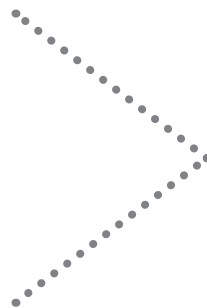


The Class D Company



Powersoft has surprised the world of professional sound since it was founded. I used to write about Powersoft products a few years ago, and since that time I was trying to imagine what the company looked like. As I can see now, my idea was not entirely correct. But that's okay. It's easy to fix. At least, if you have a chance to visit the company.

Powersoft is a Class D company, and its history is inextricably linked with PWM technology. The company was founded in the mid-nineties - the time of search for new solutions - and it has grown in the beginning of the new millennium as new solutions were found. Powersoft amplifiers always stay cool, and the market took them cool as well. Not long ago all 'proper' amps were expected to be as hot as irons, and traditional would not believe else. 'If an amplifier is not hot, that means it does not work, or it 'works incorrectly', and no matter what the PWM consultants and theorists said, there was no movement. But the Powersoft team continued insisting, and now it has won. At present I know the history of the company and its people very well, and I'm not surprised about the persistence and patience with which Powersoft is pushing

things, but during the times when only Crest and Crown seemed to rule this persistence and patience appeared to be almost manic.

As new products arrived every year, I used to watch them and wondered what Powersoft actually was about. First, the Digam amp made it into the Russian market - a strange little Italian company trying to

prove something to the world, but the world was not interested in it. The first amplifier module - a small innovative company. The DSP board - still a small but very interesting company which had a very sensible view of the future. The Power Control System; an ever-growing range; and new records in the class...

And, Mr. President of Powersoft, Carlo Lastrucci, traveling to exhibitions and making prophetic predictions about the future of sound reinforcement technology. Powersoft's authority was growing day by day, and my ideas of what the company actually was like, were growing as well. And then K Series caused 10 kW thunder. I remember when looking at the K10 and thinking, «should this be the 'Intel' of the sound reinforcement world who, with crowds of white-



collar workers, will ultimately drown the competitors in a stream of innovations?»

You think I'm joking? During the first six months of K Series sales in the U.S. Powersoft sold more than a thousand units, and this in the homeland of traditionally strong amplifier brands. Demand was so high that Powersoft opened an American office. It was a resounding success. When these news came I guess I was imagining the Willis Tower (the tallest skyscraper of America, note, ed.). I couldn't wait for a chance to take a ride in any of their elevators....

Florentine School

The history of the company is strongly linked with historical concentration of Italian culture in Florence. For instance, the Florentine school of painting stems from here. The prominent samples are carefully stored in the former administrative building named Uffizi – today it is an art gallery. The grand cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore is striking in its size and beauty even for a worldwide traveller. The Florence Art School, and a huge number of museums – all of is located here. Michelangelo's David and Botticelli's Birth of Venus are standing here. Local craftsmen have created so many works of art over the last five hundred years, that you will need weeks to see it all. Seriously. I spent two days in the city center and saw only a small part of the museum exhibits. In general, activity has always been huge here, and things keep happening here now. Not in the historical center, of course, but in an industrial suburb. Take Powersoft for example.

Powersoft

The Powersoft building is located in Enrico Conti Street, a quiet area of Scandicci, a suburb of Florence. Of course, it is not Willis Tower, but this corporate modern style building looks very impressive, particularly in a provincial town. According to local standards this building is 'multi-storey' – it has two floors. The brains of the company work here.

At 8.30 am, engineers, programmers, managers, designers, accountants, and even the top management of the company have a meeting. They meet around the coffee machine on the second floor and have a discussion about the latest news.

Morning planning continues for about ten minutes, and then everyone goes to work.

Powersoft's manufacturing is done a few hundred miles away, in the industrial north, but all intangible components of the product are born here in Scandicci. Plans, schemes, designs, programs, calculations – all «non hardware» parts are made in this building. The sales and marketing department man-



ages the company's turnover from here as well, and they do it so well that it reached several million euros without a drop even in the crisis years – a very impressive result.

As a real skyscraper, the tallest building of Enrico Conti Street is divided in departments following a very simple rule: the more bosses, the higher the floor. The administrative part, including the President's office, is located on the highest, the second floor. The phrase, «they are waiting for you at the top», works here like in any other company. The first floor is occupied by developers, with Claudio Lastrucci as the technical head and main inspirer.

I believe that many occupants of the second floor dream of moving into a multi-storey office, because Claudio Lastrucci can be a very troublesome neighbor. Claudio had graduated from Florence University before concerning himself with finding out new technologies of sound amplification. Claudio is a legend in the company. At the beginning of research, he was so interested in finding a way to instantly release large amounts of energy that he even attempted to use explosives. The formula of invention had been found. Without explosives, fortunately.

The technology was invented in 1995, but this does not mean that it became marketable immediately. The first income the company made was for software development, and it was all invested into the design of amplifiers.

The company was forced to wait for success for two long years, until the president of Outline – Mr. Guido Noselli – discovered the Powersoft booth in one of the few professional audio exhibitions. Metal boxes with an unusual bright blue color caught his attention, he set up a meeting, and as a result Powersoft got a contract to supply 500 amps.

This way Powersoft had put its name on the map of the audio industry. What would have happened if Guido Noselli hadn't found the Powersoft booth at that show? But he found it. Because he was one of the most influential people in the Italian pro-audio

market. A man like him would never want to miss the future.

Now it is 2009. Claudio Lastrucci shows me the latest development, and this development is going to blow the roof off. An Outline bass cabinet, with two 18-inch speakers and an impedance below 1 ohm, barely audible beats somewhere in the bottom of the frequency range, make the building rattle. Claudio looks very proud. «This is our newest development», he is shouting over the pulsating and rattling environment, «it is the future! We are working on this system with B&C and Outline together. Amplifier, speakers, cabinet – all parts are created specifically for this system. Now, the system works!»

And it works very well. The large cabinet is so vigorously waving its giant cones that Claudio must return it to its place on the floor every two minutes. The amplifier is connected to a laptop. Numerous parameters can be altered with special software. Claudio makes some changes in the settings and, without any additional sound from the cabinet, the windows start to rattle instead of the metal parts of the shelves. It's amazing.

It all looks amazing. The team. The atmosphere in this company. The people in it, and the way in which they decide to go. I like this way of creating something. On the first floor, Claudio and his engineers create the future. On the second floor, this future will be transformed into technology, business plans, and press releases. Next, it will be made in a modern Italian factory. And then the world will see new amplifiers with their unusual bright blue color.

It is the Class D company. That's the way it works. And now I see that Powersoft doesn't need a skyscraper because it is a company of science and engineering spirit. The height of this company cannot be measured by the number of floors. The height of this company can only be measured on the traditional Italian scale: the beauty of technology and performance. And this scale still works here in Florence as it did five hundred years ago.

Alex K.