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Industry News

Harman Group in \$7.8 Billion Buyout

Harman International, parent company behind an array of brands including Harman Kardon, JBL, Mark Levinson and Infinity, will be acquired by two private-equity firms (Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. and Goldman Sachs Group) for

\$7.8 billion.

From the earliest days of movie sound to today's digital entertainment and information systems, Harman brands delivered products for venues that include the Royal Albert Hall, cars such as the Maybach 62, and the desktop PC.

Harman shareholders will have an option to exchange some or all of their Harman stock for shares in the new private company, for a total stake of up to 27%.

Harman's founder and executive chairman, Sidney Harman, will retain his post after the buyout. He owns about 5% of the company's outstanding common stock and will elect to exchange half for post-transaction shares.

Analysts say Washington, D.C.-based Harman, organized into Automotive OEM, Consumer and Professional operating groups, is well positioned to grow—especially as a leading developer of technology used in vehicles to integrate multiple digital devices such as CDs, radios, DVDs, navigation systems and cell phones.

The deal is expected to close in Q3 but Harman can solicit new bids for the next 50 days and analyst (bullish on Harman's growth prospects) think that the appearance of another bidder is possible.

For example, Harman is currently benefiting from the move by German automakers to fully integrate the networks across multiple vehicle platforms, and DaimlerChrysler AG is moving to make this technology available on its vehicles in fiscal 2007 and 2008. Hyundai and Peugeot Citroen are also adopting this technology.



For more info, go to [Harman Deal](#)

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Here Comes the Sun: New Video-Streaming System

Sun co-founder Andy Bechtolsheim designed a new video streaming system, (Sun Streaming System) which combines computing and data storage in a single product.

Designed for telcos & ISPs (EDS and Nortel will also sell), the new system can deliver up to 160,000 simultaneous video streams -- 10X more than existing products on the market -- at a price of \$50 per stream.

OK, in case you missed that math: a Sun spokesman says the system, which is available now, would sell for upward of one million US dollars.



For more info, go to [Sun Streaming System](#)

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Digital Signage

Projecta Opens a Whole New Category of Digital Signage

Projecta's new Twin and Flex Digital Signage projection films create a whole new category of digital signage.

For use as projection screens in public spaces, the new paper-thin films mount easily on any glass or acrylic surface. The result is a screen which reproduces extremely sharp, high-contrast images, even in environments with a high level of ambient light.



The possibilities for positioning communicating via screen signage seem limitless: you can attach them to shop windows or doors or hang from ceilings. This means that Twin and Flex projection films will be particularly suitable for use in public spaces, such as shops, restaurants, showrooms or waiting rooms.

The films can be cut into any desired shape, including the shape of a company logo, for example. The films can be joined together seamlessly to form the required surface area.

Both Twin and Flex Digital Signage films are suitable for front and rear projection. Twin is used for the installation of permanent screens.

Flex can be repeatedly mounted and removed. All that is needed is a clean surface and a small quantity of water. These are properties which make this film additionally suitable for portable applications, such as sales presentations, exhibitions and conference use. A High Contrast version of Flex projection film is also available.

For more info, go to [Projecta's Digital Signage Revolution](#)

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vogel's
Professional

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Control & Integrator Solutions

How Should Your Clients Copy Books? Meet CopiBook...

If your clients have bound documents or books that need to be digitized, there's an easier solution: the CopiBook .

CopiBook tabletop scanners allow for digitalization of bound documents up to A2 format.

It's a no-brainer for museums, libraries, archives and large corporations. For example, the General Archives of the Kingdom of Belgium recently bought 20 units.

The company behind Copibook is interesting, too. They design and manufacture vision components and image processing systems (even video in extreme conditions.) The first images from the discovered Titanic were transmitted on i2S Vision cameras.



For more info, go to [Copibook](#)

Or [i2S Vision](#)

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75" Tablet Board from BEUP

Straight from their visit last week to find European partners at Gartner's IT Channel Vision, we bring you Taiwan's BEUP with its 75" interactive tablet board. You can operate any pc software on the board, making it very useful for corporate conference rooms, education, and other meetings.

