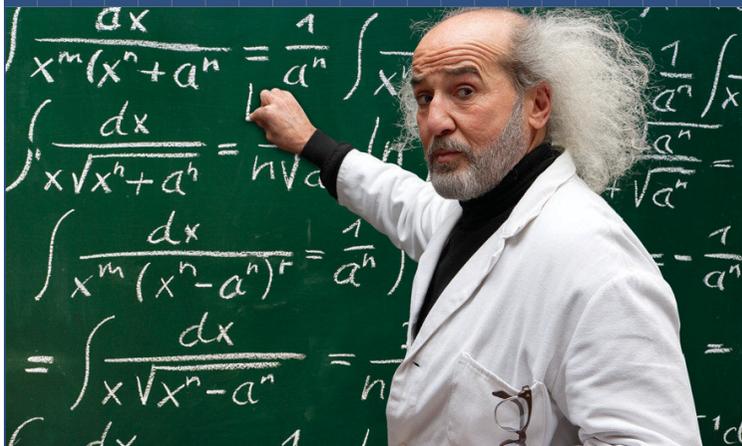
competitors, which causes concerns from another perspective. We see ourselves as a software company and the real value comes not only from the Dante protocol, but the robust implementation and the expertise and support of the company."

Back at base, Dante's development continues apace. In the past year, the company has introduced a high-capacity 128 x 128 low-latency PCIe card, as well as a higher capacity Brooklyn II module to support all commonly used sample rates, with redundancy. The aforementioned Dante Netspander, which enables the delivery of tightly synchronised networked audio across subnets in a Layer 3 TCP/IP routed network, will be available in 2012.

While the focus is firmly on the future, Ellison is aware of how far Audinate has come in just five years. Consequently, he doesn't require encouragement to ponder his favourite Dante-related memory from the past half-decade. "It could be the time we did the Dante-MY16-AUD card for the Yamaha console in only five months, or the collaboration with Bosch to be a part of its new OMNEO networking scheme, or the trips to Europe meeting with great companies like Focusrite, Allen & Heath and DiGiCo," he muses. "But maybe the best was watching the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and knowing that each country's national anthem was being played by over 2,000,000W of amplifiers all connected with Dante." 🍀

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