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End of an era: Encel Stereo set to close

Posted on: 09/02/2014

By Martin Kovacs

Alex Encel, founder of Melbourne audiovisual specialist Encel Stereo, has seen the industry undergo dramatic change in a career spanning over 50 years, from the early days of "hi-fi cranks" to the absorption of modern industry into the mainstream.

The decision by Encel (pictured right) to leave the world of retail behind and close the doors on his Richmond outlet was not taken lightly, and has given opportunity for reflection on the evolution of the audio industry in Australia

"When I got started in the industry, it was a very small industry, hi-fi people were regarded as cranks, there were cartoons of them sitting on each others' shoulders," Encel recalled. "People would say, 'I've got a friend who's a hi-fi crank'."

Encel, who conducted Australia's first stereophonic demonstration in 1958, noted audio was effectively regarded as "a minor interest", and what for him had started out as passion evolved into a lifelong career.

"It was, as I say, a little industry," he commented. "And then it started over a period to become more relevant to people."

"The industry has changed, and from our point of view we were a very big fish in a very little pond; now the pond is much, much bigger, and we're, of course, a much smaller fish."

Encel noted technology changes have come continuously, with technologies such as wire recorders, tape recorders, cassette, MiniDisc, and eight-track all coming and going over the years.

"A lot of these technologies disappear; people keep thinking that new technologies all succeed, actually most new technologies fail, they just disappear," he observed.

"Betamax was a better technology, but because of the licensing arrangements VHS became more popular. So, it wasn't a technological question, it was a marketing question."

With the doors likely to close on Encel Stereo over the next few weeks, Encel is now looking forward to cutting down from 70-hour working weeks, enjoying more spare time, and focusing on his audiovisual wholesale business International Dynamics.

"Since we're closing down the retail, that wasn't done as a random sort of decision," he commented.

"It was simply that I was more and more involved in the wholesale, and less and less involved in the retail, and the wholesale became bigger and bigger. Originally, the retail was bigger than the wholesale, now the wholesale side of our combined businesses is very large."

While it was with "a certain degree of regret" that he came to the decision to close doors, Encel noted he is now looking forward to focusing on other areas.

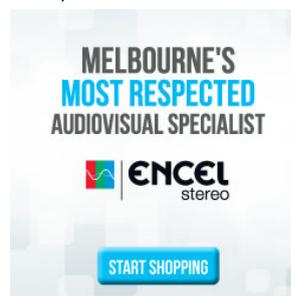
"On the other hand I had a good time, and I'm still having a good time, but in a slightly different area," he observed.

Looking back on some of the decisions made during his time in business, Encel acknowledges the best laid plans can sometimes come unstuck.

"Wise advice doesn't always work, and I can think of some silly decisions that I made that worked out very well, and some carefully thought through decisions that worked out very badly," he commented.

"With the benefit of hindsight I would have done so many things differently!"

"But then I console myself with the fact that when I started up I was told that it was an idiot industry for a young man to get into, with a wife and child, and if I'd listened to the wise advice at the time I wouldn't have got into the industry at all."



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Breaking News

Samsung initiates exclusive scheme for UK indies



Posted on:04/07/2014

UK: Samsung has launched the Home Innovation Partners (HIPs) scheme to support UK independents and improve their access to and supply of Samsung home appliance products.

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Olympus' Tizzone moves onto IDEA board



Posted on:04/07/2014

IDEA Australia (the Imaging & Digital Entertainment Association) has elected Olympus Imaging Australia, General Manager Joe Tizzone as a new Director effective immediately. Tizzone will also assume the position of Vice President, Consumer.

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Colourful US appliance character passes



Posted on:04/07/2014

US: Oliver L. "Ollie" Fretter, the colorful founder and president of the old Fretter appliance and electronics store chain whose zany commercials endeared him to a generation of US television viewers, died Sunday at his home in Bloomfield Hills. He was 91.

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Department stores hit hard by spending collapse



Posted on:04/07/2014

A collapse in consumer sentiment following the budget has led to a sharp decline in discretionary spending according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Its figures indicated that retail sales fell by a seasonally adjusted 0.5% in May compared to April, the biggest decline in 13 months, while April's figure was also revised down to a decline of 0.1% , the first fall in 11 months.

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Extraordinary growth for wearable devices despite recall



Posted on:03/07/2014

Research firm IHS expects annual shipments of all types of wearable electronic devices to reach 56 million units by 2018. In fact, it expects the global market for just the batteries that go into wearable electronics to grow tenfold in four years.

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Class action against Electrolux dryer-fire settles



Posted on:03/07/2014

US: Electrolux Home Products has agreed to settle a class action lawsuit regarding fires alleged to have started in some models of its clothes dryers. Electrolux denied that the dryers were defective and agreed to the settlement to avoid further litigation.

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Australia one of the world's most connected countries



Posted on:02/07/2014

A new report from global research consultancy TNS has found Australia is one of the most connected countries in the world, with Australians on average owning 4.8 devices and spending 3.3 hours a day online on personal interests, such as browsing, shopping, and entertainment, compared to 2.2 hours watching TV.

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Samsung unveils compact Galaxy S5 mini



Posted on:02/07/2014

Samsung has taken the wraps off its Galaxy S5 mini, a compact version of its flagship Galaxy S5 smartphone.

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July Aussie launch for Nokia Lumia 930 and 635



Posted on:01/07/2014

Microsoft Devices is launching its new flagship Nokia Lumia 930 in Australia this month along with its Nokia Lumia 635, both running on the Windows Phone 8.1 operating system.

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