

LIVE SOUND

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



INSIDE

NURTURING POTENTIAL

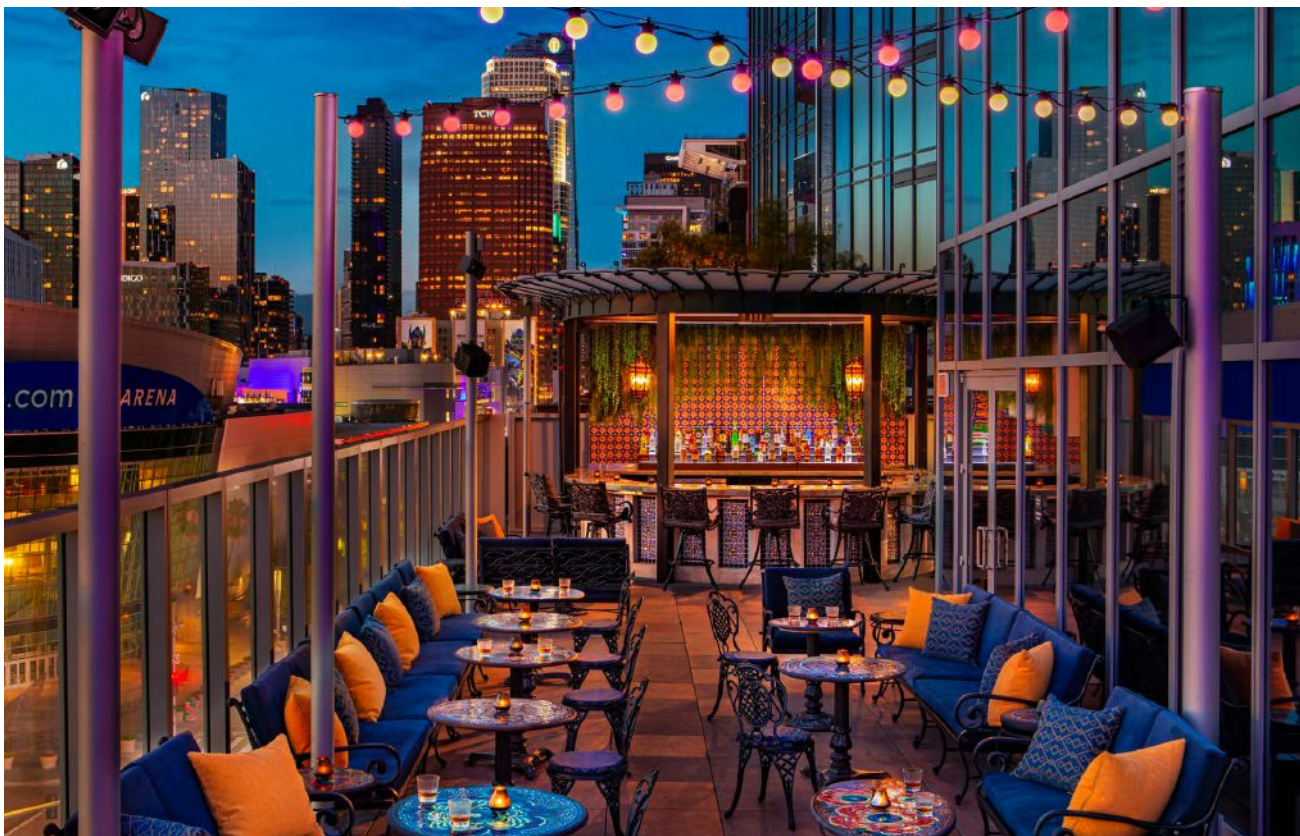
The diverse interests and pursuits of mix engineer Brandon Blackwell.

ARE UNDERPOWERED AMPLIFIERS MORE DANGEROUS TO LOUDSPEAKERS

GETTING IT DONE: AN ANATOMY OF A SMALL CORPORATE GIG

EFFECTIVE AUDIO PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING BEFORE GOING ON TOUR





The Mother of Pearl bar/restaurant outdoors at the Moxy Hotel Level 8 in Los Angeles, with sound delivered by 1 SOUND C6 compact coaxial loudspeakers.

