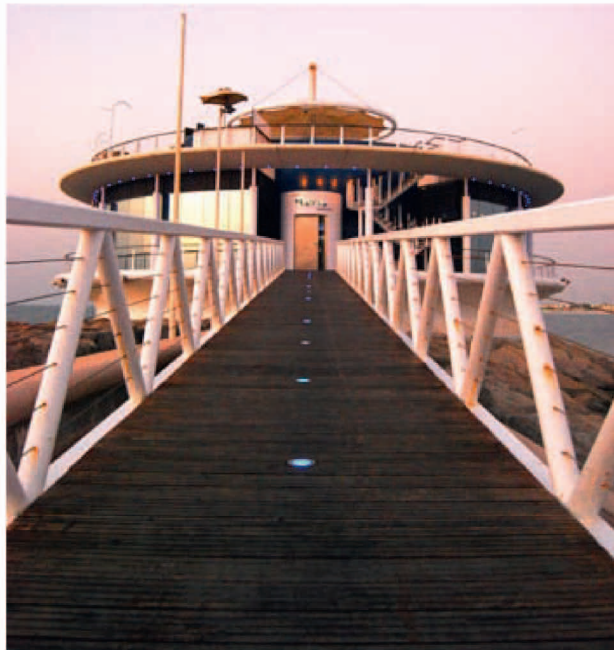


INSTALLATION

Funktioning in 360

Few Dubai venues offer the atmosphere of 360, taking in panoramic views of the Jumeirah Beach hotel, the Burj Arab and miles of ocean. As **Barney Jameson** discovers, a new Funktion-One system is adding superb sound as well



A walk across the water – the bridge to the 360 Bar



The 360 dancefloor, as the sun sets

EVEN IN DUBAI, A CITY

renowned for its spectacular nightspots, the 360° bar is impressive. It is set 200m from the shore and connected to the Jumeirah Beach resort by a seawall walkway. With access limited to just 250, the bar – which is set atop the Marina seafood restaurant in a rooftop terrace – offers its guests a laid-back party on the ocean, with breathtaking panoramic views over Dubai's ever-changing coastline. That now includes the adjacent Burj Arab seven star hotel, which customers can admire from the oversized sofas soothed by sea breezes.

But with a location as distinctive as this comes a challenge that few venues around the world have to meet quite so dramatically – its environment. For audio professionals, 360° is unique not only for its appeal as an after-dark destination, but for its potential to destroy loudspeaker systems in record time. From an audio perspective, 360° might just be the toughest gig in Dubai.

Firstly there's the temperature to contend with; no small problem in an Emirate where the majority of music-based systems are installed in air-conditioned rooms. There's no such luxury for 360°, where the

humid Dubai heat bakes its sound system as relentlessly as the rest of the coastline. Secondly, and more destructively, there is the ocean, its salinity insinuating itself into the most robust of systems, corroding them beyond use.

Finally, even if an audio install survives the weather, there are the neighbours to consider. The bar is part of the Jumeirah Beach resort, with its famous wave-shaped hotel a mere stroll away. The Burj Al Arab makes for a stunning view, but its customers don't want to hear the 360° audio spilling across the water. With VIP guests in close proximity, the system has to contain its sound

within the decked club area, but without lowering the volume to levels that could lose clubbers to another Dubai hotspot.

All of these issues came to the fore in June of this year, when the bar closed for refurbishment during the summer months. Despite having only debuted its last sound system two years ago, 360° was deemed in need of a new audio install, the environment having rapidly taken its toll on the existing speakers. As part of the consultation process, 360° bar manager Andy Erokhin and his team turned to local supplier AMB Group, the UAE distributor for Funktion-One, which recommended

an F88-based system capable of localising the sound, while withstanding the environmental challenges – thanks to some clever customisation.

The Funktion-One F88 is a direct radiating loudspeaker, comprising two custom 8-inch drivers and a diffraction slot tweeter. The 150W rated speaker differs from most enclosures in that it exerts horizontal dispersion in excess of 120°, and offering high output with clear vocal intelligibility. Not surprisingly, both the bar's management and AMB Group immediately recognised the speaker's potential for creating a



In the shadow of the Burj Dubai – one of the pole-mounted F88s



The outer ring of Funktion-One F88 cabinets angled to confine the sound to the bar area

strong audio system within 360° that wouldn't spill out of the venue's confines.

However, that still left the humidity, salinity and heat to withstand. The 15mm birch plywood housings of the 16 cabinets were extensively treated by Funktion-One's team in the UK, as were the cones and components, safeguarding them against the corrosive environment. Further modifications to eight of the F88s, used in the bar's most exposed locations, saw new rear panels fitted during manufacturing, allowing the back of the speaker to be hard wired and flush mounted to custom made poles, eliminating back panel connections and any possibility of corrosion at the speaker connections.

It's a bold solution to the problem. To contain as much sound where needed as possible, eight stainless steel poles have been installed around the bar's circumference, all angled inwards, with F88s flush-mounted at their tips. This outer ring is then augmented by a further six F88s, which are dedicated to the bar area, while the dancefloor uses four dedicated F88s controlled by the DJ mix, and which are focused on the dancefloor. The result is tightly concentrated coverage that ensures the systems' energy, which is powered by Funktion-One amplifiers, is kept within the club, thus containing the decibels. Conversely, the innovative mounting-solution ensures that the environment is kept out of the loudspeakers, creating what may be 360°'s best hope of an enduring audio install.

Meanwhile, to ensure that DJs don't exceed sensitive level limits, the installation team has added a Formula Sound limiter, which restricts the level to a maximum 96dB. The DJ area, which is furnished with a Pioneer CDJ800 mixer, is also served by two Funktion-One F81 monitors.

Two 600W rated Minibass 212 subwoofers, floor mounted under the DJ area, provide a further bass extension down to 40Hz. However, while AMB Group may have come up with a neat solution

