



Hire standard

Caroline Moss traces the corporate history of Bangalore-based Reynolds Inc, today one of India's leading PA hire companies

BACK IN 1908, AT THE HEIGHT of colonial rule, Joaquim Remedios spotted a gap in the market and opened a music shop in Calcutta selling violins and pianos. Mr Remedios went on to purchase the franchise of a US company closing down during the depression. The new company - J Reynolds and Co - had the distinction of carrying a British-sounding name, which went down well with his colonial clients, and business flourished.

The next generation, headed up by John Remedios and his brother Jonas Remedios, proved equally resourceful. J Reynolds became one of the first companies to manufacture guitars in India, at its peak producing around 500 acoustic and 200 electric guitars a month, under the Reynolds brand name.

In 1981 it was the turn of Joaquim's grandson as Felix Remedios embarked on a tour of the country, seeking a good place for a new MI store. Arriving in Bangalore, he quickly developed a fondness for the city, finding it well placed to serve the central and south of India. He decided this was the ideal location for his new business, Reynolds Inc.

'You have to realise that at this time, the concept of good sound did not exist in India,' recalls Mr Remedios. 'We were on a mission to change that.'

Like many success stories, this began in a small way. Michael Furtado, who had joined Mr Remedios in 1981, had just started a band, and a decision was taken to invest in small audio systems for



Reynolds managing director Felix Remedios

rental. 'Together we made some speakers which we considered an improvement on what was available,' remembers Mr Remedios. Ferrying the system around in a cycle rickshaw, Reynolds charged 250 rupees per show for weddings, parties and small college gigs. Many local bands were customers at the MI store, and started to use Reynolds' audio system, which guaranteed a better sound than anything else available at that time. From a small store with just two employees, the team slowly increased to six as business expanded, and Reynolds Sound & Lighting Services was born.

Three years later, Mr Remedios' brother Leslie travelled to Hong Kong to visit music retailer Tom Lee. Taking the plunge, he bought a professional system of Peavey column speakers and an eight-channel mixer. In an era where customs duty on foreign imports was more than 300 per cent,

this equipment was so unfamiliar in India that it was stuck in customs for three weeks as officials figured out what it was.

'This purchase turned out to be a great move,' says Mr Remedios. 'It really caught on and everyone started buying Peavey in India. There was also a growing trend for people bringing in speaker drivers and HF horns made by Peavey, Celestion and Fane - often in their suitcases, as that was the only available channel to import speakers! They would find a good carpenter and make their own cabinets.'

By the late 1990s Reynolds had started a lighting division, and the rental team grew to 20 full time employees. 'Customers seemed to prefer us as a one-stop provider for audio and lighting systems,' says Mr Remedios. The audio inventory now boasted around 48 Peavey mid-top units and 48 Peavey subs in locally fabricated cabinets, and Reynolds

landed its first international concert with Inner Circle, at Bangalore's historic Palace Grounds. Meanwhile, leading domestic artists were increasingly insisting on Reynolds as their equipment supplier.

Around this time, Mr Remedios decided to up the ante by investing in a top of the range sound system. At the 1998 PALA trade show in Singapore, a meeting with Meyer Sound's Mike Cooper sealed the company's fate. Learning about Meyer Sound's self-powered systems, Mr Remedios realised this was just what India needed. He kept in touch with Mr Cooper over the two years it took for Reynolds to raise the funds for its first Meyer system, comprising of 24 MSL-4 speakers and 16 650P subwoofers.

Reynolds' Meyer system was used for the first time for MC Hammer in Mumbai and Bangalore, and its success saw the company land Deep Purple's groundbreaking



Reynolds' first international concert with Inner Circle in the late 1990s using Peavey speakers inside custom cabinets

Bangalore concert in 2001. One of the first truly international acts to play India, they paved the way for others to follow. Meyer Sound sent support staff over for the event at the Palace Grounds, and India was introduced to a new level of sound reinforcement.

Today, Reynolds Sound & Lighting Services is one of India's leading PA, lighting and video rental companies. International clients include Guns N' Roses, Metallica, Bryan Adams, Black Eyed Peas, Aerosmith, the Scorpions, Iron Maiden, Enrique Inglesias, Foreigner, Joe Satriani and Sting, together with Indian stars including A R Rahman, Sonu Nigam, Shaan and Anoushka and Pandit Ravi Shankar. Reynolds also handles corporate events, conferences, product and film launches, and religious festivals for worldwide spiritual leaders including the Dalai Lama, Joyce Meyer Ministries USA, Pastor Reinhard Bonke, Pastor Franklin Graham, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and the late Satya Sai Baba. Reynolds has also handled some of India's biggest corporate events including the launch of Windows 2000 at Kanteerva Stadium Bangalore, the inaugural TED conference at the Infosys campus in 2009 and the 2012 Dell Women's Entrepreneur Network Conference in Delhi.

Reynolds employs 120 full time staff at its rental division in Bangalore, and 35 at sales offices in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune. J Reynolds and Co still operates out of Calcutta, run by Mr Remedios' brother Peter. Reynolds Sound & Lighting Services' rental operations run to three warehouses, a transport division and service centre with five technicians. With an inventory of around 250 Meyer



A Reynolds-supported Joe Satriani concert

boxes, Mr Remedios has remained true to the brand that has raised Reynolds' game for the past decade, continuing to invest only in Meyer. 'Many other companies here are still using a mix of speakers, which doesn't sound good,' he says. 'Meyer doesn't distort or colour the sound at all, and we always get consistent results, for which we are known.'

Other rental stock includes Avid



The launch of Reynolds' Milo system at an Enrique Iglesias concert, Bangalore Palace Grounds, April 2003

and DiGiCo digital consoles, Shure's Axiem microphone system, Barco HD projectors, Folsom Screen Pro and Image Pro switchers and Extron scalars, switchers and fibre-optic transmission. The company also has a video division and a lighting division based around MA Lighting and Clay Paky. In addition, the company distributes Meyer Sound, Furman, MA Lighting, Cordial Cables, Verinde Stagemaker hoists and



Reynold's Michael Furtado at front of house for the Scorpions

Look Solutions smoke and haze machines. One thing is clear: Reynolds has come a long way from peddling home-made speaker cabinets in a cycle rickshaw. Nevertheless the initiative the company displayed back then is still apparent in its constant striving for advancement and quality in all it does.

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