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WITH

**Marcus Graser**

CEO of Claypaky



Founded in 1976 in Italy, **Claypaky** has become a global leader in professional lighting for live events, theatres, and architectural lighting. In this exclusive interview with *PALM Expo Magazine*, **Marcus Graser**, CEO of Claypaky, explores the leadership vision driving one of the world's most innovative stage lighting companies. Marcus shares his journey, with him at the helm, from working alongside industry giants to shaping a customer-focused leadership approach. He offers exclusive insights into the company's plans for expansion into emerging markets, including India, and provides a glimpse of upcoming product releases that are set to revolutionize live entertainment and event production.

## 1. COULD YOU SHARE ANY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OR MOMENTS IN YOUR CAREER THAT SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED YOUR APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION?

Throughout my career, I have had the fortune to work closely with many outstanding managers. This has allowed me to learn from a variety of leadership styles, which can be summarized in two main points:

- The customer is always key to success. Therefore, managers must take utmost care of them. This involves visiting them frequently, especially at their workplaces, to understand the real needs of their businesses.
- Be people oriented. Implement a management system where

staff are well-managed and well-cared for, ensuring job satisfaction, and provide training.

In my opinion, focusing on both customer and people orientation is at the heart of leadership and innovation.

## 2. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING THE LIGHTING AND STAGE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY TODAY? HOW IS CLAYPAKY ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES?

Our industry, today, faces challenges on different levels. Currently, many technologies coexist, such as LED systems, laser systems and discharge lamps. Nowadays, LEDs have become the most popular light source due to their durability, quality and reliability. However, Claypaky pioneered the introduction of **RGB laser sources** into the market with its **Xtylos**, marking a significant breakthrough in entertainment lighting. Meanwhile, discharge lamps are still used for certain use cases.

We also face technological challenges that affect the performance of fixtures, including protocols, connectivity and the precision and speed of movement, as well as quiet operation.

Claypaky tackles these by selecting and integrating a multitude of technologies into its units. Customers today are very demanding and place great emphasis on these aspects, which not only ensure optimal fixture performance but also lead to time savings and reduced maintenance, providing good value for their investment.

Another aspect to consider is that, over the last ten years, our industry has become significantly more competitive, with the number of players almost doubling in our market segment. This means there is a strong emphasis on product development, cost competitiveness and enhancing market reach.

At Claypaky, we take several approaches. First and foremost, we continue to invest in innovation to design and manufacture lighting products that benefit the customer in terms of both new features and practicality and convenience. Another focus is on digital solutions, such as our **CloudIO**, which cater to customers' needs, affecting not only the choice of light but also how it is used and the associated services.

### 3. CLAYPAKY HAS A REPUTATION FOR PIONEERING ADVANCED LIGHTING SOLUTIONS. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR LEADERSHIP POSITION AND CONTINUE DRIVING INNOVATION IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET?

Innovation at Claypaky involves significant investment, with a substantial budget allocated to Innovation projects each year. Our innovation process involves several actions. The first is a systematic exploration of various technologies, including light sources, optics, electronics and digitization, to identify the best for the fixtures we are developing.

Importantly, innovation should foster creativity while also addressing practical needs. A key point lies in working closely with our customers, including lighting designers and rental companies, whose feedback is crucial and provides useful insights for product definition and marketing.

Lastly, for us, innovation also means working efficiently, thereby optimizing production processes and reducing costs in particular using digital technologies.

### 4. GIVEN THAT A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF LIGHTING EQUIPMENT IS MANUFACTURED IN CHINA, HOW DOES CLAYPAKY ENSURE THAT ITS PRODUCTS, WHICH ARE DESIGNED AND ENGINEERED IN ITALY, MAINTAIN THEIR HIGH STANDARDS OF QUALITY AND INNOVATION WHILE POTENTIALLY LEVERAGING CHINESE MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES?

A good portion of our equipment, particularly our top-range products, are entirely designed and manufactured in Italy, allowing full control over the production process from conception to final assembly. Moreover, we work closely with selected partners in China to enhance our portfolio and reduce supply chain costs. This close cooperation involves true product co-development. We maintain stringent control over various stages of the conception, development, production and quality control process to ensure that the final product perfectly conforms to our initial specifications in terms of features and design. Once the product arrives at Claypaky, it undergoes an additional final inspection, which ensures a result in line with the reliability for which Claypaky products are known for worldwide.

### 5. CAN YOU SHARE ANY MARKET RESEARCH OR INSIGHTS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED CLAYPAKY'S DECISION TO CONSIDER EXPANSION INTO INDIA?

The potential of the Indian market has been evident for years and we were among the first ones to systematically start investing into it. Back in the days when we worked together with **Osram**, we had a very successful local team in India, which we kept going for Claypaky. The Indian market is appealing not only in terms of turnover but also because of its significant and, in some ways, unique market trends in the international arena.

