

ITALY

# Raising the standard(isation)

After two years of preparation, FaitalPRO is ready to bring a combination of industrialisation and personnel skills to the pro-audio loudspeaker table as a “full service provider”, learns **Dave Robinson**

There's a machine in Faital's Milan factory called the Arizona-Arctic machine, in which the 'unlucky' loudspeaker is trapped in a dedicated oven/freezer and subjected to sudden and extreme thermal shocks, with a temperature swing range from -40 degrees C to +110 degrees C. The test is carried out to verify extreme strain resistance which may cause damage to glued, metal and plastic parts. You almost expect the lights to dim in the Italian fashion capital when they turn the beast on, such is the anticipated drain on the power grid.

This kind of testing might seem a little excessive, but it's only part of the procedure. Faital carries out dry corrosion tests, dust tests, drop tests and shaker tests. Boy, they've really got it in for all these transducers... And we mean all of them. There's 100% testing of end product at Faital.

But if you're going to make yourself heard in an overcrowded marketplace, you've got to do something special. So, ready yourselves, everyone, for FaitalPRO.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this



FaitalPRO 18HP1040 high performance woofer

year, Faital knows a thing or two about loudspeaker manufacturer. Fabbrica Italiana Altoparlanti ('Italian Loudspeaker Manufacturer') has built up its legacy through the automotive industry; even in the '60s, it was supplying 40% of the total Italian market demand for loudspeakers.

Faital product can be found in the shells of many quality cars in Italy and worldwide. NDAs prevent them from naming names but – well, think of some fast Italian cars and you are probably right.

Now Faital has factories in Spain and Italy, plus an automotive speaker plant in Mexico, a production unit in France, a five-year-old factory in Hungary currently doubling in size, and a logistics and sales office in New Jersey. The company is capable of producing 150,000 units everyday.

In 2005, when the company was very comfortable with its position, in terms of automation, stringent testing and quality of product, the decision was made to seek new goals.

“Every business gets to the top of the curve where it has to look at expansion to make the business successful in the future,” says overseas sales manager Flavio Naggi, the company's principal mouthpiece. “That's when we started to look at a parallel market for our product that could be generated from what we'd done so far.”

“We decided that public address and pro audio, was not that different to what we were doing.” In fact, says Flavio, the biggest different was how to deal with the customers. “The basic technology of speakers and how they work has been around since the 1920s. So we are not inventing anything new, just finding a new way of offering a complete service to the customers who need it, OEM or retail, as well as new solutions in the details that also need addressing – which could be details regarding the actual product, but also the supply chain itself, how it is presented to the market.”



Looking forward: (L-R) Bruno Naggi, managing director; Flavio Naggi, overseas sales manager; Igor Cambazzu, pro audio sales manager; and Alessabdro Morelli, sales director, outside the HQ in Milan

Flavio is an MBA graduate, a smart guy indeed, and doesn't need to talk about the quality of the Faital product by necessity because, frankly, he knows it's there already.

So Flavio talks about other product on the market that isn't always available because warehouses levels are not maintained; in other places where the manufacturing is too slow, or the scale of production takes too long to implement, frustrating customers who seek other solutions. “All these are great opportunities for Faital because they are exactly the characteristics that have made us successful with partners around the world. Our capability of taking a concept to a realisation: we can take it on with the customer from start to finish. That's very important.”

It's all about taking industrial techniques from the automotive world and adapting them, “cross-pollinating them” says Flavio, and then applying them to the pro-audio world, and vice versa. Working with the customer, coming up with a suitable validation plan – a QA document if you will – and sticking to it. And of course, using the right materials: Faital is quite aware that the demands of the pro-audio world are far greater than those of most of the bang-'em-out, car-door speaker regime.

While all the engineering will be carried out in Milan, some manufacturing will take place at a factory half an hour out, “and we're just starting to consolidate a line for high frequency drivers for all markets in Spain. We make a tweeter every four or five seconds; 15-inch woofer every 35 seconds, fully tested, ready to be put in the box.”

There are those who don't like this automated approach and would rather see something a little more 'personal', suggests PSNE.

“That's a matter of perception,” says Flavio, unfazed. “I've been faced with that before. An artist making something by hand can make it very well, but not one comes out the same as the next. We are capable of taking the craftsmanship, people who have [spent years making loudspeakers], and we add that to the machines, and the industrialisation.” That's what makes Faital different, he says.

Having launched the 'FaitalPRO' brand two years ago, this Frankfurt will see Faital emerge as a 'full service supplier' with a weighty and expanded complement of drivers for every need, be they woofer, mid-hi speakers, or tweeters.

“We've been making various types of horns [presented at NAMM] for different uses, all the way from line array to low frequency needs, with a variety of power outputs; and now we have the high frequency drivers, not only for the top end but also the medium end. A high acoustic quality but we also aim to be a little more affordable.”

It's taken a while to build up a reputation in this market, but patience and planning is paying off.

“It's gone from an initial 'Fai-who?' to people coming over and saying, hey, my friends recommended your speakers. So we are getting some recognition. And we are addressing a market where there is quite a bit of choice...” In Italy alone, don't we know. “But key are: consistency, quality, and availability. And true OEM capability – working with the customer, not just for the customer. That is a hidden strength.”

So where would Flavio like the company to be this time next year?

UNITED KINGDOM

## FaitalPRO

● "Our objective is to close deals with some of the major players in the market." Faital has made some in-roads with some US and European manufacturers already, and just as *PSNE* went to press, the company announced a significant deal with Ontario Canada's Doyle Audio ("It would be impossible to ask for greater performance and sound quality," enthuses Gerard Doyle.)

"We don't believe we can turn around the market and say, 'FaitalPRO, that's it!' We know the way the market works... but we know we can take some of the business away from others."

Flavio highlights the 18-inch subwoofer – the W18N8-1000 – which he thinks is particularly special, plus a new generation of woofers, which have been prototyped to some users already. "High frequency: 1-inch, 1.4 and 2-inch compression drivers in the market are not available and we can provide them," he claims.

*PSNE* is taken to the demo room for a first-hand listen to the power of Faital speakers. The team whack up The Prodigy's *Smack My Bitch Up* and, yes, it is seriously body-cavity shaking. There's a crack on the wall which they point out and laugh at. "Caused by these type of demos!" they say.

And for a minute *PSNE* wonders if it wasn't the mighty Arizona-Arctic machine taking on the structure of the whole building. ♣

[www.faitalpro.com](http://www.faitalpro.com)

