

Forging Ahead

CLAUDIO LASTRUCCI,
CO-FOUNDER/TECHNICAL R & D
DIRECTOR, POWERSOFT S.P.A.

Claudio Lastrucci began his journey into pro audio as a multi-instrumentalist, playing piano, drums and saxophone “a bit,” he admits of the latter. But it was while attending the University of Electronic Engineering in Florence, Italy, that his appetite was whetted for his future. “I actually did a PhD. in power electronics,” he offers.

“Before we set up Powersoft, my brother Luca, my university pal Antonio Peruch and I were involved in engineering projects for several third-party designers of products,” continues Lastrucci. “These included linear amplifiers, power supplies, power converters, signal processing, RF transmitters, automotive and navigation systems. These were primarily designed for hi-fi use, but also Formula One on-board power management as well as other industrial applications. We also did some acoustical design in those early years.”

Later, in 1995, Powersoft was born. “We chose the name ‘Powersoft’ because it embodied ‘power’ of the hardware for audio amplification and ‘software’ for artificial intelligence applications,” explains Lastrucci. “I’ve always considered power amplification, signal processing and transducer design in loudspeakers to be one single entity in the pursuit of performance. There’s no division between one domain and another, because this would limit the evolution of the products to small changes that don’t add up.”

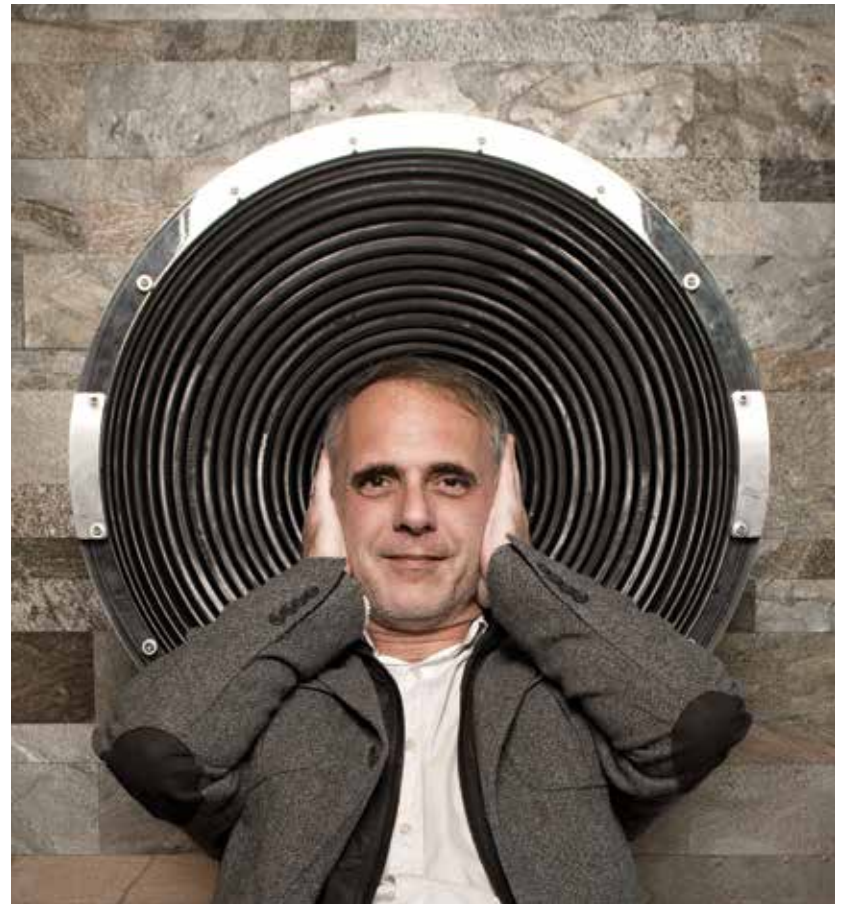
Powersoft S.p.A. is a private Italian company with two separate divisions: Powersoft Audio—which produces products such as power amplifiers, loudspeaker components and audio software for use primarily in installed and sound applications around the world—and Powersoft Mobility, which develops and provides products and services for vehicle fleet management. “Our company embodies the concept of Italian excellence,” beams Lastrucci. “Our products are available in over 50 countries, and we have a widespread distribution and authorized service network. We also have a sister company in the United States, which contracts with several agents to further extend the company’s brand presence. Our R&D department forms about 30 percent of the workforce at our Florence headquarters, with around 30 people focusing on hard-

ware, software or mechanical design.”