Used currently in Taiwan schools, BEUP particularly mentions the ability to combine board use with Microsoft Live meeting software, and even a low cost video conference application.

The unique feature with BEUP is its "active digitizer" technology (vs. the more common "passive digitizer.") This technology lowers cost and saves on power. The board is wall mount or mobile on wheels and connects via USB.



For more info, go to [BEUP Board](#)

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Acoustic Pulse Recognition: New Type of Touch Screen

It's a new type of touch screen: APR works by recognizing each unique sound made by touching a different point on the screen. It then compares that sound with a sound table and that tells the computer where the screen was touched.

Maker Elo Touchsystems assures us that this reduces the need for powerful and expensive signal processing hardware, so APR is suited to any size of screen.

APR lets the company use glass (instead of overlays that scratch easier) and This technology needs only the one-time factory screen calibration (comes with a 10 year warranty).

In fact, Elo Touchsystems has introduced the first range of products with APR technology, recommended for retail, hospitality, medical and industrial markets.



For more info, go to [APR Touch Screens](#)

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Displays

Who Cares About Rain? Waterproof LCD

Frontgate's "SunBriteTV" has a bright LCD screen that can be seen in daylight, but



this LCD Outdoor features "all-weather enclosure safeguarded from rain, dirt, insects and scratches." Even its cable ports and remote are watertight and dust-resistant.

Withstanding a temperatures range from minus-24 to 122 degrees Fahrenheit, LCD outdoor comes in two sizes: 32 inches and 23 inches. Yes, you can have a water-resistant remote control, dust cover, and articulating wall mount.

For more info, go to [Frontgate SunBrite](#)

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AU Optronics Wants to Downsize LCD-TV Race

Taiwan's AU Optronics wants to call an end to the race to produce ever-larger LCDs.

Lee Kuen-yao, Chairman, believes there is now less justification for competing with rivals by having advanced fabrication plants with the largest-sized glass substrates. AU Optronics says it will not expand production capacity and would instead give priority to becoming more profitable.

One of the world's largest makers of the panels, the company recently announced its worst quarterly results in years: a US\$150m net loss for the Q1.



For more info, go to [AU Optronics on LCD War](#)

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LG: We Won't Drop Plasma (Yet)

With display losses are wiping out profits from the handset and appliance businesses, Yong Nam, LG's new chief executive, pledges to double return on invested capital to 20% by 2010.

He outlined a tough restructuring plan designed to turn round LG by optimising its product mix, raising efficiency of its assets, streamlining the manufacturing process and cutting procurement costs.

But he surprised all the analysts by hinting that LG will retain the plasma display business, despite calls to close or spin-off.



"We're still reviewing various options to improve the PDP business. We plan to put some measures into action within this year," Mr Nam was quoted as saying.

LG, second-largest PDP maker after Samsung SDI, recently shifted focus from PDPs to LCDs.

For more info on [LG Display Business](#)

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Toshiba/Matsushita Show 20.8-inch OLED Display

The joint venture Toshiba Matsushita Display Technology (TMD) has developed a 20.8" low-temperature poly-silicon (LTPS) OLED panel to advance to the next-generation of flat-screen TV sets and monitors.

The newly developed panel demonstrates the world's largest screen size for this polymer-type OLED display panels using LTPS technology, accomplished through the use of newly developed techniques for uniform coating of organic electroluminescent materials and the optimized combination of electrodes and organic materials.



For more info, go to [TM Display's OLED](#)

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Sonos is an Apple/EMI Winner

Of all the parties walking away as winners in the deal between Apple and EMI to remove copy restrictions from digital music, Sonos may benefit the most.

Apple's plan to offer EMI's music via iTunes with no digital rights management (DRM) software to restrict the conditions under which songs can be copied will automatically give Sonos the compatibility it has lacked.

Sonos, like so many other companies that struggle with Apple's refusal to license its FairPlay DRM technology to third parties had approached Apple several times. Apple's response: It didn't want to get into the business of supporting hardware partners on behalf because the record labels didn't.

