

New Products for Kitchen and Bath

What we found while tromping
the aisles of K/BIS 2005

by Dave Holbrook

The annual Kitchen/Bath Industry Show and Conference set up camp in Las Vegas this year. The giant exposition, which took place in May, hosted more than 900 exhibitors and, despite its location, offered enough enticements of its own to keep attendees indoors and interested for its three-day run. While no dramatic new trends emerged, all of the established product lines were well represented. For kitchens, that meant lots of solid-surface and stone countertops, specialty cabinet finishes, ingenious storage solutions, and both built-in and “professional” stainless steel appliances. In the bathroom, it’s still all about adding luxury to the space you’ve got, with vessel lavs, furniture-like vanities and accessory suites, jetted tubs, big showerheads, warm floors, and spa showers galore. All and all, from the utilitarian to the lavish, there was something for everyone. Here’s a quick tour of the floor’s most intriguing highlights.



Courtesy NKBA

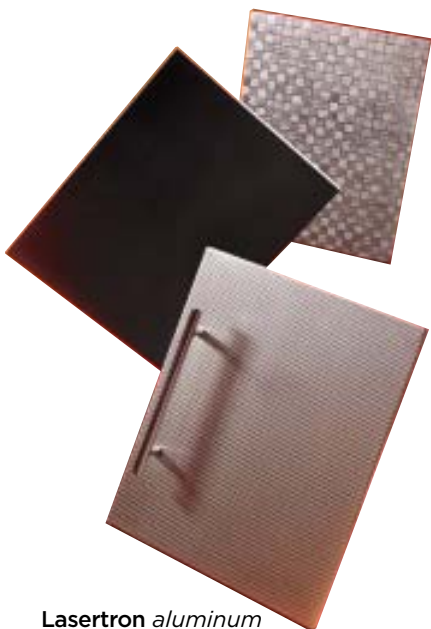
New Products for Kitchen and Bath



Armstrong
Merrimac



Columbia Forest Products
EcoColors



Lasertron aluminum
and stainless steel cabinet
doors and drawer fronts

Cabinets

Generally, the focus in cabinetry seems to be on finishes, especially contrasting glazes that emphasize nooks and crannies. Dark finishes are on the rise — not only darker wood hues, but black stains and enamels. At the opposite extreme, cabinets rendered in primary colors and bright tints are experiencing their own little renaissance. Cherry continues to be a popular face material, although usually as an “upscale” option; a few manufacturers, however, have recognized an opportunity to bring cherry to more affordable cabinetry, as **Armstrong** has done with its *Merrimac* line.

Face-frame cabinets have long been the standard at **KraftMaid**, but the new *Venicia* line offers European-style frameless cabinetry at what the company touts as affordable prices. In these cabinets, interiors coordinate with face materials, setting the collection apart from other frameless packages with more typical white melamine interiors. A wide variety of door styles, finishes, and storage choices make the line worth considering.

Those with chemically sensitive clients will be interested to know that **Columbia Forest Products** has announced plans to start using only urea-formaldehyde-free, soy-protein-based adhesive in all hardwood plywood production (see “New Glue Creates Superior Bond Without Formaldehyde,” *In the News*, September, 2005). The company’s new particleboard panel product, *EcoColors*, offers decorative possibilities with zero formaldehyde emissions and an acrylic surface. Another smart option: *aluminum and stainless steel cabinet doors and drawer fronts* from **Element Designs** and **Lasertron**. Absolutely no off-gassing, guaranteed.

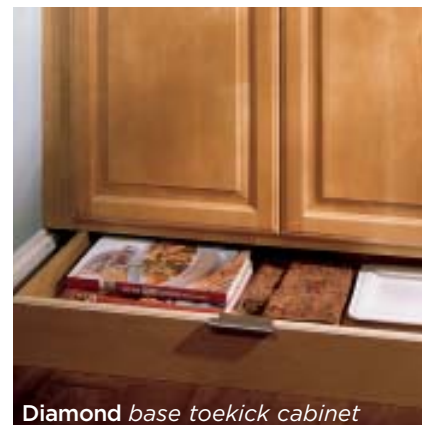
Or, how about a novel way to maximize storage in a small kitchen? The ever-present, never-used toekick gets down to business with **Diamond’s** *base toekick cabinet*.



