

11Q

WITH

Brock Adamson

CEO, Adamson Systems Engineering

In this edition of *PALM Expo Magazine's* "11 Questions" series, we sit down with **Brock Adamson**, the visionary founder and CEO of **Adamson Systems Engineering**, as the company marks its 40th year in pro audio. Adamson dives into what sets the company apart, and they are building deeper roots in markets like India. With honesty, insight, and a clear eye on the future, Brock reflects on four decades of pushing boundaries, and what's still to come.

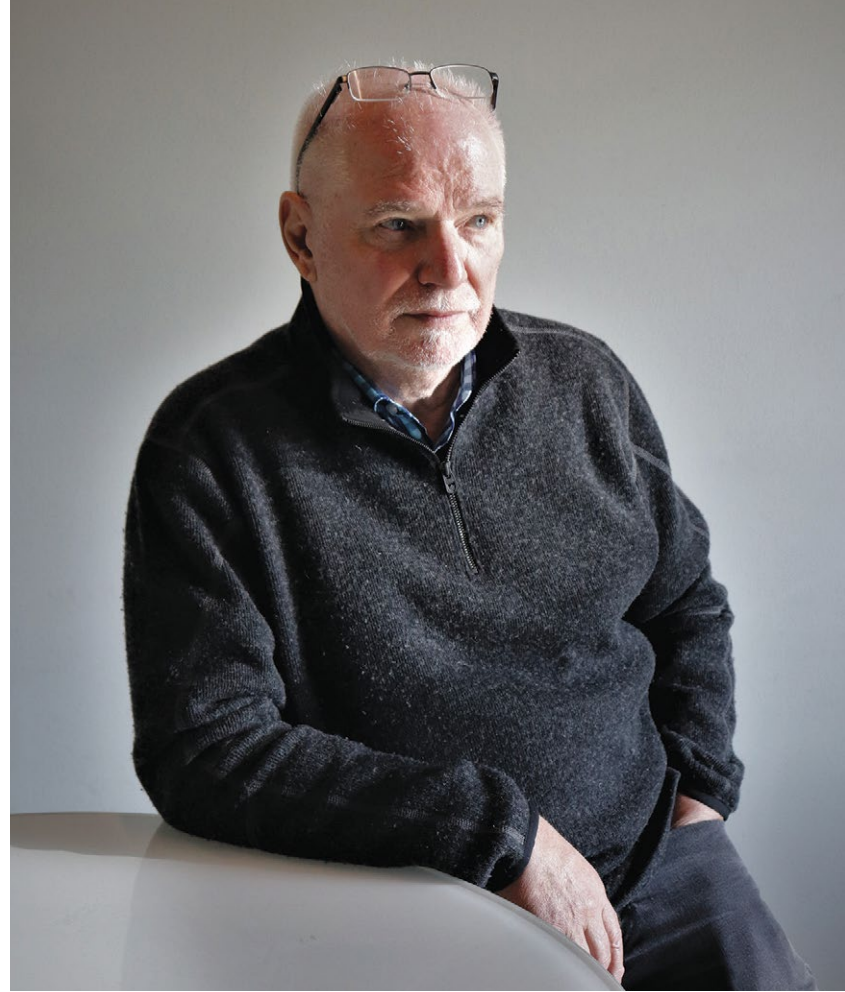
1. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY INTO THE PRO AUDIO INDUSTRY? WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BUILD A CAREER IN THIS SPACE AND LEAD ADAMSON SYSTEMS ENGINEERING?

I always loved what loudspeakers did when they moved air effortlessly filling a space with the sound of music. But it rose to another level listening in the same room with guitarists. Great players from **Randy Bachman** to **Robert Cray**, even **Clarence Gatemouth Brown**. Early on, I experienced something very special watching and listening to **Lenny Breau** in my living room, sitting on a small chair, playing his guitar. I became a servant to the ones that made music and made it my life's goal to bring that sound to life, to make it even better.

It was live experiences that triggered me to keep looking, to push harder. The first was **Neil Young** and **Crazy Horse** at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, then hearing **Jerry Doucette** in my own first major system in the Pacific Coliseum. Then later still, I remember holding a mid driver in my hands just after **Miles Davis** made it vibrate only a few hours earlier. Dang!

