



Inside Job

When it came time for a 'high-definition' reinvention, Miami's Mynt Lounge handled everything in-house

By Justin Hampton

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For now, the mirrored Traxon panels of Miami's Mynt Lounge reflect a calm and settled scene, a marked contrast from the aggressive jostling outside by the velvet ropes in front of the door. Mynt's resident DJ Julian Ingrasso is stirring the pot on three Pioneer CDJ-1000s in preparation for tonight's headliner, Hungarian "topless DJ" Niki Belucci, who's making her U.S. debut here. Anywhere else, she'd probably be the main focus, but taking center stage as the crowd gradually swells is the club's recent "high-definition" reinvention of itself. Seated across from Mynt's brand new custom video screens—six each across from each other in the Lounge's long, narrow main room, ranging in small, medium and large—General Manager Bob Jones relates

how this time around, Mynt decided to fly solo for its annual renovation, choosing to install and reorganize everything in-house. "We kind of, like, rolled the dice, [as] we thought we could really make it happen with all of our combined experience," says Jones as yet another ream of napkins flies into the air, a common phenomenon during business hours. "We didn't want to have a sound company and a light company and all of that. All of those companies are probably gonna hate us a little bit. I've worked with them all in the past, but we decided we were gonna do it on our own, and I think the effect has been incredible." Romain Zago, who co-owns the club with local surgeon Alex Desimone, masterminded the club's main design. During the pre-production process of this year's

renovation, Zago's priority was to develop a dynamic and constantly changing experience for his clientele. "[No matter] if it's one, two, three, four in the morning, there's always something new that keeps changing the club every half-hour, every hour, or even every 10 minutes, not only because the music is changing, but the scenario [as well]." The keys to realizing this goal are the video



Much of Mynt's renovation period was spent fabricating the walls on which the projection screens are mounted in a rented warehouse.

and lighting systems. Inspired by similar designs for pageants like MTV's VMAs, the Grammys, and American Idol, both systems are handled by resident VJ Bran. From his position across from the DJ booth, he operates from an impressive console of high-tech toys. Numark NuVJ, Pioneer DVDJ-1000, Edirol V-4 mixer: It's all here.

For lighting control, Mynt boasts of being the only club in South Beach running its lights from the German controller software program e:cue. "The advantage of this system is

that you can control and map many of the [system's] DMX universes at the same time, without using a media server," explains technical supervisor Pawel Rogusztzak. Controlled two apiece by a network of microservers named "butlers," Mynt's lighting design encompasses 32 DMX universes, up from last year's 26, which are all accessed and tweaked on an Elo 17-inch customizable touch-screen monitor. The club's new laser and the control the e:cue system provides over the lighting (which includes traditional stage lighting for the dancefloor divas Zago loves showcasing and Elation's versatile Vision Scans) allows Mynt to create any atmosphere it wants.

"[The e:cue] gives us a lot of opportunity to change our show immediately during the night, or to create any kind of effects that we really like and fit to our setup," says Pawel. Next door to Mynt's lighting strategy is the

club's video assault, which commandeers the main two walls of the main room. Zago credits his initial inspiration here to interior designer Gianni Ranaulo, who re-imagined the club three years earlier.

"You can put abstract images. You can put videos. You can put video clips. [But] I

'...We thought we could really make it happen with all of our combined experience,' says General Manager Bob Jones of the in-house install.

didn't think that was enough," Zago says. "I wanted to...frame them with class." From that came Mynt's projection screens, upon which eight Riki EIP-1600T DLP projectors display hi-def, specially corrected images split and resized for each screen using the Scan Converter video processor. "Our screens are not standard 16:9 ratio," says Pawel. "So the main goal was to stretch the image without losing the sharpness." These images can be augmented by the DJ using a Kaoss Pad and pulled from either DVDs or the club's own Sony web camera, an installment from last year that now feeds into the video system. And, of course, there are the frames above and below each screen, which contain 1600 Color Kinetics iFlex SL LED lighting fixtures. Much of Mynt's renovation period was spent fabricating the walls on which these screens are mounted to exacting specifica-

THINKING ABOUT A DIY INSTALL?

Consider these five tips from Mynt owner and managing partner Romain Zago

1

Know Your City Codes and Ordinances

Get all your permits, and hire a top contractor. Follow the law from A to Z.

2

Think Before You Build

Study, think, and prepare yourself for any possibility before going to construction. Perfect engineering is a result of anticipation.

3

Be Honest With Yourself

You must know your capabilities and talents. My gift is to imagine, create, and design. I wouldn't dare to design if I wasn't capable of executing a project to the highest level.

