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## Semtex sniffer joins sound of music at show

**Adam Gifford**

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**HI-TECH karaoke for amateur musicians, and technology to detect plastic explosives, were among the offerings at a Silicon Valley technology showcase for Australian and New Zealand companies last week.**

About 30 Australian companies presented their wares to venture capitalists and other industry insiders at the third ANZA Technology Network Conference.

David Evans from Adelaide firm Digital Monkey showed a prototype of In The Chair, a computer program that allows tyro musicians to play along with an orchestra or small ensemble and get instant feedback on their tone, rhythm, volume and timbre.

Mr Evans said he wanted to raise about \$500,000 to complete development and at least \$3 million to fund a US-directed export effort.

He reported interest from angel investors and an invitation to talk to a new \$2 billion venture fund specialising in digital entertainment.

He had also hooked up with former Yahoo executive Tony Surtees, who is now a part of Santa Clara Group, which provides management support and advice for technology companies trying to break into the US.

"With the music industry going through massive changes as new distribution models emerge, Digital Monkey has the opportunity to carve out a niche," Mr Surtees said.

The product could appeal in the education sector as well as entertainment, he said.

Listed Perth company QR Sciences plans to shift its headquarters to the US in the new year so it can target the \$US3.5 billion (\$4.6 billion) national security sector.

Its quadruple resonance technology, which uses radio frequency spectroscopy to identify plastic explosives such as Semtex from their molecular structure, is licensed to three of the four main US aviation security companies.

Chief executive Kevin Russeth said QR Sciences needed people to help it manage the transition to the US, build the operation and provide capital.

"We found people at the conference who can help us in all three of those areas," Mr Russeth said.

Justin Miller, from Perth human resources software developer Empired, said he came away with strong leads.

On the back of this, "we will find early adopters in this country", he said.

Previous ANZA showcases failed to win large amounts of Silicon Valley cash for participants, but Michael Zimmerman from Australian venture capital firm Technology Venture Partners said the higher quality of presentations this year made funding more likely.

"I would be surprised if no funding came out of this," Mr Zimmerman said.

While many entrepreneurs appeared nervous on the first day of the event, by day three most had a hopeful gleam in their eye, and small huddles of people seemed to be talking seriously in every corner of the Palo Alto hotel.

The audience was never more than 100, but ANZA Technology Network chief executive David Cannington said organisers aimed for quality rather than quantity.

"The quality of the audience is better than it was for the first two years. The venture capitalists we attracted are good, and there are a lot of service providers, who are an important factor in Silicon Valley," Mr Cannington said.

"While we may look down a bit on attorneys in Australia, in the Valley they are important facilitators," he said.

*The Australian*

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