

Unconfined Innovation

MICHAEL ADAMS, HEAD OF ENGINEERING, VUE AUDIOTECHNIK

BY KELLEIGH WELCH

When designing loudspeaker systems for the newly-established VUE Audiotechnik, Michael Adams, Head of Engineering, taps into his experience as a FOH/Monitor Engineer as he aims to create a product that produces a clear and pristine sound. "When you're working directly with artists as I was, you figure out quickly what sounds good and what doesn't. And since I was the designer, manufacturer and FOH engineer for most of those systems [I worked with], I learned very quickly how to address concerns and how to predict them at the design stage."

Prior to co-founding VUE Audiotechnik in March 2012 with CEO Ken Berger and Executive Vice President Jim Sides, Adams worked as a FOH Engineer for Jimmy Buffett, Jackson Browne and Emmylou Harris, while also working as a system designer for Silverfish Audio—today better known as national SR provider Sound Image. In 1974, Adams joined Silverfish Audio full-time, and while there, developed a strong relationship with the company's co-founders, Ross Ritto and Joel Silverman.

"We were literally designing and building everything back then," said Adams. "The ready-made systems

of the day simply couldn't keep up, because the big manufacturers were mostly employing engineers who never actually did live sound." The tours, he says, "benefitted from that first-hand knowledge."

Adams continued to run sound for performances through the late 1990s, while also founding Audio Composite Engineering (ACE) with Ritto, where they collaborated with designs for numerous companies, including Yamaha, JBL and QSC.

While VUE Audiotechnik has only been around for nine months, Adams said he was initially attract-



ed to helping found the company because of the creative freedom it would give him. "I've collaborated with some pretty big manufacturers over the years, and with a few exceptions, they're always very concerned with protecting lines and market positions," Adams said. "Innovation, where it exists, is tightly managed in environments like that, and that can be very confining. VUE has no sacred cows to protect, so I have a lot of room to be creative."

Today, with the knowledge he gained from his years as an FOH engineer, Adams has helped VUE develop speakers with sound quality and reliability in mind. "I always start with the best components," explained Adams. "Any loudspeaker is as good as its weakest link, so ensuring great sound quality always begins with picking the best components. Also, every system should be tested extensively and pushed really hard under real-world conditions before it's ever considered finished."

The company is located in San Diego, with all product design, sales, marketing and operations coming from that office. Because the company is so new, Adams said the staff is still very small, but it is expanding as it gains recognition and business. Adams leads the engineering and manufacturing departments, coordinating all development and manufacturing, and manages the company's small production team in Escondido, CA. Berger acts as CEO and directly handles the business operations and marketing, while Sides runs the sales side of the company.

"The VUE culture is built around innovation and a commitment to long-term customer relationships," said Adams. "This manifests itself as creative freedom and the leeway to utilize all our resources to push the

boundaries of designing in interesting ways."

The company also has a Research and Development operation in Solingen, Germany through a partnership with Speaker Connection GmbH, and a technology partnership with Materion Electrofusion.

VUE Audiotechnik has released three loudspeaker classes: the a, h and i-Class. "Of our current products, I'm most proud of the h-Class full-range systems and the hs-28 subwoofer," commented Adams. "With the h-12 and h-15, we've achieved significant improvements in usable bandwidth. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the testing process that I referenced earlier, as well as our use of Beryllium HF drivers."

"I'm also really excited about the hs-28. It benefits from a unique hybrid design called Active Compliance Management (ACM). In essence, ACM combines band-pass and vented alignments—both sharing a common chamber. The hs-28 places two 18-inch woofers into this configuration, and Dual 2000 W amplifiers provide power, while DSP is used to align the outputs of both vents and the front-facing driver. I've wanted to bring this concept into reality for many years, and VUE presented the perfect opportunity to do so."

Looking forward, Adams said the company plans to introduce new innovations to the industry, while also improving on the existing loudspeakers the company has released.

VUE's three-phase product timeline will see second-phase products released in early 2013 and third phase at the end of 2013, Adams explained. Being cautious with details, he added, "There are some pretty cool innovations in each group."

VUE Audiotechnik
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