KraftMaid
Venicia



Element Designs
*aluminum and stainless
steel cabinet doors
and drawer fronts*



Diamond *base toekick cabinet*



Blum *clip-on attenuator*



Grass *Metro Elite*

Cabinet Hardware

Fully concealed undermount slides have by now proven their mettle; the latest innovation is the soft self-close. **Grass**, for one, offers its *Metro Elite* series slides with Airmatic shock absorption that slows drawer momentum to a soundless close. It's a nice enhancement. Similarly, **Blum's** *clip-on attenuator* modifies the standard cup hinge to self-close doors silently; it can be a simple proprietary retrofit or a complete replacement option. **Blum** also showed its cool *Space Corner* drawer, which makes clever use of that pesky corner base. Upon opening, the opposing drawer faces actually flex toward one another to clear adjacent face panels and keep reveals uniformly narrow.



Blum *Space Corner*

On the massive-hardware front, everyone got a big kick out of working **Reversica Design's** demo installation of the *Gyre 6300* television-concealment system.

On one side, the cabinetry appears to be a handsome bookcase; flip it around like one of those secret doors in a haunted castle and there's a working television on display.



Reversica Design *Gyre 6300*



LG Electronics
microwave/toaster

Kitchen Appliances

LG Electronics tackles countertop clutter with two new products that combine functions: a *microwave/toaster* and a *microwave/coffee maker*. **Lance Larkin's** *Brew Express*, which brews coffee directly into a stainless steel carafe, installs within a 2x4 stud cavity — yet another way to clear some precious countertop space.



LG Electronics
microwave/coffee maker



Lance Larkin
Brew Express

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Sharp Microwave Drawer



AA-Abbingdon
embossed tin panels



American Standard
Lakeland

Apartment dwellers and others with no practical means to vent the range hood to the outdoors may appreciate **Kobe's** new *recirculating filtration hood*, which delivers up to 400 cfm and uses charcoal filtration to capture odor while directing grease and oil to a detachable container. And **Sharp's** handy *Microwave Drawer* can be installed as a stand-alone appliance or incorporated into its Insight Range, which also provides a glass ceramic cooktop and a conventional or convection oven.

Kitchen Surfaces

Look at the ceiling and backsplash in the average kitchen. Drawing a blank? Consider dressing up these areas with **AA-Abbingdon's** *embossed tin panels*, just like in the old days. A quick peek at the installation manual suggests they're fairly simple to install. Another way to spiff up a backsplash: *quilted stainless steel panels* from **Star Stainless Design**. Talk about easy: These babies transform a kitchen's entire look with peel-and-stick efficiency.



Kobe recirculating filtration hood



Star Stainless Design
quilted stainless steel panels

Sinks

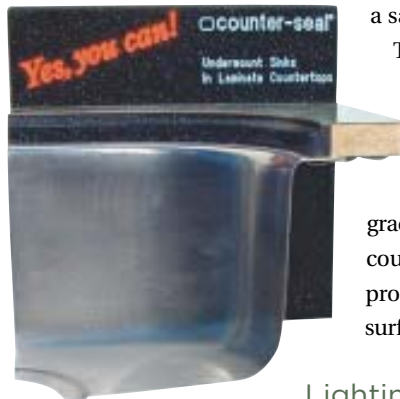
In the replacement category, **American Standard's** *Lakeland* single-bowl sink fits in a standard 22-by-33-inch double-basin cutout and can be adapted to occasional dual-bowl function with its drop-in basin.

Showing up in bathrooms is a material we tend to associate with kitchens: stainless steel. **Neo-Metro's** single-piece *Ebb Basin* is made of 16-gauge stainless and features an inward-sloping surface that conceals the drain. It comes with



NeoMetro
Ebb Basin

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Counter-Seal rings

a satin or mirror finish.

