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A glitzy kaleidoscope at Dubai's Chameleon Club



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Chameleon bar:

Four UPA-1P Meyer speakers in (X) technique stereo-mode face the chameleon's body from all four corners along with 2-floor mounted 600-HP dual 15-inch subwoofers installed behind the bar, that allows low frequency to surround the area. 12-spot speakers installed on the belly of the chameleon connected to a different audio source deliver special sound effects:



The Chameleon can talk

To create a sound system that was as ‘jaw-droppingly’ good as the interior of the club was spectacular, Joe Chidiac, audio specialist, Pulse Middle East, put together a system with unequalled clarity and power. In conversation with Supriya Srinivas



We stood on the dance floor. DJ Rolland let the music play at 120db. It felt like an adrenaline

rush. Incredibly, audio specialist, Joe Chidiac, continued his interview with me, and I listened with no extra effort even as I swayed imperceptibly to the music. “This is because you are listening to a pure sound. You can easily have a conversation while the music is playing. We are achieving 130db but currently we are running at 120db. In some other clubs, even at 100db you cannot talk – that is because it is not pure music coming to the ear. Here, you would not face the ringing in the ear or the headaches normally associated with such clubs,” he said.

Coming from Chidiac, this is no empty boast. The 28-year-old Lebanese guitarist and audio

specialist for Dubai-based Pulse Middle East, is steadily building a name for himself with sound installations in Ferrari World, the Diablo Club (Ibn Batuta Gate Hotel, Dubai) and now the recently inaugurated Chameleon Club in the Byblos Hotel at Tecom, Dubai.

The chameleon challenge

Combined with the skills of his colleague and lighting designer, Rami Haber, who has earlier been involved with mega-projects such as the Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi and Ferrari World, among others, the audio-visual effect at the Chameleon Club is nothing short of spectacular. A giant chameleon welcomes you to the club. Poised over the bar-area, this fibre-glass creature has no less than 8,000 LED lights on the body



The VIP Zone

The chameleon has allowed for interesting possibilities with guests at the club surrounded by a kaleidoscope of colours ranging from hot pink and green to a sparkling blue

alone, an installation that was deemed impossible at the design stage. Chidiac recalls, "Initially companies that tendered talked of a limited number of external lights. We decided to go ahead with 8,000 LED lights that would fit on the body like a skin. It was custom-built for us by Greece-based Electron. While Rami has done lighting for Ferrari World and other venues, this particular installation is unique to the region."

Pushing the design envelope was Milanese designer, Italo Rota. Best known for his work on creating the interior design of the Cavalli Club in the Fairmont Hotel, Dubai, Italo Rota placed the 6.5 metre by 5.5 metre chameleon covered in 15,000 LEDs with a tongue that rolls across a heart-shaped ceiling, as the centrepiece of the club. Recalling the

challenges in installation, Chidiac says, "We had many factors to consider from heat generation to controlling 8,000 LED pins on the body, as well as maintenance issues. All we have to do now is to replace the pins without going into the body. During installation, each group of 150 lights was installed manually and after rigorous testing, Rami put together a programme that allows for the unique movement of light that you see now. We initially thought it was a dream and to see our impossible-sounding design convert to reality was truly satisfying."

The chameleon has allowed for interesting possibilities with guests at the club surrounded by a kaleidoscope of colours ranging from hot pink and green to a sparkling blue. The six zones of the club have

30,000 LED lights in addition to the acrylic custom-made LED boxes on the walls and ceilings creating the perception of never-ending walls.

Acoustic challenges

While the lighting, all controlled by Avolites lighting mixer that is placed in the compact DJ booth makes the club a visual spectacle, it posed some unique challenges for Chidiac as he designed the audio. He says, "It wasn't easy. As you can see, we have a lot of acrylic boxes on the walls and ceiling and it can affect the acoustic quality with a lot of bouncing, interference and clashing. Everyone was afraid that we would not be able to hit 120db without reverberation – but now we have happily achieved 125db with no reverberation problems even when the club is empty. The sound is so pure. When it is packed, the sound is warmer and nicer. The ceiling is also treated acoustically. There are springs to accommodate the vibrations. A similar solution was achieved for the acrylic boxes along the walls."

Choice of Meyer

Carving a club out of what was once the roof-top of the hotel was a welcome challenge for Chidiac. The venue was one of the reasons why Meyer Sound was used. Calling it the 'Rolls Royce' among the various brands in the market, Chidiac says, "Meyer was the obvious choice given the venue. We have a high ceiling with plenty of ventilation and that allows us to use the powered speakers of Meyer. I have always enjoyed working with the brand." DJ Rolland, the resident DJ and musician/composer concurs and says, "With any other brand, I would have had questions. But with Meyer, what can you say?" Chidiac said he enjoyed



Chidiac says, "It has been a joy working with the team and a creative person of the calibre of Italo Rota and converting his design to reality."