“Powersoft is focused on creativity, innovation and passion,” continues Lastrucci. “We continue to heavily invest in our technical support network, which now includes 22 certified centers around the globe. As an independent company, Powersoft is proud to make autonomous decisions rather than having to answer to an outside board of directors or other entities. The passion of our distributors is the basis of our business, and our reputation is very important—we can lose money, but we cannot lose our reputation.”

Arguably, Powersoft’s reputation is based on its technological impact within the pro audio community—for example, in the company’s very early embrace and subsequent marketing of its lightweight Class D amplification, years before the rest of the industry followed suit. “When our company started, our technology was far ahead of the market requirements of the hi-fi domain,” recalls Lastrucci. “Nowadays, switched mode amplifiers and Class D amplifiers are commonplace, but 20-plus years ago, a digital amplifier was 10 times more powerful for the same size than expected, so not even the professional market was ready. There was a growing awareness of the benefits of greater efficiency and better power to performance ratios...but it was a challenge for us to concentrate solely on audio because it was a new technology that we were trying to bring to market.”

Pushing evolutions within the pro audio community is a defining quality of Powersoft, explains Lastrucci, and the company invests heavily on new ideas—thus new patents and innovations that are both recognized as the company’s own and a bellwether of things to come. “Powersoft is much more an engineering company than a marketing and branding-led company, so we’ve always had ideas that are ahead of the industry as a whole,” Lastrucci explains. “We’ve improved



Claudio Lastrucci, Co-Founder/Technical R & D Director, Powersoft S.p.A.

that balance in recent years by putting more effort into the marketing side to increase our exposure to the outside world—but we are essentially a technology-first company. We feel the responsibility to design audio products that match the market’s needs, yet at the same time, we must be able to market to other professionals who may not be familiar with our products.

“Our patented technologies have become the driving force of our core business, and they have also impacted a diverse set of applications such as highly effective power amplification modules for active speakers,” he continues. “Also, our merging amplification and transducer methods can be seen in our groundbreaking M-System/M Force and IPAL. I believe it was these switch mode technologies that opened the doors to active loudspeakers as we know them today. The previous huge and largely inefficient amplifiers of yore have since been replaced by solutions that are a lot smaller and considerably more powerful. It is impossible to underestimate the impact that this technology has had on the professional sound industry.”

The systems integration market provides Powersoft with an actively upgrading clientele, offers Lastrucci, as they are eyeing power consumption concerns. “[The integration market] is growing faster than the live sector, and our most recent product launches have rounded out our installation line. [In the] meantime, we are seeing growth in the government verticals, along with increased

investment in cultural infrastructure. Speaking broadly, regulations are becoming stricter on power consumption and noise thresholds, particularly in brand-new venues. This is especially noticeable in Europe, and to a slightly lesser extent in the U.S. Broadly speaking, all long-term projects are more carefully examining the issues of power consumption as an investment consideration.

For Lastrucci, Powersoft’s success story lies in convincing people that its new technologies can provide benefits worthy of investment over, perhaps, some conventional solutions. “As said before, many of the technologies we introduced were gradually adopted in professional audio applications worldwide due to extremely high efficiency,” Lastrucci explains. “By combining our company’s knowledge of switch-mode amplifiers, power supplies and the desire to fully exploit the real benefits of the native energy recycling capabilities, Powersoft will continue to make a difference in this industry by providing new products and conceptual hardware and software solutions to meet and exceed market demands.”

Regarding what’s next, Lastrucci has no intention of spoiling the fun. As for new technologies, “I can’t spoil the surprise,” he teases. Meanwhile, Lastrucci’s Powersoft is cognizant of its competitors and competing products. “We respect our competition,” he offers earnestly. “We focus consistently on innovation, education and training to stay competitive.”

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