There are several systems out there that allow you to undermount a sink in a tile or laminate countertop. Solid-surface **Counter-Seal rings** are made to match specific sink models. The ring is factory-set into exterior-grade plywood and then incorporated into your countertop substrate to achieve a water-proof transition between the counter surface and the cutout edge.

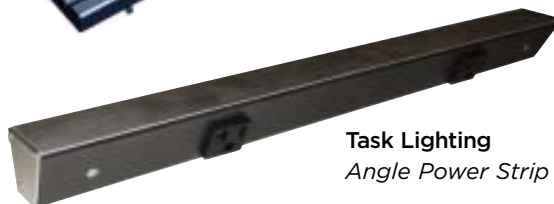
Lighting

The future of undercabinet lighting looks bright indeed, if and when the prices come down. LED fixtures last a long, long time and save a lot of dough compared with other lighting technologies — but a \$2,500 price tag for illuminating the average kitchen doesn't strike me as exactly mainstream. Still, **Cyberlux** has a recessed *LED ceiling fixture* in the works that sounds promising. And, since few would argue that electrical outlets enhance a backsplash's appearance, **Task Lighting's** new *Angle Power Strip* may be just the ticket for those countertop appliance applications.

One final point on the topic of lighting: **Broan** has done something rather remarkable about hard-to-hide bathroom exhaust with its line of *Decorative Fan/Lights*, which come in traditional drop and contemporary recessed styles.



Cyberlux
LED ceiling fixture



Task Lighting
Angle Power Strip



Broan Decorative
Fan/Lights



Hansgrohe
Pharo Lift
Showerpanel

Showers, Tubs, and Spas

Over the past few years, as bathrooms have expanded in size, function, and luxury, modular plug-and-play-type tub and shower spas have proliferated. Conversion panels make existing showers easy to upgrade, and full-blown enclosed tub/shower units with all the bells and whistles — massage jets, steam ports, radios, lighting, overhead and hand-held showerheads — come pre-plumbed and configured, making installation barely more complicated than it is for a conventional unit. Such is the case, certainly, with **Hali's** *steam shower*.

Also making life easier for everyone — and in keeping with the tenets of universal design — **Hansgrohe's** *Pharo Lift Showerpanel* is height-adjustable within an



Hali *steam shower*

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Sprite *filtering showerhead*

8-inch range, thereby accommodating bathers of varying sizes and ranges of motion.

Folks looking to reduce their daily dose of chlorine might want to consider one of **Sprite's** *filtering showerheads*. Cartridge life ranges from three months to one year with normal use.

But for sheer good looks, **Jaclo's** *Cubix* collection hits the jackpot. These fixtures offer an angular, minimalist alternative to the industry's fixation on cylindrical, curvy fittings.

Everyone loves a shower, but nobody loves cleaning it. Putting the job off, of course, only makes it worse. **Intelligent Consumer Products'** battery-operated *Shower-Shower* powers and scours for hours while you go smell the flowers. Basically, it deposits a cleaning mist on surrounding walls, replacing the manual pump-spray bottle of common chemical shower cleaner.

Not everything at the show aimed for that elusive cutting edge. With its warm wood tones and old-timey washtub shape, **Azura's** *Cedar Bathtub* stood out like a Beverly Hillbilly in a crowd of Trekkies. The vessel comes in round and oval shapes and with its own set of matching stairs.



Intelligent Consumer Products
Shower-Shower



Jaclo *Cubix*

Toilets

The humble toilet is undeniably a good thing. Can it be improved upon? **Toto's** *Aquia* and **Kohler's** *Purist Hatbox* both say "Yes." Oh, and if you felt forgotten



Azura *Cedar Bathtub*



Toto *Aquia*



Kohler *Purist Hatbox*



Gerber
PeeWee



Engineered Glass Products
Thermique

LG refrigerator with TV



as a kid, that's because **Gerber** hadn't yet come up with the child-size *PeeWee* collection. Toilet training is no longer a stretch but an experience in personal affirmation.