2. ADAMSON CELEBRATED ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2024, MARKING FOUR DECADES OF EXCELLENCE. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES FOR THE COMPANY DURING THIS PERIOD?

Well, the state of pro audio at the beginning of our company is not that interesting today, given all the advances... sort of like a dusty



history book. The product now clearly speaks for itself, but along the way, there are a few points of interest.

A very special type of **Kevlar** process was discovered, and from it we created a unique mid device. That was a very significant step for me personally. These materials led to very good results with large woofers as well providing stiffness and stability, and transient response not possible with paper cones.

The co-linear waveguide assembly that came next was a true milestone. It gave us a remarkable improvement in far field coherence, and we took those developments into all the work with **Linkin Park**.

Finite Element Analysis has changed the game in audio. Every one of our previous discoveries relating to drivers, enclosures and waveguides has since been fully explored and optimised with FEA and BEM simulation software. That work, plus further recent discoveries resulted in the current **Vergence** product.

Array optimisation software has had a tremendous impact on the implementation of arrays and then really came into its own with our powered line arrays. Our array optimisation algorithms are the best in class, with this tireless effort beautifully preparing the way for the outstanding work our immersive team has done with the **Fletcher Machine**.

Networked audio, that would conform to a public **IEEE** standard was an important goal for me personally. This was pursued by our team for many years. We think this is a great contribution to the industry and we are very proud of it – something that will stand the test of time.

It is a big step to become an electronic manufacturer. It has been quite successful and very rewarding for our team. Powered array elements with increased channel count have given us complete control over arrays and more acoustical power than we thought possible. Without going into too much detail, we have Silicon Carbide (SiC) power devices, de-saturation current limiting combined with on board computing (MCU) giving us the most advanced power modules in the world. All our network components, switches, gateways, endpoints, etc. benefitted from our investment in Fuji electronics manufacturing technology. We built an outstanding manufacturing capacity with really impressive speed and

repeatability for all our surface mount (SMT) applications. To complete the picture for power electronics, we have highly specialised equipment from Germany for automated selective soldering of the heavy “thru-hole” components found in amplifiers.

3. HOW DO YOU SEE THE GLOBAL PRO AUDIO INDUSTRY EVOLVING, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND SHIFTING MARKET DEMANDS?

Technology convergence is a dominant force in all technologies, including pro audio. For example, signal processing first moved into amplifiers, followed by networking and then those technologies collectively moved into loudspeakers within the amplifiers. So now that entire piece of converged technology has become the powered, networked loudspeaker. Networking and interactive control surfaces will further integrate everything else – UI/UX will dominate. Adamson has taken a leading role in AVB networking with the Milan standards-based network protocols which we think is key to the future of interconnectivity across all product types.

4. WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE SETS ADAMSON APART FROM OTHER AUDIO BRANDS IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND CUSTOMER-CENTRIC DESIGN?

We have focussed our attention on the physical loudspeaker, first on driver response, then waveguide technology and summation in the far field. We don't try to fix loudspeaker limitations with signal processing; there is no substitute for correct physical summation. The benefit of that work can be heard in speech intelligibility and clarity, particularly in large venues and particularly in the far field. As well, we have advanced the physical handling of the product from the truck pack to getting it into the air.

5. WHAT KEY TRENDS ARE SHAPING THE LIVE SOUND MARKET TODAY, AND HOW IS ADAMSON ADAPTING TO ADDRESS THESE TRENDS?

We are not adapting to trends! We are setting the pace for others to follow. To be more clear, the state-of-the-art and the future of large scale performance systems is the networked, powered, adaptive line array. Now, I should also make it clear we have not stopped chasing down certain interesting future advancements, but I will not say more at this time!

6. YOU HAVE SEVERAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIAN DISTRIBUTORS AND SOUND RENTAL COMPANIES, DOES THIS MEAN ADAMSON FINDS THIS MARKET PROFITABLE?