STRAIGHTFORWARD TO UNIQUE

Inside a multifaceted sound design at the new Moxy Hotel Level 8 in L.A.

by Kevin Young

Billed as “A First-of-Its-Kind Multidimensional Showcase” with eight immersive restaurants/clubs, describing the audio design for the new Moxy Hotel Level 8 in downtown Los Angeles as ambitious is putting it mildly.

The 30,000-square-foot dining, drinking, and entertainment space is, as characterized by Jonnie Houston of Houston Hospitality, the company behind the project, “an accumulation of Mark (Jonnie’s brother and partner) and I traveling around the world... bottling up our wildest dreams of experiences that we wanted to recreate. This project was the perfect mash-up to throw it all onto one floor.”

“I’ve done numerous Moxy Hotels,” explains Angelo Poulos (CEO of Mount Vernon, NY-based designer/integrator Anthem Productions). “We started back in 2016 or 2015, and for the last three New York hotels, decided that 1 SOUND was the speaker of choice.”

About the new Level 8, however, he adds: “Was quite an undertaking. A phenomenal space, but one of the trickiest because it’s multiple venues, all right next to each other.” Located near the LA Convention Center, the project actually involved two adjoining hotels, The Moxy and AC Hotel Downtown Los Angeles, both providing access to Level 8.

With the decision made to use 1 SOUND loudspeakers exclusively, Poulos and 1 SOUND CEO and designer Lou Mannarino “put their heads together” to develop a design that would work for each location and help ensure more ideal sonic transitions between each of the spaces, particularly those inhabiting Level 8.

Poulos: “Audio is a big part of what the designer and owners focused on. They didn’t tie our hands at all. That’s rare. And

I think that should be mentioned: the care taken in terms of acoustical treatments and execution. They trusted us. They knew the outcome. They had a goal.”

“I would say almost the full line of our loudspeakers are represented in this facility,” Mannarino adds. “It’s a complex space,” he continues, featuring 180-plus 1 SOUND products powered by Powersoft amplifiers, spread across Level 8, the AC Hotel’s Lobby, La Lo La Rooftop space, AC Bar and Lounge as well as the Moxy lobby and Bar Moxy. “The Moxy and AC are separate,” he adds, “but linked. On every floor, there’s a door between the hotels, and Level 8 is accessible from both hotels.”



Sinners y Santos nightclub is served by 1 SOUND Contour CT212 (mains at the dance floor/DJ booth) and Contour CT28 loudspeakers joined by Cannon C8s (DJ monitors) and SUB215 and SUB212 subwoofers.

DIFFERENT NEEDS & GOALS

The client’s objectives were clear well beforehand, and, given the fluid communication and the history of the working relationship between all those involved, Poulos, and Mannarino, they felt confident in achieving those goals, from conception to completion and beyond. “1 SOUND supports all of our partners by being active in the design and choice of products. I did the final commissioning – I tuned every room – more than once in some cases,” Mannarino says.

In each space, the needs and goals were different, influenced by the highly individual nature of each venue and the challenges presented by some high-impact, signature design elements and the proximity of each to the next. “Given each space is connected, the transitions between the rooms – each environment had different requirements for sound – so attention to detail, sonically and aesthetically, was key.”

That required both entities to be highly responsive. “We worked hard with Jonnie, the designer. He was changing things up to two or three weeks before opening. But, because we build here, we could adjust to his needs.” That’s a core value to the partnership between the two firms and 1 SOUND’s custom shop, Mannarino says, noting multiple custom finishes are used throughout the project.

“Gold grilles on speakers, wood finishes to match the mahogany tones in Mr. Wanderlust. Some rooms are more basic. But it was interesting. It’s not typical for brands to do this, but we do custom finishes in five days. It’s become more common for our partners to ask about creative ways of making things look appropriate – with that comes the possibilities of making different moldings or stretching fabric over different substrates to create the environment.”

He describes his company’s relationship with Anthem and Poulos as “a symbiotic collaboration” – one in which each firm is willing to listen to customers and make changes to ensure the final product is precisely what’s required regardless of how far

along in the project they are. “It’s about listening, caring, working together, and communication. In the install world, speakers often get put in a plan before the building is built, whereas we’re adjusting things like colors up until a week before (opening).”

