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September



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World music live
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Singapore: MICA (P) 109/06/2008;
Malaysia PPS 1604/06/2009 (020100)

4 Series Audio Management Systems



Heard, but not seen

With architects and sound installers often at odds over interior design, Hong Kong's Toroko Restaurant adopted an 'invisible' approach to its sound system. **Tim Goodyer** reports

NEW TO THE EXCLUSIVE

Langham Place Hotel in Hong Kong's resurgent Mongkok district is the Toroko Restaurant. The lively venue offers robata-yaki grill, sushi and other authentic Japanese cuisine in a very modern and stylish setting. Committed to the highest standards, the Toroko management recognise that each and every part

of the experience plays its role in customer satisfaction. So when it came to ensuring that the sound system was on a par with the restaurant's design and service, it turned to Nick Stephens at Nexus Technologies to specify then install a suitable system.

At the heart of the Toroko experience is classic minimalist

Japanese design – as impressive as it is beautiful, but a very difficult setting to blend a sound system.

'We understood from the beginning that the whole installation had to be in harmony, not only acoustically but aesthetically as well,' Nick Stephens says. 'We chose Amina speakers as we knew that a zero visual footprint was what the client

wanted. What we didn't realise at that stage was that there were other advantages too.'

To create the ambience and deliver atmospheric audio throughout the restaurant, Nexus Technologies created a six-zone system and then located 35 30W invisible Amina plaster in-wall loudspeakers in the ceiling to service these zones. As

the name suggests, the speakers are mounted in the wall or ceiling. The process requires a plaster opening in a wall, then skimming and sanding ready for decoration. Equally simple.

The Amina speakers are provided by the use of subwoofers to reach of the system by a Crown C installation and taken care of. Plus 816A an integrated control MKP 3000 for is also a Pearl providing parallel and multiple options.

The flat panel mimics the room in traditional – such as an acoustic – microscopic solid-state ne rather than u (piston) ma Amina's impl panel is 'tuned 2mm of plas and can there as part of a invisible. Bec cause such a and the plas flexible, they layer, then th wallpaper on layer next to propagation a soffit-mount a hemispher This means s – even big op be addresse visible cabin

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Preparing robata-yaki



The restaurant's dining 'pods'



Stylish throughout – the bar

the name suggests, the Amina speakers are actually plastered into the wall or ceiling. The installation process requires them to be mounted within a plasterboard opening in a wall or ceiling, and then skimmed over with plaster ready for decoration. The process is equally simple for solid walls.

The Amina system is supported by the use of two JBL Control SB-2 subwoofers to extend the lower reach of the system and is driven by a Crown CTs 8200 eight-channel installation amplifier. Routing is taken care of by an Extron Mav Plus 816A and AMX NI-700 NetLink integrated controller, with an Extron MKP 3000 for remote control. There is also a Peavey Digitool MX 8x8, providing parallel DSP processing and multiple interface and control options.

The flat panel speaker design mimics the role of the soundboard in traditional musical instruments such as an acoustic guitar or piano – microscopic surface deflections are created through the use of solid-state neodymium exciters, rather than using a conventional (piston) magnet and cone. In Amina's implementation, the panel is 'tuned' to accept 1mm to 2mm of plaster skim on its face and can therefore be decorated as part of a wall to make them invisible. Because the vibrations cause such a small displacement and the plaster itself is relatively flexible, they pass through the skim layer, then through the paint or wallpaper on top, to excite the air layer next to the wall. From here the propagation is simple, resembling a soffit-mounted loudspeaker with a hemispherical dispersion pattern. This means that a large space – even big open-plan rooms – can be addressed without the use of visible cabinets.

At 345mm wide, 450mm long and 40mm deep the speaker units can be installed either between the stud in modern drywall in walls, or the beams in ceilings. In contrast to piston speakers, the in-wall speakers generate a diffuse soundfield that is particularly well suited to background music applications. The 'hot' and 'cold' spots associated with the cone of sound that is emitted from piston speakers are much reduced, and the detail of higher frequencies is retained.

Another benefit of this is that, as a whole space is filled with sound, the disturbing effects created by reflections for walls, ceiling and

fittings are reduced, making the system suitable for areas with hard surfaces. 'One of the benefits that really stands out is that it is almost impossible to tell where the sound is coming from,' says Mr Stephens. 'It appears to be coming from everywhere, but nowhere at the same time. It is quite apparent that this characteristic also serves to reduce problems related to acoustic reflections within the space.'

The diffuse characteristic also offers the installer more leeway. While positioning traditional speakers has to be carefully considered, and precise location required to reduce hot and cold spots the Plaster In-wall speakers offer more flexibility. They can be readily installed in the ceiling or wall with the precise location

being less relevant. This solves a multitude of issues, especially where design features or support utilities may conflict with an exact location. The loudspeakers are suited to voice reproduction as well as BGM, and the system has a Ross EAS-7560 emergency alert audio message insertion system installed, which provides switching for a fire message.

'Installation was a breeze, in fact all the holes were cut one day, and all the speakers installed the next,' Mr Stephens reports. 'My confidence in specifying this product for future jobs is certainly reinforced and I am delighted to have such a high quality showcase of the product here in Hong Kong.'

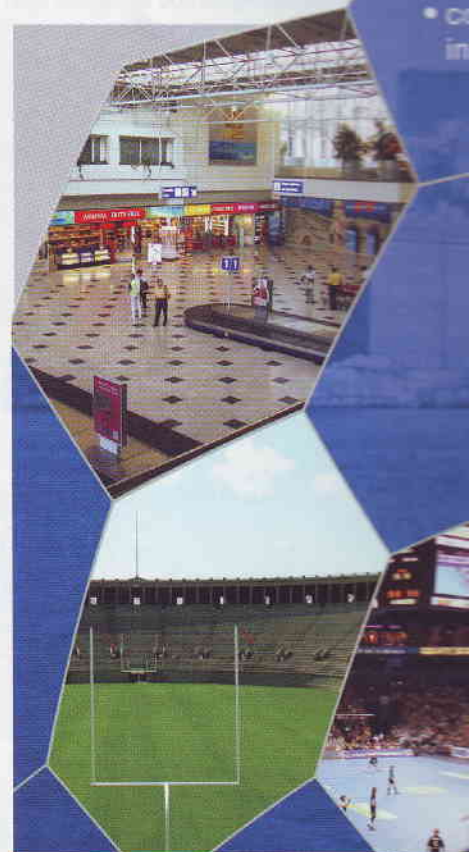
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