

by Daniel Gumble



For a company that was founded as recently as 2010, Solution One has already managed to acquire something of a top-end reputation, and as a representative of Full Fat Audio and Funktion-One, it's easy to see why. Yet, while Solution One may be a company of relative infancy, its founder and managing director Chris Hawkes is certainly not lacking in experience or knowledge when it comes to the business of high-end pro audio distribution.

Having worked for over a decade in the industry, Hawkes had already established a strong relationship with the aforementioned brands, and with the inception of Solution One, he was determined to carry on the work and continued development he had previously achieved with each.

As a company dealing predominantly within the French market, Solution One is also keen to spread its distribution on an increasingly global scale. Hawkes explains: "I separated from my previous partners and set up this company to carry on the work that I'd been doing with Funktion-One and Full Fat Audio over the past ten years. We represent Funktion-One and FFA over the French market, what we call the Francophonic market. These include the French-speaking North African countries, the overseas French colonies, the French region of Belgium, and Portugal. That takes us quite far a-field I'd say."

It is over a lengthy period of time, and with a great deal of work alongside various dealers from across the world, that Hawkes has been able to garner the necessary contacts to construct the platform from which he could launch Solution One. "I've built up a network of dealers over different countries and that is how we cater for it on the ground."

Although Hawkes is essentially on his own with Solution One, his friends at UK amplifier manufacturer Full Fat Audio have continued to do a great deal of business with him. As a result of FFA's highly reputable status, demand for its units is often high and varied, with their amplifiers regularly in use at many of the UK's major festivals, nightclubs and theatres. This is something Hawkes cites as one of the particular benefits of FFA amplifiers, especially with regards to their versatility and far-reaching capabilities. He comments: "The great thing about FFA is that they've got a commensurate solution for all the installs that we do. The small quads, despite the fact that they're amazingly powerful, fit in very nicely with the multi-point systems that you have around the perimeters of clubs."

Hawkes is also aware of the brand's aesthetic presence and power to draw attention. "Clients, who are maybe not as aware of the audio side of things, when they see a rack of FFAs they are pretty blown away because it just looks stunning. At a high-level installation it is the icing on the cake."

In fact, it was only last month that FFA amplifiers and Solution One dealer Colorsonic were called upon to provide sound for an event of such high-level status, in the luxurious location of Saint Tropez at 'Les Caves Du Roy' one of the region's most resplendent nightspots. Frequented by an array of the world's rich and famous, optimum sound quality is absolutely essential. Hawkes discusses exactly which FFA units are used to provide such audio opulence: "The quads are generally used across the mid-hi section. The 4004s are used for doing all the perimeter sounds, using Funktion-One's small products like F55s and mini bass."

## Recession Proof

With such prestigious locations and venues seeking out the services of FFA amps, it's hardly surprising that the company has managed to maintain a healthy and substantial status despite the economic crisis and the recession, which has seen many a brand suffer significantly.

"The thing about FFA and Funktion-One as a pair of brands is that they are still finding their market position, and I think that's why we've still got growth. Frankly, up to now we've been recession-proof, as we are finding more and more people who enjoy the sound of the product and the growth we have seen thus far has been organic," Hawkes explains.

Hawkes also hints that times of recession may even be responsible for FFA enjoying its healthy market placement, as a company handling audio for leisure and entertainment events where people are going out on a more regular basis to escape the trappings and limitations of an economic downturn.

Another pair that have stood by Hawkes through his new endeavour are Funktion-One founders Tony Andrews and John Newsham. In addition to their renowned status as top-end manufacturers, the duo had also developed something of a pioneering reputation for their work ethos.

Hawkes' relationship with the brand and its founders reaches almost as far back as the company's creation, where the duo's approach did not go unnoticed. He elaborates: "My relationship with Funktion-One dates back to the early '90s, when I was lucky enough to meet John and Tony. I was immediately entranced by their approach to sound and looked by any means possible to get involved. And when I was lucky enough to be asked to be their representative in 2000 I thought that it was an extraordinary opportunity and decided to modify my professional career to fit."

Via Solution One dealer Decibel, one of Funktion-One's latest installations took place at animal attraction centre Marine Land in Antibes, France. With a venue that houses various different pools hosting attractions focussed upon a range of animals, the need for audio clarity surrounding each area is paramount. Hawkes explains how a solution to this problem was achieved: "They were looking for a nice solution to even out the sound with something that wouldn't have to be turned up too loud, and so our dealer in Antibes got in touch and we looked into several different solutions for it; notably, one using the hybrid array system that Funktion-One has used in big public spaces. We also said you might be able to do this with three Res 4s, which would not take up much space and be quite an economical solution. So I went there with the system and within minutes they were convinced, as everybody got a fantastic sound."

With both brands continuing in their tradition of providing top-quality sound for high-class clientele, Hawkes' Solution One looks to be in good shape for the future.

