

# First impressions count

**Helen Fletcher** looks at how technology has enabled manufacturers to push the boundaries of cabinet design forward

**CATCH** the player's eye with an impressive and sleek looking cabinet and you've won half the battle. There are many reasons why a player will be drawn to one machine over another, but the importance of strong cabinets in a location that attract their intended target audience, cannot be over-looked.

When you look at some of the machines that have passed through the amusement and gaming industry over the years, there is no doubting the improvement in quality. But then this is a sign of the times and gaming machines have moved with their customers - reflecting their tastes and standards.

While amusement machines differ greatly from their gaming counterparts in their look and style - leaning more towards themeing and brands, the research and development, time and effort that goes into them is no different.

According to Marc-Antoine Pinard, vice president of business development and marketing at Adrenaline Amusements, whereas gaming machines tend to be smaller and slicker in their design, amusement cabinets need to somehow be larger than life and the real challenge is to have something impressive that doesn't only focus on size, bold artwork or loud colours.

"Cabinet design has moved on greatly," said Pinard. "Ten years ago, a driver for instance was defined as 2D game play with no detail, a steering wheel and metal seat. Now you can play a driver game sitting in a fully sized representation Honda street racer with tyres and doors, a full-sized body and functional interior.

"A good product is one that doesn't feature a completed R&D process in my opinion. Evolution is key to survival in many ways and while we go through a series of significant modifications before going to commercialisation with our product, it doesn't mean we won't from one selling season to another, alter the colour mix or respond to operator/distributor comments and adjust the cosmetic elements by adding upgrade packages or new versions of the product to our catalogue."



The design goal behind Adrenaline's debut product Kaboom! was to bring the cartoon representation of TNT explosives to life. By making the red TNT stick the centrepiece of its product, Adrenaline's innovation team worked on a concept where the player is able to appreciate the essence of the original idea while being offered a more integrated concept - the construction wood box, the explosion detonator and so on.

"You always need to remember that operators are the final link between the rest of the amusement food chain and the end users," continued Pinard. "They know more than anyone what their customer appreciates the most and what they are looking for. The key is to be creative and make sure you have a flexible product."

While innovation and creativity is important for good cabinet design, according to Sega Amusement Europe's general manager Justin Burke, budget, a lot of the time, is the deciding factor on what is included when designing a game and "you can have all the technology and flair in the world, but if you haven't got the budget there's no point."

"There are other influences," he continued, "technology for one - what can and can't be done and what is going to last five or 10 years on site. You can have loads of good ideas but if it's not robust enough to be shipped, operated and moved around then there's no point. It's got to be practical and tough enough to cope.

"You also have to keep in mind cultural