### 6. WHAT POTENTIAL DO YOU SEE IN INDIA'S LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND EVENT PRODUCTION INDUSTRY? HOW DOES THE INDIAN MARKET ALIGN WITH THE COMPANY'S STRATEGIC GOALS?

The Indian market is also interesting due to its large and growing live entertainment industry, which demands high-quality, innovative products — aligning perfectly with our strategic goals.

India also has a very successful market for television, motion pictures and cinema, which presents opportunities for joint business strategies with our current parent company, **ARRI**. We work together locally to organize demos, attend trade shows and visit customers.

### 7. WHAT ARE CLAYPAKY'S LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES FOR ITS

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### PRESENCE IN INDIA, AND HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS IN THIS NEW MARKET?

Our long-term goals, of course, include increasing our market share, establishing a local presence and engaging with major market players. But that's not all — India could become a crucial part of our **supply chain**, particularly concerning digitalization, as well as software and hardware.

### 8. HOW DOES CLAYPAKY ENSURE IT STAYS AHEAD OF INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS, ESPECIALLY REGARDING SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

Claypaky has a special team devoted to this, which works closely with our parent company, **ARRI**. We comply with all renowned international certifications and standards. We are the first and only company to secure robust compliance for marketing laser source fixtures in the U.S. in compliance with the rules given by FDA/FAA. Lastly, our focus on sustainability is evident from our achievement — two years ago — of the ISO 14064-1:2018 certification under our “**CP Green**” project, making us the first company in the entertainment lighting industry to receive this certification for carbon inventory management systems.

### 9. COULD YOU SHARE ANY UPCOMING PRODUCT RELEASES OR TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS THAT CLAYPAKY IS PARTICULARLY EXCITED ABOUT?

The market today is highly diverse, with several promising technologies with an assured future. In particular, multispectral LED engine sources and both white and RGB laser sources will be firmly on our roadmap in the coming years. We continue to see potential in discharge lamps, especially for use in hybrid products where LED light sources have not yet reached peak performance. The market increasingly values certain product features, such as the noise level during lighting fixture operation, the speed of movements and effects and the precision of light projections. Concurrently, we are developing service tools and implementing digitization to simplify the use of our fixtures. We also recently launched effect lights that combine advanced technology with creative effects, like the **Volero Wave**. Lastly, our roadmap consistently aims to diversify design and production as much as we can to provide customers with as many options as possible, while also ensuring that we do not undermine sales of our existing units.

“Customer feedback has always been essential for our product development. For instance, our Sinfonya and Rhapsodya lines were developed based on specific requests and feedback from theatre customers amongst others.”

#### 10. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE FUTURE OF LIGHTING IN LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND HOW DOES CLAYPAKY ASSESS AND RESPOND TO THESE CHANGES?

As mentioned before, we consistently receive feedback from various markets and customers. Based on this feedback, we have identified two main trends that may appear contradictory but are actually complementary. On one hand, there is a demand for our fixtures to be as versatile as possible, allowing them to be used in a wide range of applications and environmental conditions. On the other hand, there is a call for highly specialized products, tailored specifically for particular market segments, such as the theatre world. The challenge

lies in allowing both trends to coexist, of course, by adopting distinct development strategies.

Today, innovation and new product development move at a rapid pace, necessitating frequent updates to our roadmap. Nonetheless, we can confidently identify some trends. Weatherproof fixtures are becoming the new standard in many applications and hence valued in both outdoor and indoor settings. Both LED and laser sources will continue to develop significantly without getting in each other's way since they complement one another. Digitalization will become more prevalent, enhanced by the latest digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools. As always, our role is to remain actively engaged, continuously gathering market feedback and investing in our leadership to drive the innovation processes within our industry.

#### 11. HOW IMPORTANT IS CUSTOMER FEEDBACK IN SHAPING CLAYPAKY'S PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE OFFERINGS? CAN YOU PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW CUSTOMER INPUT HAS INFLUENCED A RECENT INNOVATION?

Customer feedback has always been essential for our product development. For instance, our **Sinfonya** and **Rhapsodya** lines were developed based on specific requests and feedback from theatre customers amongst others, resulting in features like the **TONEDOWN** function™ for silent operation as low as 27 dB, “Absolute Position” for advanced pan and tilt control, and **ACCUTUNE**, an advanced new colour management algorithm.

Consider the **Skylos** as well, which has established a new product category within moving heads. It is essentially a searchlight equipped with several features that make it ideal for touring and other applications/installations.

Additionally, I should mention CloudIO, a maintenance tool for moving heads that was designed at the request of rental companies to facilitate and optimize their workflow in service and operations.

