

Alpha channel

With Dubai's first Funktion-One installation, the Alpha Club is looking to lead the city's nightclubs in a new direction. **Tim Goodyer** reports

THE BRIEF WAS FOR THE 'BEST

club sound system in Dubai

– preferably Funktion-One'. The location was the grounds of the Le Meridien Hotel in Dubai – the site of the planned Alpha Club. But, as it had previously been a Greek restaurant, the venue posed considerable challenges. With marble floors, vaulted ceilings, floor-to-ceiling glass windows and a large dome above the area that would become the DJ island, the room's acoustics would be in direct conflict with the required performance of the sound system.

With his experience of running nightclubs, Alex Bracken (CEO of entertainment group New Dawn, which is behind the venture) understood the implications of the interior design of the room on their new venture, and turned to acoustic consultant Dr Tikendra Singh to help address these shortcomings. Described by Mr Bracken's partner, DJ/promoter Kristian Valdini, as being 'by clubbers for clubbers', Alpha placed a very high value on its sound system and was aiming for 'a sensation of total immersion on the dancefloor'.

The main loudspeaker system is the work of systems designer Peter James from the AMB Group of Companies in Dubai, and consists of four Funktion-One Res2As and a 221 Bass, with the Res2As used to 'wash' the dancefloor in sound while the subwoofer is located centrally beneath the DJ podium and encased in a 40mm thick, solid concrete enclosure, to eliminate any possibility of creating unwanted vibration or resonance in the DJ console. Although a Funktion-One system made an appearance in the Infusion tent at the Dubai Desert Rock Festival earlier in the year, this is the first permanent installation of an F1 system in Dubai. Mr James chose the speaker combination to meet the club's requirements for sound quality and to achieve the high SPLs needed to create a memorable experience for the club's customers. 'I've always believed that combining an amplifier within a loudspeaker allows for a perfect match of components and, having used the Res2As before, am delighted with their power and fidelity. In combination with the 221 Sub, the 15-inch bass driver in the Res2A gives superb definition and huge amounts of power in the upper bass. In addition, their mid and high frequency reproduction is unbeatable – smooth, crystal clear and effortless, and, even at high



The Purple VIP room

SPLs, is easy on your ears.

'The 221 Bass is the one we use in our Dance Stacks, and it simply loves modern electronic music. It gives rich, deep, bass reproduction with an almighty punch, and combines beautifully with the Res2As to create an amazingly dynamic result. This is what makes Funktion-One so popular with DJs – it allows them to connect with their audience and deliver a much more enjoyable experience,' Mr James reveals. 'And, if designed correctly, a system like this won't cause that painful ringing in the ears so often experienced with high SPL dancefloor systems.'

Powered by Funktion-One amplifiers, the system has a high SPL capacity and will, even under the most demanding conditions, appear to effortlessly produce extremely high sound levels. 'Any audio professional will understand that a system is only as strong as

its weakest link, but we so often come across compromises that reduce the quality of the system to that of a mediocre component,' Mr James says. 'Fortunately, the team at Alpha understands this and welcomed our recommendations, and this has ensured that the entire audio chain is of the best possible quality. In more than 30 years in pro audio, this is the first time I have had such a free hand and such a knowledgeable and understanding client. Combine this with quality products, and I couldn't be happier with the result.'

The Funktion-One solution also extends to the DJ's monitors, with an M12 being powered by an E15/E12 amplifiers combination and controlled by an X01 management system. The DJ system itself comprises a Pioneer DJM1000 mixer and four Pioneer CDJ1000 Mk3 decks.

Funktion-One F88 loudspeakers



Alpha interior design

have also been used to provide fill to other areas throughout the remainder of the venue. 'Although the club is relatively small, we wanted to ensure a level of tonal balance wherever people gathered in the club,' Mr James explains. 'These speakers are really only there to provide a level of spectral balance and clarity in all areas away from the dancefloor.' There is another pair of F88s covering the small outdoor terrace downstairs

and a pair of F81s outdoors at the entrance to the club, completing the Funktion-One signature sound.

Alpha also has an intimate upstairs terrace that will be used for private functions. This has its own dedicated system comprising two Funktion-One AX88s and an F118 Bass, again powered by Funktion-One amplifiers. As before, the DJ system is from Pioneer. This system can be used independently of the main house system by



The ground floor terrace



Loudspeaker installation



DJ island and Funktion-One Res2A loudspeaker



The upstairs terrace has a second Funktion-One system that can be linked to the main DJ

another DJ, or fed from the main DJ mix downstairs. 'We wanted a system here that would create a similar experience as downstairs, but needed to be mindful of spill to the neighbouring hotel areas,' Mr James continues. 'The tight dispersion pattern of the AX88 allows us a high level of control and the F118 will ensure there is enough punch to satisfy all musical tastes. This combination is a very popular solution for small areas in clubs worldwide and was a very easy choice.'

A similar attention to the sound has even been applied to the system in the bathrooms. 'These are usually overlooked but, in my opinion, that's where and when most people make the decision that it's time to go home,' Mr James says. 'My goal is to ensure that the experience, or vibe, that the DJ is creating is maintained wherever you are in the venue. If the toilets have no sound, that dose of reality – even momentarily – is usually all it takes to allow you to make that decision to end the night. We wanted a rich, deep and dynamic sound in there but were restricted by the size and mounting options, so a Bose FS3 system was selected with a ceiling mounted bass and two small flush mounted cubes, resulting in an almost invisible system that maintains the experience.'

Alpha is the first of Dubai's clubs to use Funktion-One and – if Alex Bracken is right – it has set a benchmark for others to follow. 'We wanted the best, and expected the Funktion-One solution to be priced accordingly,' he says. 'But in the end, it was no more expensive than many other options we considered. We now have a world-class sound system that will allow us to attract leading DJs from all over the world to our club, and a venue that sets new standards in the UAE.'

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