



Independent retailer Iain Wilson recently opened his second shop – a brand new Panasonic Store in Dumfries. We talk to him about how the shopfitting project went

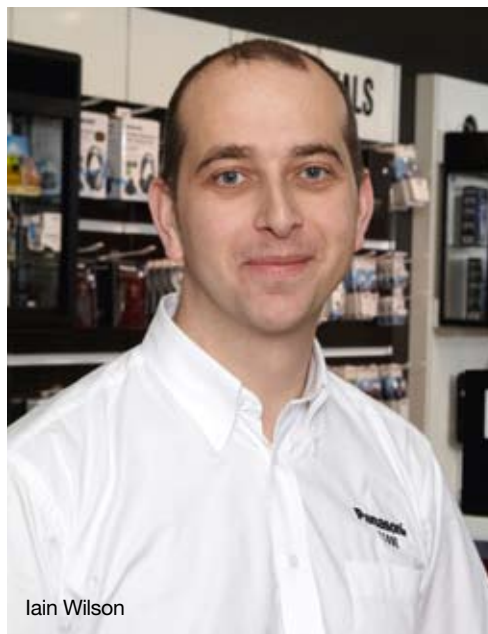
**IN THESE tough times, it's always nice to hear about retailers opening new stores.**

Shortly before Christmas, independent dealer Iain Wilson did just that. His Panasonic Store in Dumfries, Scotland, opened its doors in mid-November – and enjoyed a good festive trading period.

“We opened up on a Saturday morning with quite a lot of local advertising, including an outside wrap on the front of the local newspaper. We also did some local TV and radio advertising. All of that made for a busy opening weekend,” he tells *ERT*.

Mr Wilson, whose family-run business started in 1974, also runs a multi-brand shop in Dumfries – Wilson’s – but this is the first time he has committed to selling purely one brand.

“People are looking for the Panasonic brand and products,” he says. “We have done well with 3D – it’s been our key line. The vast majority of our large screen sales have been 3D. That’s been very encouraging. We’ve also done well with the Lumix digital still cameras. The Panasonic Store did well over Christmas – given the state of the economy and the fact that we’ve had digital switchover already in this area. I was more than happy with the business we did. However, January



Iain Wilson

was more challenging. There’s been a lot of negative press telling people that they’ve got no money and to be careful. I think people are holding on to their money and expecting the worst.”

The new store is located in the town centre of Dumfries, in the Loreburne Shopping Centre.

“We took over an existing empty retail unit. We took it back to a shell. We did everything from scratch – the whole unit was rewired and we put in new flooring and air conditioning,” explains Mr Wilson.

The store refit was carried out by specialist company Replan, along with some input from local contractors.

“I was delighted with how it all went and I found Replan very easy to work with,” he says. “We had definite ideas on how we wanted it to look, but we also talked it through with Replan extensively. I’d had a look at other Panasonic stores, too.”

**Demonstration**

The 1,200 square foot store includes a special feature wall with a 65in 3D TV demo area and a home-cinema system. There’s also a dedicated interactive section with 16 units to display digital cameras and camcorders, plus home appliances at the rear of the shop.

Says Mr Wilson: “The home appliance section has bright red, glossy kitchen units with an oak worktop and a breakfast bar. All of the appliances are in situ.

“The refit gives us the ability to display a wide range of Panasonic products – the company’s line-up is huge. Panasonic will have 10 washing machines in its range this year – now we have the space to display them, demonstrate them and actively promote them.”

The refit has also meant that the store has attracted a wider customer base, as Mr Wilson explains: “We’ve gained a lot of new customers. The location helps – we’re getting younger guys come in who wouldn’t have associated our old multi-brand store with products like digital cameras and those types of gadgets. The new store has attracted a lot more attention.”

Looking ahead, he says: “I’m not negative about things, but I do expect it to be quite quiet. I think this year will be very tough, judging by how pricing has been recently – it’s been really hard to compete.

“There’s a lot of competition in Dumfries. There’s a Comet, Currys, Tesco Extra, a Sony Centre and another multi-brand indie. We have to play to our strengths and offer a better package. We’ve got the edge and offer a good level of service, which is what the independents do well.”

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