

DALLAS SHOW REPORT

UNExpected

Although show promoter **Rick Schneringer** had been warning exhibitors for several weeks that he anticipated a much bigger crowd than would normally attend a 'regional' show, there were many who were very surprised by the turn-out in Dallas over the November 18-20 show period. The show not only produced crowds, but buyers with money in their hands and business growth on their minds. The general attitude of show exhibitors was that the show was 'one of the best' regional shows held to date, perhaps the best outside of the Las Vegas/Nashville 'national' circuit.

The show setting was elegant; Lowes-Anatole Hotel is one of those Texas-style 'you-have-to-see-it-to-believe-it' places; more than a million square feet inside, distances from one end to the other measured in tenths of a mile, meeting rooms by the hundred. If an industry is judged by the 'class' of its trade show locations, TVRO received an 'A' from first-time attendees for being right up there with the 'Ewings' of Dallas.

Pricing first; the 'soft fall selling season,' reported by most from early September through at least the first of November, was reflected in some of the desperation pricing found in exhibit booths and on antennas in the lot. LNAs: down to \$75 in small quantities for 120 degree, 50 dB units. Receiver plus downconverter plus (120) LNA packages were bottom-ended all over the facility at under \$300 and some approached the \$250 figure if you knew where to look and what to say. Packages consisting of antennas, mounts, plus electronics hovered either side of \$750 for antennas in the 8 and 10 foot range. Of course the baby sized six footers, with electronics, were in the \$500 region. Price was the name of the game.

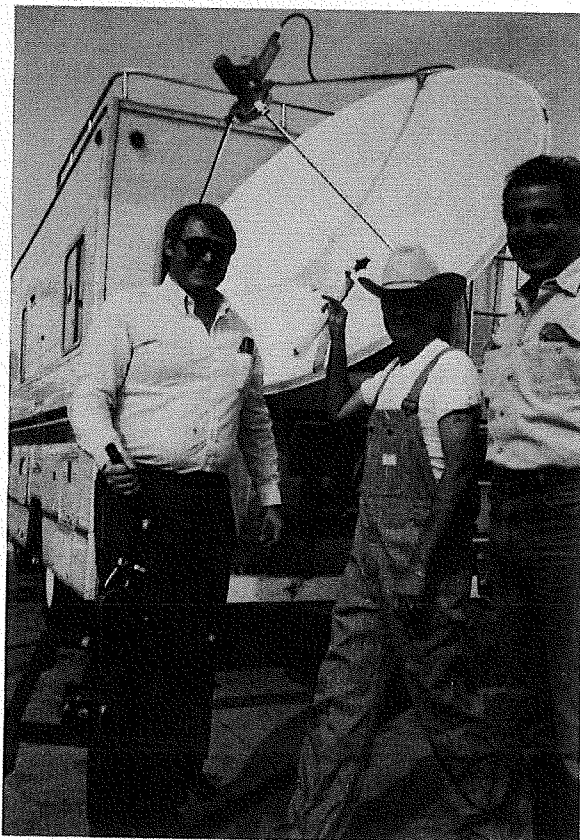
New next, **Birdview Satellite Communications, Inc.** (315 N. Lindenwood Drive, Olathe, Kansas 66062; 913/829-0400) had the newest of the new; their just under 8 foot 'spoon antenna.' Birdview has spent, according to their annual reports, in excess of \$1,000,000 researching and developing their small-region not-parabolic dish antenna. It is an 'offset-fed' dish which means that it has the general shape of a 'spoon.' The reason one might do this is to gain an advantage over close satellite to satellite spacing (such as the 2 degree spacing between satellites coming), and, to perhaps also reduce antenna noise pick-up in the process. Birdview's 'spoon' attracted plenty of attention because it was new, and it held the promise of being a better way to create usable 4 GHz signals with dishes smaller than ten feet in size. It also attracted attention because it was well promoted and displayed above their booth, its shape and the method of suspending or mounting the feed away from the surface (at the offset-focal point) was 'unusual' and very dramatic. Field-user reports are the next step and it will be interesting to see how long it takes someone to 'knock off' the design assuming it works well enough to be attractive as a knock-off.

New concepts (not yet in production): **Norman Gillaspie** from International Satellite Systems (and the original 'Gillaspie' in receiver design) was talking about a new approach he has to block downconversion. Norman likes the idea of blocking down to 50/550 MHz rather than the more common 270/770 or 450/950, or 950/1450 MHz. His rationale goes like this:

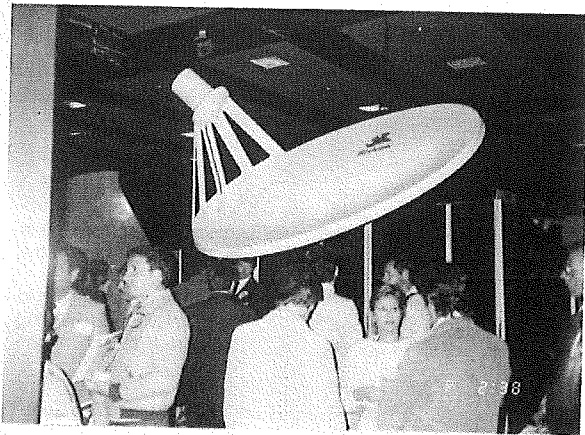


TINY/ but effective. Jim Halley and his Intersat 'Micro-Q' receiver is designed to underprice the off-shore receivers with American parts and labor.