4

Have A Back-up Plan

Be sure that all key areas are covered by your staff, and have a contingency plan for all of them. Train and teach your staff to be knowledgeable in their respective areas of work.

5

Don't Get Discouraged

Never give up. There is always a solution—and it is usually simple.



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tions in a specially rented warehouse. To gauge the wall's durability, Romain developed a unique stress test: "I took a bottle of Grey Goose and I started slamming [the frames] to make sure it resists. Hopefully, no one's ever gonna take a bottle of Grey Goose and slam it. But I believe the elbow of a customer who is dancing and slams the stripe, that's good enough power to break it. So I have to make sure it's resistant enough so it doesn't."

Mynt powers the party with a Dynacord Xa sound system installed last year, which does the job well, so all that was added to the system were EAW filler speakers unobtrusively ensconced in the ceiling for minimal visual distraction. The main floor's four tops are in the corner, while the eight subs are distributed two each under the DJ booth, next to the bar and in a dancer's stage in the room's center.

As powerful as these speakers are, however, Zago insists that the system doesn't overwhelm his patrons. "It's a small club. I don't want people to go home and wake up and have a headache," he says. "[So at] Mynt, the walls are made of a special foam behind the velvet, which is fireproof, of course. And above the foam, there is a velvet that absorbs all the high-end sound that a speaker can provide."

Mynt is hardly done with its finessing. Zago promises to transform the intimate and subdued back room behind the DJ booth into a membership-only, open-format salon, and mentions a name designer with whom he's about to close a deal on the project. In the meantime, the fruits of his labor have served him well in a sagging economy, as a handpicked clientele continues to both fill the tables and dance on top of them.

"We don't have a dancefloor. I think it's passé. The dancefloor is the club itself where you can dance on the tables, you can dance on the sofas, you can dance on the floor," he says of his modus operandi. "The club business, once you're in, you've gotta forget whatever problems you have and you gotta be coming into the mood of this nightlife. You gotta be happy. You want to celebrate every hour."

In this light, Mynt Lounge delivers a textbook DIY example of how a properly integrated system can deliver an awful lot of rock around the clock.

THE SYSTEMS

Lighting

- 84 - Elation OPTI 30 par cans
- 48 - Color Kinetics iColor MR g2 LEDs
- 44 - Traxon Technologies Mirror 64PXL wash LED panel
- 32 - Color Kinetics iColor iFlex SL LEDs
- 10 - Elation Vision Scan 250 scanners
- 8 - Color Kinetics iColor Fresco digital cove lights
- 6 - Color Kinetics ColorBlast 6 wash lights
- 2 - Elation PAR64 par lights
- 2 - Martin Professional JEM ZR 24/7 hazers
- 1 - Del Lighting 120V RGB flat LED rope
- 1 - Elation Image Pro 300II Gobo projector
- 1 - LaserNet Scanner Pro laser projector

Lighting Control

- 21 - Elation CyberPak DMX dimmers
- 17 - e:Cue Butler DMX output devices
- 16 - Color Kinetics PDS60ca power supplies
- 4 - Color Kinetics iW PDS-150 power supplies
- 4 - Color Kinetics PDS-70mr power supplies
- 2 - e:Cue Butler Garage lighting controllers
- 2 - Elo 1000 Series 1715L touch screen monitors
- 2 - Netgear JFS516 ethernet switchers
- 1 - CypherLight V2.1 Laser Control software
- 1 - e:Cue Programmer v3.8 SP2 lighting control software

Sound

- 8 - EAW VR62 speakers
- 8 - Pioneer CDJ-1000MK3 CD players
- 4 - Crest CA 9 power amps
- 2 - Dynacord Xa-2 audio systems
- 2 - Electro-Voice QRX-115/75 speakers
- 2 - Pioneer DJM-800 mixers
- 2 - Shure PGX-SM58 wireless mic systems
- 1 - Biamp Audia digital audio platform
- 1 - Biamp Nexia digital audio platform
- 1 - Nexo PS8 sound system

Video

- 8 - Eiki EIP-1600T DLP projectors
- 6 - Adtec Digital Edge 1013 digital video players
- 2 - Analog Way V-SCALE VSL121 high-resolution scalers
- 1 - Canon LV-7265 LCD projector
- 1 - Crestron TPS 4000 touch panel
- 1 - Crestron AV2 audio/video control processor
- 1 - Ediol V-4 video mixer
- 1 - Korg KA0SS PAD effects processor
- 1 - Numark NuVJ software
- 1 - Pioneer DVJ-1000 DVD player