Yes, of course, there is a huge benefit for Adamson to be fully engaged in Indian markets. We will make speakers, and if you like the results, you will buy them, the very basis of commerce! Seriously, though, our distributors in India have aggressively pursued new opportunities and given the arrival of a major new product, we are excited to find the next steps.

We have identified India as a critical market for us. In the past few years, through our distributors **Stagemix** and key partners like **SOUND.COM** we have had some great successes which we have felt not only in the APAC region, but globally too. With the development and success of the Vergence Group of products around the world, pro audio in India has also embraced this world-class technology with early systems starting to arrive.

It should also be mentioned that Canada has a very open immigration policy and so we find that a great many people have come from India to work at Adamson, 20% of our staff, in fact. Software and hardware engineers, CNC machinists, including senior managers all come to our country from your country. You can be very proud of them, I assure you.

7. DOES ADAMSON HAVE ANY PLANS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OR COLLABORATIONS IN THE INDIAN AND ASIAN MARKETS TO ENHANCE ITS PRESENCE?

We will continue to build on key influential partnerships and

collaborations in the Indian market; this success in India is quite visible to users in other countries around the world. This has definitely helped Adamson not only in the Asian markets but as well as in global markets. We have many successful projects being regularly delivered throughout APAC influenced by people's positive experiences in India.

8. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FORESEE IN EXPANDING ADAMSON'S FOOTPRINT IN INDIA AND THE BROADER ASIAN REGION?

We are feeling confident that the new products we are introducing are being well received. There are more new products on the way, and with our recent \$7.5m investment in factory floor space and machinery, we are positioning ourselves to meet a greater demand with both speed and resilience. Specifically, we have greatly enhanced our new product development capacity in both electronics and plastics, with a strong focus on mold making. Bringing new products tailored to any newly discovered applications market requires speed and agility. I think this is what we need to deliver what is expected of us.

9. WITH MULTIPLE NEW LAUNCHES LIKE THE VERGENCE GROUP AND THE IS-SERIES PRODUCT LINE EXPANSION, HOW DO THESE ACHIEVEMENTS REFLECT ADAMSON'S LEGACY? HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE COMPANY'S NEXT CHAPTER?

Hmmm... I think you are getting tricky with these questions! If we have a “Legacy” to speak of, it would be that we have always been an innovator. We are not merely assemblers of products from parts based on clever supply chain management. We take a 1,000 Kg bar of solid steel and carve magnet cups from that very raw material. For example, we have created high performance mid-range transducers from raw material, precisely tailored to our requirements, along with so many other engineered components. These newest products strongly reflect that ethos.

The next chapter will reflect that fundamental value, but with accelerated purpose. The new capital investment will yield shorter new product development times and greater creative wiggle room. Loudspeaker systems are made of many widely varied molded parts. Die cast aluminum heat sinks and speaker baskets, molded Kevlar diaphragms and cones, molded plastic waveguides and horns; the list is nearly endless. Mastery of these processes, including mold development, makes for creative engineering and a better product.

10. WHAT CORE VALUES AND BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY HAVE GUIDED ADAMSON'S GROWTH AND SUCCESS OVER THE YEARS?

Don't offshore! Master your materials and processes. Dig deep into the principles of your technology and never stop questioning the results.

11. HOW DO YOU FORESEE THE FUTURE OF LIVE SOUND EVOLVING OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

AI and Machine Learning models will dominate the improvement of system deployment and the corresponding evolution of UI/UX. Users will collaborate with Artificial Neural Networks to ease use and improve results, delivering more accurate predictive results in new rooms with less time-consuming data entry.

But having said that, further refinements to driver and diaphragm technology can be surely expected, given the advancements in material science, simulation software and 3D printing.

As laid out in the foregoing discussion, we are in mid-stride, executing many plans and strategies that will impact APAC. But those steps alone would not deliver the results we all want to see if we don't invest in a greater regional team. I am not a salesman (!) but I know our team strives for a better understanding of local and cultural communities to improve our knowledge and support across the region, and I know of the great interest in further training, education and support.

I have confidence in India as a nation, and in particular the people I know first-hand that have come to work here in Canada. The Adamson team all have confidence in our markets in India and APAC. Together, we will make our mark.