"For very long cable runs, between the downconverter portion and the receiver(s), the cable losses are monstrous in the higher frequency bands. Additionally, amplifiers and splitters and other bits and pieces required to make the extended-distribution sys-



HOMETOWN BOY/ Pat Porter (center) from Starcom was 'in his element' in Dallas arranging for in-booth autograph sessions for the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders on day two of the show. Ask Pat why he learned to 'play the bones' (his right hand) sometime.



OFFSET-fed spoon-shaped dish from Birdview Satellite Communications has 'unusual' appearing support system for feed. Dual LNAs and downconverter electronics inside of feed housing.

tems play to distant receiver locations are either poor in quality, or impossible to find, in the higher frequency bands."

Norman likes 50/550 because virtually all of the common CATV hardware available (passive and active equipment) already works in



NOT CRAZY ABOUT THE BOOT/ Shaun Kenny, heading up the BORESIGHT TV production effort, explains to the Nitec people why he believes their 'rain boot' may not hold up in heavy use.

this frequency band. He also likes it because he feels that a system that is installed with a 'long trunk run' could be adapted from the now defacto 950-1450 MHz IF through a converter to 50/550 for long trunk runs. In effect you leave the equipment (DX et al) at 950/1450, but re-block the block to 50/550 for long trunk runs and then when into the area where the signals will attach to demodulators, re-block again back to 950/1450 MHz. This way, the 50/550 region becomes a lower frequency 'trunk band' that allows you to cover greater distances with fewer (or no) amplifiers than you could do if the system stayed in the 950/1450 MHz region all the way through. An interesting concept and with more and more 950/1450 block systems coming on the marketplace, the limitations of the higher band for extended cable runs will certainly cause some system planning engineers many headaches that could be avoided if the blocked band was dropped down to the 50/550 region for 'trunking.'

Intersat introduced the latest Jim Halley created receiver; the 'Micro-Q.' Halley has been working to reduce the costs and component count on low-end receivers and his 'Micro' will be an attractive American built target for the off-shore folks to shoot at. The entire receiver is housed in a container that reminds one of the set-top CATV converters. Small; very small. This is a block conversion package and when you learn the pricing (still to be firmed up as we go to press but under \$175 with block downconverter) you will wonder how they do it with American overhead and labor ("magic" comments Halley).

Chaparral's announcement of their 'LNF' (low noise feed) had been anticipated. The unit marries the feed horn, polarization selection system and LNA into a single package. The big advantage is that the installer has fewer wires to run or account for while the disadvantage is that a failure in any segment of the system requires replacement of the entire feed system. 100 of the units are now in the field being tested.

And there was Nitec. You may remember that seemingly clever piece of hardware you saw in Nashville from a firm called 'Eagle Prey.' This is a mount and drive which they suggest has 'robotic origins.' The mechanism will point anyplace in the sky which means you can directly adjust both elevation and azimuth for each and every satellite with it. You could also follow 747s across the sky to panic your neighbors. The Nitec people are part of a multi-multi-billion dollar Japanese concern and this is their first product in the TVRO marketplace. It's a very unusual, very professional approach to antenna system control and not inexpensive. It will be of interest to see how the product matures in the marketplace.

SPACE Dealer Board Meet

There are 21 people on the SPACE Dealer Board and they first met to get their affairs in order during the Nashville show. This time 19 showed up for the meeting which was held two days prior to the show opening. Official business first; new officers.

- A) Chairman: **Charlie Brown** of Illinois
- B) Vice Chairman: **King Oberlin** of Indiana
- C) Secretary: **Jeff Manlon** of Kansas
- D) Treasurer: **Tom Harrington** of Ohio

These four plus **Wayne Morong** (Maine), **Hoyt Foster** (Texas), **Tom Spessard** (California) and **Anna Visalli** (New Jersey) sit on the full SPACE board of directors. All eight would attend their first 'big board' meeting the following day.

The dealer board definitely had their 'act together.' They spent nearly seven hours grinding through a considerable agenda sorting out their goals and committees for the first year of operation. Dealers are represented on the various 'big board' committees dealing with 'standards,' education, membership, consumer awareness, shows, and finance. In effect, anything the 'big board' does in the future will be done with a dealer-board member sitting right there expressing the will and position of the dealer members.

SPACE's **Chuck Hewitt** reported that after the latest 'membership roster purge' there were 667 dealer members of SPACE. The dealers decided to set some goals for additional membership growth and selected 1,500 total dealer members as a goal tied to the Las Vegas show. Then they went to work, as volunteers, at the Pan-Am SPACE show booth to recruit dealers who do not yet belong to the trade association. At \$95 (per year) per pop, they raced through more than