That, and tuning the systems as needed, is ongoing, a process that unfolds during the build, when it’s completed, and into the future. “We have a nightclub, a lounge, a piano bar, a steakhouse. It’s a little challenging to put that all together and ensure you’re not bleeding audio from room to room. That’s why we felt 1 SOUND would be the best selection for speakers,” Poulos says, also pointing to the Moxy’s large outdoor pool area that’s open 24/7. “There are residences right next door – big high-rises within 200 feet. So that’s when we went back to the same approach we used for the Good Time Hotel, using Tower LC44s to control the audio and keep it from spilling out of the property, which was one of the big successes of 1 SOUND in the space.”

“The reason we used the Tower Series for that is the cardioid cancellation for the neighbors,” Mannarino adds. Essentially, to get the level for DJs and other entertainment necessary for revelers without disturbing those who aren’t at the party, “so there we have LC44s and SUB310s. I created an end-fire array in the pool to keep it tidy, based on the boundaries, and it works very well.”

A PROCESS OF FINE TUNING

Level 8’s venues range widely and include relatively straightforward spaces, such as Maison Kasai, billed as an interactive dining experience from Michelin-starred chef Joshua Gil (with WSUB45i with French cleats that were hung flush higher up on the walls and C6s), and The Brown Sheep, a rooftop patio-style dining space serving “elevated street food,” with audio delivered by a combination of C5s and SUB12s.

SHOWCASE

Granted, other spaces are, to say the least, more unique. Lucky Mizu, for example, a Japanese restaurant featuring a 40-foot “Earth Harp” that Moxy’s marketing materials describe as “feeling as if you’re dining inside a music box” because the space acts as “an enormous, immersive instrument.” Among the elements there, Mannarino continues, are recessed SUB10s and C6s, for which the client’s interior design requirements necessitated custom coloring.

“The harp obviously was a challenge,” Poulos says. “Coming in, we designed what was supposed to be a Japanese restaurant. When they changed the concept to include this huge harp in the middle of the room, it was – well, we’ve never done (something like) it before. I’m sure it’s been done, but I don’t know to what scale. So we had to move speakers around, make sure the coverage was correct, and change out the subwoofers to accommodate the sound pushed out for the harp.”

Even more traditional venues like Que Barbaro, a South American restaurant with down-firing WSUB45s suspended with threaded rod and 1 SOUND C-Clamp Accessories, and C6s, required a great deal of care and feeding. “The Cannons, they’re soft on the ear and high fidelity,” Mannarino says, “and there’s an extra octave of low end in the Cannons that allows them to sound full-range in all the locations. The WSUB45 also has unique properties, in that it’s a very fast transient sub, a quick sounding sub, front-loaded, with a big round sound that’s more hi-fi and matches the Cannons extremely well.”

Another challenge he mentions was even more off the wall – in the Sinners y Santos nightclub, where they deployed Contour CT212 (mains at the dance floor/DJ booth), Contour CT28s, Cannon C8s (DJ monitors), SUB215s, and SUB2112s. “They came up with the idea of this motorized boxing ring,” Poulos says, “and I was like, OK, that sounds great, but when you’re lowering a boxing ring that’s 24 by 24 feet and comes down and covers almost the entire area it messes with all the dispersion of all your speakers, and that was one of the challenges when we started realigning, adding, and moving speakers to be able to accommodate that.”

The changes made along the way required responsiveness and agility throughout the project. “We were signed up on this project five years before doors opened,” Poulos adds. “The concept changed numerous times as the building was being constructed, and when the operator, Houston Hospitality, came in, they started tweaking more in terms of how they wanted to see each space.”

Given that time frame, he notes, “We also had new 1 SOUND products that were different from what we’d originally had in the



Piano bar, jazz lounge and late-night destination Mr. Wanderlust is outfitted with loudspeakers matching the decor courtesy of the 1 SOUND Custom Shop.



More subtly deployed Cannon C6 coaxials in Lucky Mizu, a Japanese restaurant.

design. For example, we’d originally designed Sinners y Santos with other 1 SOUND speakers, but then Lou came out with a newer model, the Contour CT212, which would be a better fit for the nightclub. Even though we designed and specified the original products, we took it upon ourselves to take on the cost of changing to something that we knew would be much better for what they were trying to do.”

AGILITY & DEXTERITY

All loudspeakers are driven by Powersoft amplifiers, and the entire complex is networked via BSS Audio HiQnet London Architect with audio signal sent throughout all 34 stories and both towers. Again, because the two hotels – The Moxy and AC – are linked so closely, Poulos explains, “We had to integrate the same control system, and to be able to do routing of the music from the lobby to the elevators to the event spaces in there.”

