



Custom-designed loudspeaker enclosures have been hidden in the unlikeliest of places at Manchester's newest dining and nightlife attraction. Llanor Alleyne reports

With Panacea's architect insisting that no speakers should be visible, Adlib Audio built enclosures within the room's structural columns

In a hidden place

Like many cities across Europe, Manchester is undergoing a transformation from early 20th Century industrial hub, to trendy party town replete with exclusive venues catering to varying tastes and desires. Entering this youth-defined, changing cityscape is Panacea, a flagship venture in a planned six-

venue roll out for 29-year old party promoter and entrepreneur, Joe Akka. Designed around the concept of "pretension is out, perfection is in", Panacea is said to be a non-exclusive, sophisticated space for a contemporary, relaxed crowd.

To partner Panacea's atmosphere with its acoustics, Akka called in Adlib Audio's Andy

Dockerty to design a system with a balanced, unobtrusive sound that was visually inconspicuous. To that end, Dockerty – along with Dave Fletcher who produced all the cabinet work – set to work embedding speakers, concealing wires and coming up with unique ways to hide subs.

"The biggest issue with a restaurant or bar-based

installation is that everybody wants maximum noise but they don't not want to see a speaker," says Dockerty. "So what we had to do, because we didn't have any real height in the venue or anywhere to hide speakers, was to be clever as to how and where we put them. Consequently, all of the supporting pillars had square structural [interiors], and within

them we built all of the speaker products to fit within the pillars."

Akka to insert his own specific programs.

them to be in the first place," says Dockerty. "Part of the skill of

'Operational levels are never quite what people intended them to be in the first place; in this case we needed to do a bit more tweaking – we felt we could make it even better'

While the 33 Adlib AA615 speaker enclosures were indeed discreet and kept within the architectural design of Panacea, their sonic focus needed just as much attention. To solve that problem Dockerty and his team designed all the speaker cabinets so that the compression driver within each one could be twisted to any desired angle up to 40° in any direction, to provide smooth dispersion around the long, low-ceilinged room.

Aesthetically, Akka wanted Panacea to stay clear of the 'club' feel inherent in big, black speaker enclosures. Adlib supplied several samples of paintwork for the speaker grilles to find an exact colour match, and Dockerty catered to minute details such as ensuring there was no bagging on the grilles and using event white foam behind them.

In further homage to camouflage, Adlib had to find a nifty hiding place for the bass components: six AA15BP subs. With an architect firmly outlining what they could and couldn't do, the team took extreme but creative measures. "They excavated into the concrete in six positions around the floor, to allow the sub cabinets to fit within the floor area underneath the seating," says Dockerty. "The beauty of that is it is a powerful and discreet system." In addition to the six subs, one dual hybrid version of the sub is fitted underneath the stairs, while a single 12in sub is ensconced in the ceiling.

Panacea is divided into three audio zones – the bar, restaurant and booth seating – and these can be controlled via three BSS Soundweb Jellyfish remote controls that can be operated by the managers. Dockerty also specified a Soundweb Jellyfish controller at the DJ booth position, which is primarily for

The system is powered by Crown CE Series amplifiers, with a C-Burn MP3 system serving as a background music source. Adlib also supplied a full DJ setup, including Pioneer CDJ 1000s, Technics 1210 decks and an Allen & Heath Xone:62 mixer.

As with many custom-designed systems, some fine-tuning was necessary for Panacea after its early spring opening. "Operational levels are never quite what people intended

our company, part of the relationship with the client, is that we will pop in every now and again just to make sure they are happy with the system. In [Akka's] case, we needed to do a bit more tweaking for him. We felt we could make it even better."

Adlib Audio's work ethic has been more than appreciated by Akka who says: "The guys have been very obliging. It makes a difference when you are talking to people who care." ■■■



Where speakers are visible, they have been painted to match the décor and had their grille badging removed

Installed

AUDIO

- Adlib Audio AA615 loudspeakers
- Adlib Audio AA15BP sub-woofers
- BSS Soundweb + Jellyfish remote controllers
- Crown CE series amplifiers
- C-Burn MP3 music source
- Pioneer CD-J1000 CD players
- Technics 1210 turntables
- Allen & Heath Xone:62 mixer

www.adlibaudio.co.uk
www.allen-heath.com
www.crownaudio.com