A co-founder of Sonos was once quoted as saying, "...we sure spent a lot of time explaining why the songs wouldn't work on support calls. We just blamed Apple."

News of their agreement came before EC regulators said they will launch an antitrust probe against Apple and the major recording labels. The EC says DRM rules (about to be changed in Europe) via iTunes violate competitive rules. The regulators sent Apple, Universal Music (V), Warner Music (WMG), EMI, and Sony BMG (SNE) a confidential statement of objections outlining the charges last week.

For more info, go to [Sonos](#)



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Asheridge to Build Euro Distribution for ZÖN

Asheridge Communications, specialist provider of custom installation solutions, wants to build the European distribution network for its ZÖN multi-room audio system.

Asheridge named AED as a partner for ZÖN technology in Belgium, and is in negotiation with key distributors in a number of other territories.

Jonathan Rigby, Sales & Marketing Director, Asheridge says: "Sales of the ZÖN multi-room audio systems have been going from strength to strength since we launched the product last year. The range has great potential, and with the right partners on board we are confident of repeating this success across Europe."

The latest member of the ZÖN multi-room audio family is the new ZAS-430 with an easy-to-use interface and smart programming features.

For more info, go to [Asheridge & ZÖN](#)



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Linksys Launches HomePlug AV

Now you don't have to drill through the walls and climb through the attic or cellar to install network cables – you just use the wires that already run through the building. The PowerLine AV Ethernet Adapter lets your customers turn their existing power lines in home or office into a high-speed network.

The PowerLine AV Adapter interfaces ethernet devices to the HomePlug AV PowerLine network standard. Plug the PowerLine AV Adapter into the wall, and connect your ethernet-equipped devices to the Adapter using the included network cable, and you've turned your customer's whole house/office into network infrastructure!

With up to 100Mbps data rates, you can play lag-free head-to-head network computer games, and run media-centric applications like streaming video and VoIP telephony.

The Linksys PowerLine AV Ethernet Adapter Kit is a for high-speed, "no new wires," home or office networking. More than 65 companies support the Home Plug Powerline Alliance in its efforts to create standards for high speed home/SOHO networking.

For more info, go to [Linksys PLK200](#)

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Mounts & Accessories

Vogel's Professional with Universal Projector Support Range

As the popularity of video projection increases, so does the need for suitable projector supports. Vogel's Professional has anticipated this market trend by continually improving its range of universal projector supports.

Characterized by simple design and easy-to-mount features, the PPC 130, PPC 150 and PPC 180 are complete projector mounting kits for LCD and DLP projectors. A cathedral ceiling mounting plate, a variable extension tube and a universal projector adapter are all included. The mounting kits feature adjustable extension tubes (*PPC 130*: 30-39 cm (12-15"); *PPC 150*: 52-85 cm (21-32"); *PPC 180*: 83-134 cm (33-55").

Installers require fast, safe and universal solutions. So the new projector adapters fit most LCD/DLP projectors and they feature sturdy, yet good-looking die-cast arms (4 pcs included). An easy click in/out system allows for quick servicing. The mounting arms come equipped with anti-theft screws (only removable with a provided special Allen key.)

Thanks to a tiltable ceiling mounting plate, the projector can be tilted in any desired angle. A cover is included for use in recessed ceilings. The patented CIS Cable Inlay System hides all unsightly cables from view; first removing the plugs is no longer necessary.



For more info, go to [Vogel's Professional](#)

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Audio

Nimzy Vibro Goes Flat

According to the maker, Nimzy Vibro Blaster turns any flat surface into a speaker. Utilizing a patented electro acoustic technology, Nimzy Vibro Blaster transforms sonic signals into sonic mechanical vibrations to produce sound. Apparently it can transmit sound or music through any flat object (wood, stone, plastic or glass.)

The Singaporean makers of the Nimzy Vibro Blaster suggest it for conference rooms, restaurants, school auditoriums as well as home use.