Bathroom Fittings

Show attendees swarmed the New Products Pavilion to vote for their floor favorites. **Engineered Glass Products'** *Thermique* heated glass towel warmer snagged first place for best new bath product. I liked the *Stor-ganize By-pass Shower Door* shown at **Sterling's** booth, which tucks five or six dishwasher-safe adjustable shelves into a stationary panel alongside the sliding doors. Such clever use of hitherto unexploited space in a small bathroom really takes the prize.



Sterling
Stor-ganize By-pass Shower Door

TV Nation

Television itself may idle along in the off-season with reruns, but these kitchen-and-bath manufacturers never give it a rest. A number of companies have seized on the idea of updating their products by incorporating a TV. And so we have a fridge with one built right into the door (**LG**); a waterproof TV that doubles as the *control interface* for a tankless water heater (**Rinnai**); and a television screen that magically appears through



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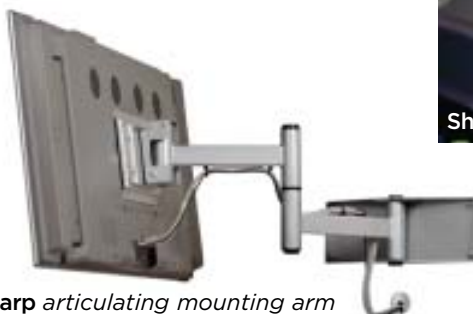
Seura two-way bathroom mirror

the glass of a *two-way bathroom mirror* (Seura).

Yet another approach to shoehorning that all-important telly into the kitchen — without intruding on work space — comes from **Sharp**, whose *articulating mounting arm* allows its 13- or 15-inch *Aquos Liquid Crystal TV* to hang under a 12-inch-deep wall cabinet, rotate for the best viewing angle, and then fold away inconspicuously.



Sharp Aquos Liquid Crystal TV



Sharp articulating mounting arm

Sources of Supply

AA-Abbingdon Affiliates

718/258-8333
www.abbingdon.com

American Standard

732/980-3000
www.americanstandard-us.com

Armstrong Cabinet Products

800/527-5903
www.armstrong.com

Azura

480/663-8000
www.azurabath.com

Blum

800/438-6788
www.blum.us

Broan

800/558-1711
www.broan.com

Columbia Forest Products

800/237-2428 East
800/547-1791 West
www.columbiaforestproducts.com

Counter-Seal Corp.

604/464-7266
www.counter-seal.com

Cyberlux

919/474-9700
www.cyberlux.com

Diamond Cabinets

812/482-2527
www.masterbrandcabinets.com

Element Designs

704/332-3114
www.element-designs.com

Engineered Glass Products

312/326-4710
www.egpglass.com

Gerber

847/675-6570
www.gerberonline.com

Grass America

800/334-3512
www.grassusa.com

Hali Canada

866/425-4583
www.halicanada.com

Hansgrohe

800/488-8119
www.hansgrohe-usa.com

Intelligent Consumer Products

480/753-9394
www.i-c-p-inc.com

Jaclo

800/852-3906
www.jaclo.com

Kobe Range Hoods

877/289-5623
www.koberangehoods.com

Kohler

800/456-4537
www.kohler.com

KraftMaid

888/562-7744
www.kraftmaid.com

Lance Larkin

866/268-5953
www.lancelarkin.com

Lasertron

954/846-8600
www.lasertrondirect.com

LG Electronics

800/243-0000
www.lgusa.com

Neo-Metro

800/591-9050
www.neo-metro.com

Reversica Design

877/773-8377
www.reversica.com

Rinnai

800/621-9419
www.rinnai.us

Seura

800/957-3872
www.seura.com

Sharp Electronics

866/726-4399
www.sharpsusa.com

Star Stainless Design

866/416-7827
www.starstainlessdesign.com

Sprite Industries

800/327-9137
www.spritewater.com

Sterling

888/783-7546
www.sterlingplumbing.com

Task Lighting

800/445-6404
www.tasklighting.com

Toto

888/295-8134
www.totousa.com