

CREATIVE FUNKTION

TECHNICAL INTERVIEW

FUNKTION ONE'S ICONIC LOUDSPEAKERS HAVE TRANSFORMED DANCEFLOORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WITH THEIR UNMISTAKABLE AESTHETICS AND CLEAR, DEVASTATING SOUND. BUT THE STORY DOESN'T END THERE, AS WALTER MIRAUER FINDS OUT WHEN HE TALKS TO F1'S TONY ANDREWS - THE CREATIVE GENIUS AT THE HEART OF AUDIO'S MOST COMPELLING CULT.

Tony Andrews' loudspeaker designs really made their mark almost two decades ago when his was the guiding light at Turbosound and they produced a revolutionary touring concert system called Flashlight which, among other things boasted high accuracy, high power handling and exemplary pattern control. Watched over by Tony's Funktion One partner John Newsham, the system duly went on its travels, most notably with the Dire Straits 'Love Over Gold' world tour. People sat up, and they took notice. Many refrigerators and colour TVs were sold, and the eponymous album became an essential feature of every hi-fi bore's CD armamentarium. Andrews meanwhile, realising that narrow angle, long throw, flying cluster systems might not just be what the burgeoning danceclub and indoor venue marketplace might require, pressed ahead and developed Floodlight, a wider dispersion application of his patented turbotechnology. Then, coinciding neatly with his founding of his own operation, aptly named Funktion One, came Axhead: a truly innovative phase plug design which introduced new standards of focus, accuracy and control, virtues all of them which were much appreciated in the wider market in general and within clubland in particular. They say success breeds success, and continuing development was inevitable, especially within a milieu increasingly obsessed by excess.

Recent products from Funktion One have proved to be no less groundbreaking than their forerunners. The widely acclaimed Resolution Series represents the core of their activities and has

made impressive inroads into the dancefloor market, the latest expression of this being an assemblage of Res units under the banner of Dancestack which, for readers of this magazine at least, is their flagship product.

The flag waves worldwide too. In addition to such iconic UK venues as Hammersmith Palais, Stealth and Digital in Newcastle, you can experience Dancestack's dominating presence in major locations across the US, including Ice in Las Vegas, all of the happening venues in Miami, at Bergheim in Berlin, as the centrepiece of what must surely be the only place to go at night in Clermont -Ferrand (trust me, the rest is duller than Dudley), in Russia, Japan and even, when the next wave of licensees' wives arrive to blow their Christmas bonuses, Tenerife. Globalisation has arrived, then.

The next innovation from Funktion One will be launched at the upcoming Frankfurt Pro Sound & Light Show. This takes the form of built-in amplification for the two best-selling system components, Resolution 2 and F218 Infrabass, and is an important step towards dream fulfillment for Tony and the team. As Tony explains: "We've always taken a holistic approach to designing sound systems, and while this has been centred around loudspeaker cabinet and drive unit development, I have also been concerned to make sure, as far as possible, that the systems out there sound as good as we know they can. In the beginning we used to give people advice about matching equipment, especially amplification, and then a couple of years ago, we began sourcing and

badging our own (from MC2, Ed), and the introduction of two dedicated modules, A4 and A6, extends that process, and deepens our involvement with electronics." The two new amp modules have been purpose designed and built to Funktion One's specifications by another respected source, XTA, and sport numerous advanced facilities and outstanding performance figures. They are also equipped with 'smart' front ends to facilitate remote operation and software control programs. Apart from any sonic virtues these units may possess, and I would expect them to be notable, their use obviates the need for long, passive cable runs and the power and dynamic losses that go with them. A good move then, Tony? "Yes, it's a logical next step, and we're very excited about it and looking forward to giving people a chance to hear it for themselves."

What about other weak links in the audio chain? In DJ world, the mixer is often the culprit...

"Absolutely, and I still find it frustrating that the end result can so often be compromised because the mixer just isn't good enough to match the rest of the system. That's why we had Formula Sound custom build us one, specifically for this marketplace. But, you know, it doesn't end there. These days, everyone's in love with their laptop, and MP3 is all over the place like a rash. I think that's tragic because, as a performance medium, at this high level, it just doesn't cut it. It's too compressed, and if you have a decent quality sound system, you can hear the compression."

I agree: it's as if you can feel the absence, rather than enjoy the presence.



"Totally. I can understand the convenience aspect of having loads of music scrunched up into a tiny space, great portability and so on, and I'm sure it's fine for listening to when you're on the move, in the bedroom or burbling away in the background while you do something more interesting, but I just can't see it as a performance medium. To me, it doesn't perform."

Let me conclude here by putting an operator's spin on all of this. I recently asked Aaron Mellor at Digital why he had opted for a Funktion One system for both of his principal dancefloors in Newcastle. "Before you even turn it on, it's an authority statement. It looks like it means business, and this raises people's expectations. The joy is, when you turn it on, then it delivers on those, and then some. That's why we bought it, and that's why they love it."

One final customer service, holistic footnote. Mellor flew to Miami to buy his rig, pre-owned as they say in America, second hand to you or me. Tony Andrews made the journey up to Newcastle to supervise the install for him and to optimise the overall performance of the system. That's how much he cares about getting sound to be as good as it can be. It doesn't get any better than that, quite simply because, for the time being, it can't. If it ever can, guess who'll be behind it? Me too.