For more info, go to [Nimzy Vibro](#)



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KEF Reaches for the Aluminum Muon

Famous industrial designer Ross Lovegrove helped KEF create the new "Muon" series of speakers. Carved out of a block of solid aluminum by computer-aided manufacturing, these shapely speakers take a week to create. The 4-way, eight-speaker setups weigh 115 kilos each, and retail for 103,000 euros. This edition is limited to 100 pairs.

For more info, go to [KEF Over the Muon](#)



HD Conferencing COULD be the AV/IT Conduit*By Gary Kayye, CTS*

When I saw the Cisco's version of HD videoconferencing, called Cisco TelePresence, I was extremely impressed, as I have been with all the HD-based VTC systems. But, when I started to ask a question of Cisco, I was stopped mid-sentence and told this was, "not videoconferencing; that's a bad word with the thousands of people who bought those systems that never worked – we don't want our system called videoconferencing".

OK, marketingspeak! Blah, Blah, Blah.,.

But, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that they may be on to something. They are probably even right. There is no doubt that videoconferencing has a reputation of never quite delivering on its promise – over-promised and under-delivered. Most VTC manufacturers will readily admit this (off-line).

So, why not make up a new word and re-sell it as something totally new – Hey, isn't driving a Lexus a lot more luxurious than driving a Toyota? And, certainly Mazda has nothing on Infinity.

But, what really made me stop and think was what they, Cisco, may be onto here. By introducing this technology, Cisco is "officially" in the ProAV business now. Sure, they claim that they are only going to sell it through 25 Cisco-certified partners (none of which are known as traditional ProAV integrators, by the way). But, one way or another, they are in the ProAV business now.

And, maybe we now have the conduit to the AV/IT convergence because Cisco isn't selling a videoconferencing system. Cisco is selling a network add-on. A network value-add. IT managers get networks. As far as they're concerned, networks work.

Every major ProAV tradeshow, conference, advisory board or writer (including this one) has been pushing the AV/IT convergence bandwagon for a few years now the writing's on the proverbial wall. And, just because it's only happened in HomeAV, so far, doesn't mean that it won't happen in ProAV. In fact, to the contrary – because wireless and networked video and audio are pervasive in the home, it will, in fact, rise up to the Pro world too.

Maybe HD conferencing is the pathway to the professional AV future – for integrators. It's clear to me that most integration firms get it. While some have lived in IT-denial, most of you have been out there getting educated and integrating AMX, Extron and Crestron network-enabled control systems. But, not totally. With the exception of a few systems out there designed by companies like Waveguide, Shen Milsom Wilke, and Pelton Marsh Kinsella, the majority of AV systems out there are AV-centric with an IT port.

What we need to strive for are IT systems with an AV port. This is where products like Crestron's Adagio and AMX's MAX are taking the HomeAV world and will, eventually, take the professional AV community. So, maybe it will take Cisco, an IT company, rather than a Polycom or Tandberg (both AV companies) to push us into the IT realm and AV-enabled IT systems.

I wish them the best of luck as, although they certainly have the resources to pull it off, I certainly (along with many of you) remember Cisco's IP/TV and its promise to do some really similar stuff to what the TelePresence system claims.

And if they do pull it off, the word videoconferencing might not be so bad after all!

Well, that's it for this edition of rAVe Europe!

Do you have a special topic you would like to address industry-wide? We're open for **Guest Editorial** comments on the industry from Europe... Sorry, no commercials...this is just for industry issues. Contact: rAVeEurope@gmail.com





Well, that's it for this edition of rAVe Europe! Thank you for spending time with us as we follow the industry happenings.

A little about Gary Kayye, CTS, founder of Kayye Consulting: Gary Kayye, an audiovisual veteran and columnist, began the widely-read KNews, a premier industry newsletter, in the late 1990s, and created the model for and was co-founder of AV Avenue - which later became InfoComm IQ. Kayye Consulting is a company that is committed to furthering the interests and success of dealers, manufacturers, and other companies within the professional audiovisual industry. Gary Kayye's rAVe was first launched in America in February 2003.

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