

# ADAMSON SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

## Thinking *Inside* the Box

by BILL ABNER

In a time when most companies are trying to branch out and diversify their base, Adamson Systems Engineering is focused on building quality products delivered to a specific market. Namely, products directly focused on the touring and festivals market. Providing the loudspeaker systems for Linkin Park's high profile *Projekt Revolution'08* tour is just one example of their products being used in a specific niche market. While they acknowledge that there are other opportunities out there-and they do sell their products in those other markets-Adamson designs and builds products primarily for live sound reproduction in touring applications.



When asked how that focus came about, Director of Marketing and Sales, Jesse Adamson, son of company Founder, President, and CEO, Brock Adamson, explains that it happened as

a natural progression. "My father was a live sound mixing engineer with Rocky Mountain Sound, and my Grandfather was always into engineering and manufacturing. When "my old man" (Brock) realized that existing speaker boxes of the day weren't up to the task for touring and live sound applications, he relied on his sense of manufacturing to begin designing boxes that would fit the purpose. It developed more out of a need from a sound company perspective than from some small contractor-based organization." The byproduct of that nexus is a company with a solid idea of who it is and where it is going, as well as a good understanding of its position in the marketplace.

Adamson designs, develops and manufactures as many as possible of the components needed for its speaker systems right in its own 37,000 square foot plant outside Toronto. That alone sets it apart from most speaker builders, marketers, and manufacturers. From the 5/8" Baltic birch cabinets themselves, to its patented rigging and flying system, and even its own wave guides and transducers, Adamson believes that its ability to provide

quality components designed and built to its own exacting standards sets it apart from other big name speaker manufacturers. Jesse Adamson explains: "We are not limited by off-the-shelf products and standards by which most of the big name manufacturers are limited. We don't have to pull from those same component selections that everyone else does, so it allows us to achieve higher levels of control and consistency in our product lines."

One only has to look at the many patents and innovations in speaker technology devised by the Canadian firm to understand their point. For example, Adamson was among the first speaker manufacturers to develop and capitalize upon, line array technology. It was the pioneer of Kevlar cone technology, and many users agree that their "Shooter" array modeling and configuration software is at the top of the class in line array calculators. Additionally, its transducer innovations has set it apart from the norm by allowing much higher power and higher SPL where it was previously unattainable with any level of consistent quality. "One of our main focuses at Adamson is the real technology *inside* the box," adds Jesse.

While Adamson is still a small, family-run business (around 50 employees in its Port Perry, Ontario facility), their influence is felt worldwide. Its foot is firmly planted in European markets from Belgium and France, to Germany, Italy, Switzerland and The Netherlands.

It has further capitalized on that success by opening Service Centers throughout Europe designed to cut delivery times to the end user by stocking limited amounts of products, and a select group of replacement parts.

The young company attributes much of its overseas success, again, to quality. The European market, by Adamson's reckoning, hasn't been as susceptible to the allure of big name badges like JBL, EV, or Meyer as has been true in the US and Canada. "The European Market was easier to break into for us because they seemed to be looking for products that would meet their specific needs instead of just reacting to the marketing of the larger and more well advertised products in North America, just because they are a big name," explains the scion of the Adamson Empire. That edge transmits and carries over to the European touring and festival season as well. Already this year Adamson is on board for several major summertime festivals in Germany and other European countries, and it looks to be a busy summer for the company's systems techs in addition to their Linkin Park commitment.

Looking to the future, Adamson is committed to continuing to build innovative touring systems, by keeping its ear to the ground so to speak, and by delivering a high quality, well designed product, intended to keep the touring world's

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needs well in focus. Additionally, it is looking to increase its exposure into contracting, or installations, because it realizes there is a huge chunk of business out there that can benefit from their products.

Passion seems to be the catchword for this company though. One can hear it in the way Adamson speaks about their products, its mission and their goals. From the paternal Brock whose life of innovation and vision is well documented and hailed, through Jesse and on down the food chain to the office staff, the design teams, and even the box builders in the plant. They all speak about their systems with conviction, care and pride. "Basically, we like to think that we build something that everybody else can't build, and we try to apply that to the touring market," says Adamson.

On the surface, Adamson Systems Engineering appears to be a family enterprise with its manufacturing roots dating back through three generations. Jesse however is quick to point out that the real heroes are the guys like Kenneth "Pooch" Van Druten, FOH engineer for Linkin Park and Jim Digby, Linkin's venerable Production Manager who are out there in the trenches every day putting the systems to work and providing valuable feedback to Brock and Jesse, so that they may continue to develop, design, and build speaker systems that will exceed expectations, continue to meet the challenges and rigors of life on the road, and allow them to think *inside* the box. Inside the speaker box that is. 🎧