

INSTALLATIONS ▶▶▶▶▶

Funktion One Res-4 speakers, using patented Axhead technology, have been installed by Promedia Systems

PLASTIC PEOPLE

PROMEDIA PROVIDE LONDON'S LATEST UNDERGROUND CLUB WITH A SERIOUS SOUND SYSTEM...

The ultimate sacrifice to clubbing is selling your collection of prized jazz vinyl in order to raise the deposit to open your own dance venue. But that's precisely what Nigerian Ade Fakile had to do when he set up the first manifestation of Plastic People on the site of the former Fish (the club, not the restaurant) in London's West End.

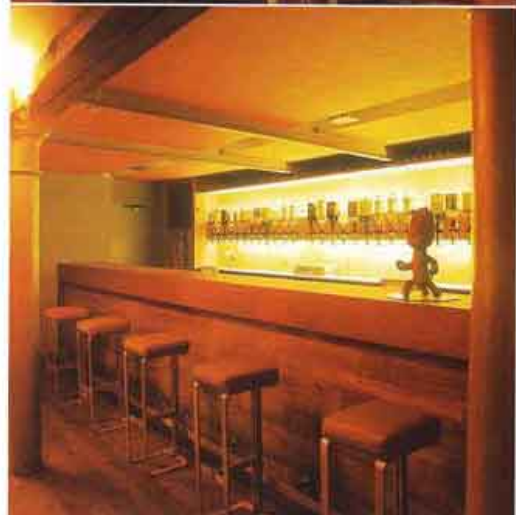
Plastic People has been running since 1994 - when Ade went to his favourite Oxford Street club, The Fish to find it had closed. He managed to obtain the landlord's number and was told that while he couldn't use the "fish" name he could rent and promote the premises himself. That was the defining moment when Plastic People was born and a record collection was yielded up. At the end of the five year lease the building was earmarked for office conversion and so the search was on once again.

Thus in March the Plastic People caravan headed east to the funkier, friendlier area of Old Street, right on the edge of fashionable Shoreditch, where names like the Bass Clef, Straight No Chaser and Gilles Peterson (who also DJ's at Plastic People) are second nature among the savvy.

"This was the only place I could find because it's impossible to get planning permission in central London," said Ade. Not that his experience at Curtain Road (where he was dealing with Hackney Council) was exactly a walk in the park, and his planning application eventually had to be sanctioned by the secretary of state on appeal.

But in his 200-capacity basement in Curtain Road, Ade has developed Plastic People into a real cult club. With the aid of his architect partner Harry Hewitt, this former studio, with its low ceiling and hard reflective surfaces, has been lovingly converted into a spartan rectangular box, with American walnut floor - a conversion which with all the renewed invisible infrastructure will have hoovered up around £300,000 of Ade's hard-earned cash.

But at the Homelands Festival this spring he was exposed to the Funktion One sound system, and by the Autumn he had built up the confidence (and ▶



► the funds) to replace his hired sound system with a permanent rig, which has recently been installed by Promedia Systems Ltd. The system is based around the legendary Tony Andrews/John Newsham "Axhead" technology, now embodied in the Funktion One systems. Once he had experienced the Funktion One sound at Homelands, and then heard a set-up demo down at their Hoyle Farm HQ in Surrey, Ade became hooked.

What's unique about this venue is firstly that there are two DJ booths facing each other for a DJ trade off (which required a bit of technical wizardry with the monitor booth outputs), and secondly that barring a couple of token low voltage halogen colour reflectors (which look like mini inverted groundrows) there is absolutely no lighting. "It's what we call active darkness," says Ade.

This installation features the first use of the new BSS Soundweb MkII programmable DSP device, along with the new 96kHz sample rate and 24-bit converters of the FDS-366 Omnidrive Compact Plus management systems, as well as Connect software for the C Audio Pulse amplifiers. Networked together, this will allow flexible online/offsite system management via Modem - including monitoring of all the loads on the amplifiers and the temperature of each unit. And with remote gain controls everything can be locked out of the Pulse amplifiers except the power switch.

This system will eventually have different preset EQ configurations for principle DJs like Gilles Peterson and Ashley Beedle and Harvey, as well as Ade himself, who can be found on Saturday nights presenting his cool blend of jazz, which alternates with Hip Hop, House and Northern Soul. The night Jarvis Cocker appeared the club was swelling to capacity.

Despite the club's compact dimensions and low ceiling, the sound system has been cleverly thought out by Ian Woodall's team. The four-way system comprises four of the Funktion One skeletal Res-4 top boxes, mounted in the horizontal plane, which fit snugly against the chamfered walls, with their silver fascias providing a stylish, futuristic look, and four mighty F218 bass bins. Pairs of Nexo PS10's can be found on DJ monitor duty at both workstations and three PS8's are used for peripheral sound.

C Audio Pulse 2x1100s control the subs and low-mids while 2x650's power the high-mids and HF. As for control, a pair of BSS FDS-366 Omnidrives are assigned to the Funktion One boxes, while the Nexo speakers are on the Soundweb network.

Promedia's Ian Woodall and Ade had hit it off straight away. "It was evident he knew what he wanted, and it was something that I could relate to immediately," says the former. "In fact he cared so much about the sound that he would gauge feedback from the punters. Our brief was to concentrate on eliminating any potential dead spots and hotspots, and so what you see in here is state-of-the-art ... but that's precisely what he wanted to achieve."

The system is so well balanced that minimal tuning was required. Promedia found they could correct 99% of problems simply by changing the box positions rather than with the EQ. However, Promedia, with assistance from BSS Audio, had to carry out one modification to solve the problem of sound level compatibility once the two DJs start firing off each other's monitors from opposite ends of the dancefloor via the obligatory Technics SL1210s (unusually fitted with Shure carts) and Denon CD playback. Had they used the standard booth output and volume control on the Formula Sound FSM-600's the sound would have been affected in both locations.

Instead, they ran a separate feed from each DJ booth straight into Soundweb, bypassing the standard booth control and rewired the control directly to one of the eight Soundweb control ports. "This deals with the control seamlessly," confirms Ian. "We did a few listening tests and it was perfect."

This is the first installation with the new MkII, and aside from the superior audio performance and digital AES-EBU stereo input and output cards, Ian Woodall recognises that he couldn't have implemented this piece of customisation on the original Soundweb. Furthermore, because of the inherent temptation of DJs to overdrive their monitors, Promedia were grateful for Nexo's sensor control, which takes over when the peak limit is being reached.

And that's about it. There are no frills about this club. But with change out of £100 for the lighting, the audio boys reckon that Plastic People achieves just about the perfect ratio of sound to lighting.



The backroom equipment at Plastic People includes C Audio Pulse amplification and BSS's new Soundweb MkII digital signal processing, used to control Funktion One speakers as well as dedicated controllers for the Nexo PS10s used for peripheral sound

