

industrytalk

As Acustica Beyma celebrates its 45th year of business, **Murray Stassen** speaks to commercial director Espartaco Saez about loudspeakers and the state of Europe

LAW GRADUATE Espartaco Saez turned down a legal profession to pursue a career in business in the late 1990s. He went on to spend more than five years as international trade manager of Signat Electronics, before joining Valencia-based Acustica Beyma as commercial director in 2005, a company at the forefront of professional loudspeaker technology since 1969. Saez asserts that his appreciation of music makes his involvement in the pro-audio industry a "privilege". "There are two kinds of people," he says, "the people who go into a pub or a disco and don't care about [the music] and the people who say, 'I need to leave this place because the music is horrible.' For me, music is really important."

Have you always been interested in music and sound technology?
I've been interested in music for many, many years, from heavy metal to classical. It is a daily privilege to be involved in this kind of industry and you have to have this kind of passion, just to understand some people, you know. We are dealing with people that are half artist, half engineer, so you have to be really keen on hearing and understanding these people and you really need to work to understand them. To understand what they are talking about you have to share similar passions.

What does Beyma's 2014 product portfolio consist of?
The current list of catalogue products available for the general public adds up to 150. We need to point out that we have more products "outside" than "inside" the catalogue, a consequence of having customised hundreds of products during the last 45 years, which is our real core business: to offer customised solutions to all kind of audio system manufacturers, from start-ups to global names.



Which products are most important at the moment?

At the moment we think our most important products are the MaltCross family – 10-inch, 12-inch and 15-inch woofers and mid-bass units, which are really making a difference.

What is the MaltCross cooling technology?

The MaltCross technology was one of our responses to the savage price increase of neodymium, which happened two years ago. With this patented technology we are able to offer well-balanced speakers with higher levels of power usually related to bigger voice coils, therefore we have lighter and more efficient speakers with excellent sound properties with lower levels of distortion. The name MaltCross comes from the shape of one of the pieces that is in the motor of the driver, which has a shape similar to [the Maltese Cross]. I hope this explanation will not bring us any religious conflict!

Is there a product that has been particularly unsuccessful?

Yes, the TPL150, our first pleated diaphragm tweeter. When we first launched this unit, it was not really understood within the pro-audio industry. In fact, I think it was not expected by anyone. Some big players were trying it and described its performance as incredibly precise but not many knew what to do with such a high

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fidelity unit. It was a product out of its context. We found people trying to develop audio systems for our TPL, which is totally the contrary of how this industry works, in order to take advantage of the unit. Fortunately, thanks to the unparalleled performance of the unit, changes in the market and product improvements – that situation changed.

By 2015, you will have been commercial director of Beyma for 10 years. How much has the industry changed during this time?

10 years already? It feels like it was yesterday when I started! During the last ten years, many events have happened, but from my point of view, I would highlight that the world has become a smaller place and the industry is now more global.

Shorter product life cycles have increased the stress levels at the companies and have forced them to be more competitive. New comers from both the East and the West have reinforced this hectic atmosphere. These factors have mainly affected the companies and not end users, which now have a wider variety of competitive products available.

What are the biggest problems facing the European pro-audio industry?

I am quite a pro-European guy, but in my opinion, the main problem with Europe is Europe itself. In general terms Europe is a mature market and flat in terms of economic growth rates, and that trend has a direct reflection on the pro-audio industry. Those with a eurocentric view – companies that have not had the interest or the capability to break into European borders and have to sell "abroad" – are struggling for survival. Audio systems are sold one by one, a kind of artisan profession, and channels of distribution are packed with existing and new players.

How did the economic downturn affect your factory operations in Valencia?

At that time we had a two-digit percentage decline, which was really worrying because there was a great global uncertainty about what was going to happen. Spain was and somehow currently is really affected by that turmoil. The crisis forced us to think and make our company more competitive in several aspects and thanks to that we were present in all the continents and were able to rapidly recover turnovers and growth.

What are your views on outsourcing production to countries like China?

This is always an option for many companies, but not for us because it will affect our identity and brand positioning. I have seen many companies moving production to China and I am now seeing several companies leaving China. Apart from the typical copy issues, it is difficult to handle a subsidiary company (or a regular supplier) nine thousand miles away without having a presence there. The Chinese government's plans are to double salaries and move 200 million people from the countryside to the cities in the next decade, which basically means that they are getting ready to create an internal demand which will replace the export activity as the main motor of the economy, so, how long are they going to be competitive as a cheap manufacturing [option]? Let's see. ■

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