

Life Sounds Better in Space...

"What makes you think they're gonna care about a bunch of lifers who found God at the ass-end of space?"
Ellen Ripley, Alien3

It is often said that the Ibiza dance season gets underway when Space opens... which isn't strictly true, but most thinking people understand the deeper meaning behind this much used citation. It's more of a commentary on the cultural importance of a club that is widely regarded as the best dance music discothèque anywhere in the world. Even the readers of DJmag agree after selecting Space as their number one club of the year for 2011.

All of which means the Playa D'en Bossa based venue has a lot to live up to this season, but if last Sunday's Opening Fiesta is a taste of things to come, Space has every chance of scooping the DJmag club award for a second year running.

If, like me, you made the pilgrimage to Space last weekend, you'll know what a fantastic day/night/morning it was. The doors opened at around 4:30pm on Sunday afternoon and remained ajar until noon the next day. There were no warm up sets and no chill-out rooms. From the first tune to last, the tech-house rhythms were intelligent, relentlessly stomping, and always expertly mixed.



Sunday was my first visit to Space, but it didn't take me too long to realise that the Opening Fiesta is more than just a club-night; as the name suggests, it's more akin to a festival, or at least a small carnival. Visitors get access to six different rooms – the Discoteca, the Terrace, the Sunset Terrace, the Salon, the Premier Stage, and the Red Box – and on opening night, the Space car-park is hosed down and transformed into a gigantic outdoor arena boasting a huge rock-concert sized stage.

I spent the first few hours dancing around in the outdoor arena, drinking vodka and smoking menthol slims, hiding away from the late afternoon sunshine which was still hot and beating down through the high strung canopy in fine laser beams. I remember thousands of pretty girls with soft skin and painted nails wiggling all around me, and a never-ending procession of Boeing aircraft sweeping overhead like a ravenous convoy of highly mechanised Great White Sharks.

These things are hard to recall with absolute clarity, but they aren't easy to forget. I'm not sure who exactly was playing behind the decks in those first few hours – Wally Lopez followed by Fedde Le Grand, perhaps – but I decided not to investigate the matter any further, realising that my ears would be in safe hands either way.

The line-up for Sundays Opening Fiesta was immense. Carl Cox, John Digweed, Andy Fletcher of Depeche Mode, Steve Lawler, Jeff Mills, Mark Knight, Yousef, and Jonathan Ulysses were just a few of the A-List DJs who jetted in from all over the planet to play at the worlds most famous dance party. Nevertheless, if truth be told, the real star of Sundays Opening Fiesta was the sound-system.

Like most of today's leading clubs, Space uses a Funktion One loudspeaker system to add a little more oomph to its auditory output. Which is important, because a nightclub without a decent sound-system is not a nightclub at all; rather, it is a room filled with drunkards and bad noise.



On their website, the Funktion One boys say that they “are intent on sonic accuracy...” and, they continue, “...our loudspeaker systems also have excellent directional control allowing sound to be focused where it's needed... minimising out-of-venue environmental impact.”

All of which sounds fantastically technical, but, in layman's terms, what does it all mean for the average clubber?

In a nutshell, anyone lucky enough to visit Space, or any other club with a Funktion One sound-system for that matter, will perceive every kick drum, every percussive hit, and every synth flare in crystalline clarity, and yet, at the same time, they'll be able to speak to the person standing next to them without ever having to raise their voice. We are talking about projected and directed sound here, which means every ounce of amplification power is aimed at the dancefloor rather than being lost to the surrounding environment. Gone are the days when festivals polluted neighbouring towns and villages, and twenty years from now, insiders say, the technology will be so efficient that there will be no sound leakage at all.

As the sun faded away to the west, I ceased musing about the excellent Funktion One sound-system and stepped inside the club for the first time, squeezing slowly into the room known locally as the Terrace, which is a large, airy room, floored in fine terracotta tiling and festooned with hanging greenery. Again, the sound in this room was incredibly punchy and filled with stomping hedonists from the outset. The enormous Main Room – a much darker dance hall with an English clubbing feel and appearance – took a little longer to fill up. But by 10pm it was full of activity, and by midnight it was nearly as busy as the outdoor stage.

A little later, I headed back outside. Day had turned to night, and Carl Cox was banging out a relentless barrage of tech-house tunes on the outdoor stage, which was now busy with entertainers and performers – plump lipped dancing girls, trapeze artists, and a gang of creatine pumped hombres wearing stretched leather shorts – all of whom were swinging on a set of giant metallic hoops which dangled down from the roof of the stage like a cluster of hollow moons. I watched on as a gang of white laced angelic stilt walkers cut through the crowd, each of them fluttering their elongated eyelashes and flapping their fairytale wings. The angels smiled down at me from their high vantage point and I smiled back, holding up my menthol slim in a deliberate salute to everything good and decent in this world. But a little later, a cruel posse of red dressed stilt walkers appeared, taking giant, demonic steps into the crowd and flexing their fiery dragon wings in a cruel and furious fashion... all of which caused me to flee in a sudden fit of panic... but I knew instinctively not to yell and holler, after all, the sound-system in Space is so good that Everyone Can Hear You Scream.

Words by Johnny Lee