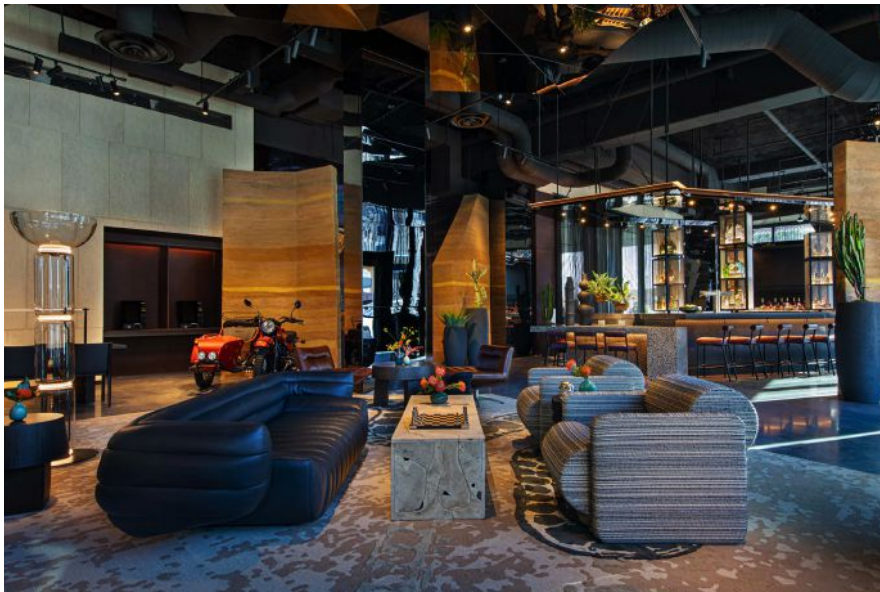
“Angelo built custom GUIs for individual areas. On Level 8, they’re all connected,” Mannarino adds. “There are remotes on the walls for each room.” There’s also significant and specific zoning for different sections. “So when you’re using the GUI on the network, you can control just about anything from it.”

Beyond the agility of the loudspeakers and user interface, the needs of this project required dexterity from both Anthem and 1 SOUND in various other ways. “The value of having one brand of loudspeakers. I mean, we didn’t do the ceiling speakers and elevators. But the value is that we, as a brand, are part of the project,” Mannarino says, citing another product that was swapped out literally the day before our call. “If something could be done better, as a brand and a partner, we want to do that – the customer, it’s of benefit to them. It’s something Angelo can do in collaboration with us.”

That’s baked in, he adds. “I tell all our partners that it’s not over when the commissioning is done and they open. We (1 SOUND and Anthem) think of these projects as a show. On a Broadway show, for example, we do touch-ups every Thursday before the weekend. It’s art, so it’s ongoing, and I think that Moxy has done something very special. It’s not ordinary – it’s not resort style, it’s authentic, high end.”

And for that, 1 SOUND’s custom shop is critical – not just to the integrator but to designers/architects as well. “We’re there from start to finish,” Mannarino says. “So, when things change, it’s not a burden on the integrator.” If a color needs to be changed, it’s changed without the integrator having to take heat from a manufacturer or contract out to have those colors changed. “Those aren’t issues with 1 SOUND – people don’t necessarily receive their equipment until they need it on site. They don’t worry that it’s not going to be there or if they’re missing something – it’s fluid,” Poulos says.

“It’s not something where we have to say, ‘You know that’s going to cost more money’ or ‘We’re going to have a three-month lead time.’ When we started tuning and seeing how the rooms were being built out, you know, there would be, say, speakers moving to wooden columns. So we ended up calling the custom shop and changing to brown-painted speakers to match the speaker to the wood color. That was done literally a week and a half before they were opening up. Three days later, it was shipped to LA, and we had it before the opening. That’s something that could never be done with another manufacturer. That’s the relationship we have with 1 SOUND. We see something we know would be better and turn it around immediately.” **LSI**



As with several other spaces, the Moxy lobby and bar lounge receive coverage from loudspeakers that blend very well into their surroundings.



1 SOUND Tower LCC44 column loudspeakers flanking the DJ booth at the Golden Hour rooftop eight stories above downtown LA.

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