Getting the EQ right

Surrounded as we were by serious hardware in acoustics, it is easy to forget the artistry that went into creating the sound that is the same quality regardless of which area in the club you are. "I use two software technologies to test my systems," says Chidiac. "One is the EASE modeling software where generally the design process begins. While the software will tell you the

"Just having the best product is not enough. For instance, if you do not respect the design of Meyer, the sound can be a disaster"

Joe Chidiac, audio specialist, Pulse Middle East

working with DJ Rolland and his opinion was especially critical during the five days it took to achieve the EQ in all the zones given the differences in room shapes, height of ceiling, the materials used in the interiors – all causing the music to sound differently in different zones of the club.

The easy camaraderie between Chidiac and Rolland offered an inkling of the team work that made the Chameleon Club possible.

optimum coverage of a venue, it will not identify the locations. And that is where the second software comes into play – my knowhow and creativity." Chidiac reportedly makes the venue flat with a spectrum analyser which he then removes to use his ears. Chidiac says, "I walk from zone to zone, speaker by speaker to achieve the desired effect. Just having the best product is not enough. For instance, if you

Products and integrators

Suppliers: Procom Middle East (www.procom-me.com)
Design, engineering and installation: Pulse Middle East (www.pulse-me.com)
Sound: Meyer Sound (www.meyersound.com)
LED lights: Electron (www.electron.gr)
Lighting mixer: Avolites (www.avolites.com)
Live performance: Yamaha 01V audio mixer (www.yamahaproaudio.com)

do not respect the design of Meyer, the sound can be a disaster. It is like having a Ferrari and not knowing how to drive it.”

Possibly the ultimate compliment can only come from the resident DJ. Rolland says, “If I have a splitting headache after a day’s work something is wrong. If there is a delay between the monitors and the rest of the system, it would be difficult to work. For me, Joe is the best when it comes to sound – this is a perfect sound system for a club of this size.”

I may not be a sound purist, but I know a headache and true to Chidiac’ words, there was no sense of feeling heavy-headed as I stepped



out of the club. I did, however, leave the club with a promise of testing the

sound on a Thursday night when the club would be packed with people.

Creating a jaw-dropping sound system

The installation is driven by no less than 40,000W of Meyer Cabinets with a Galileo 616 processor

The main stage and DJ booth area:

Two UPA-1P compact, vented two-way enclosures. The loudspeakers feature a 12-inch cone low-frequency driver and a 3-inch-diaphragm compression driver coupled with a 100-degree horizontal by 40-degree vertical constant – Q horn installed above the DJ booth and 6 UPJ-1P that combines the advantages of self-powered systems with the placement and arraying flexibility afforded by a vari0 rotatable horn that features a 10-inch cone low frequency driver coupled with 80-degree horizontal by 50-degree vertical constant – Q horn installed above the stage area in a 2-array shape. 2700-HP subwoofers are installed on the left and right of the stage to boost and cover the area augmenting the low frequency range of the loudspeakers.

At the gates :

Four UPJ-1P Meyer Speakers in (X)

Technique Stereo Mode along with 4-floor mounted MID-sub-dual 10-inch cone driver each featuring a 2-inch voice coil and a lightweight neodymium magnet structure.

Chameleon bar:

Four UPA-1P Meyer speakers in (X) technique stereo-mode face the chameleon’s body from all four corners along with 2-floor mounted 600-HP dual 15-inch subwoofers installed behind the bar, that allows low frequency to surround the area. 12-spot speakers installed on the belly of the chameleon connected to a different audio source deliver special sound effects.

VIP lounge:

Four UPJ-1P and 2 MM-10 Miniature Woofer Meyer cabinets form a pendant from the ceiling with a U-shaped bracket employing the figure-of-eight technique. Chidiac says,

“This lounge was a challenge because of the LED installation which caused a lot of acoustic issues and arriving at an EQ that was ideal took a great deal of testing.”

Restaurant:

Four UPJ-1P and 2 MM-10 Miniature Woofer Meyer cabinets form a pendant from the ceiling with a U-shaped bracket surrounding the seating area to maintain less decibel levels at the bar. Chidiac says, “At the restaurant and the VIP areas, the sound is generally 10 decibels lower than the dance area.”

Entrance:

Four MM-4 miniature type speakers deliver special sound effects while entering the club. Chidiac says, “DJ Rolland created these special sounds that evoke the movement of a chameleon. These sounds play as guests step out of the elevator and in the restrooms.”