



Hammersmith Palais

Barvest's historical flagship venue gets to grips with its future.

With the notable exception of the Beatles, there have been few important British bands that haven't played at the Hammersmith Palais. A home for 70s punk rock, 80s ska and 90s dance, the Palais has been a launching pad for the UK careers of everyone from the Stones to the Strokes. The Palais' distinctively wide auditorium and flanking gallery bars have been updated with a rolling pattern of refurbishment and renovation over the years. But this has not effaced from its walls and stage the historical feel of a performance venue that has rocked, danced and rolled since 1918. The venue is intrinsic to the history of live music in the UK: The Clash paid a backhanded complement to the venue in the song '(White Man) in

Hammersmith Smith', whilst Slipknot paid their own tribute to the venue, almost burning it down during a Kerrang awards ceremony.

However, when Bar Vest's tenure began in 1999, the venue's traditional live agenda was ditched. The Palais was branded as a Po Na Na and traded purely in events and dance music. By 2002, only one live act was booked to play.

The period of rebranding seems a misnomer for Barvest. The company have demonstrated talent for operating live venues and spotting good promoters: Barvest's Foundation in Newcastle (formerly the Riverside) remains an important live venue and was for an age the home of the venerable Shindig night. In 2002 Barvest decided to resume

the live agenda at the Palais; recovering the venue's public perception as a rock n' roll and reinstating the Hammersmith Palais handle. The Palais has resumed its glory years, but Barvest's ambitions for the venue have not stopped here. A sound installation has been carried out by Mark Metcalf and Blue Box Audio to unite the venue's live, event-based and dance agenda through one very serious sounding – and looking – Funktion One system.

Instrumental to reuniting the Palais with it's warts n' all past has been Dave Gaydon, who has overseen promotion, bookings and musical direction for the company's 28 Po Na Na concerns since 1999. Gaydon began his career at Oxford's Po Na Na, promoting his Headflux night, a

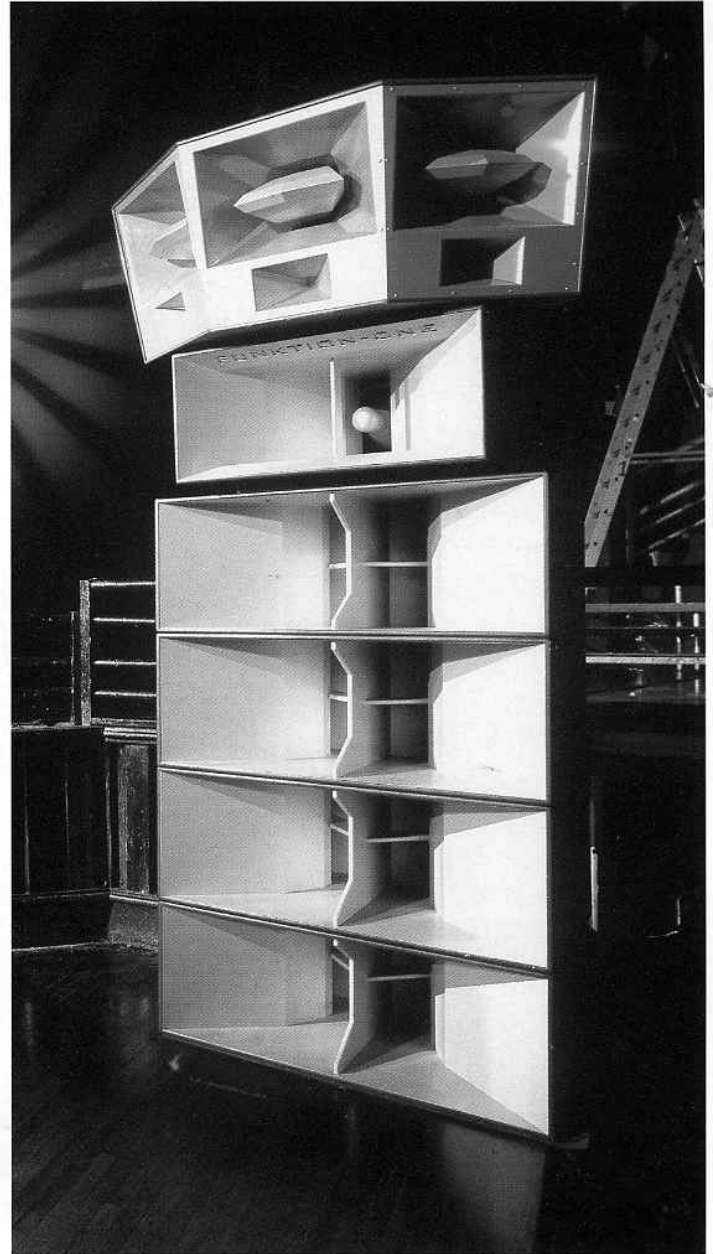
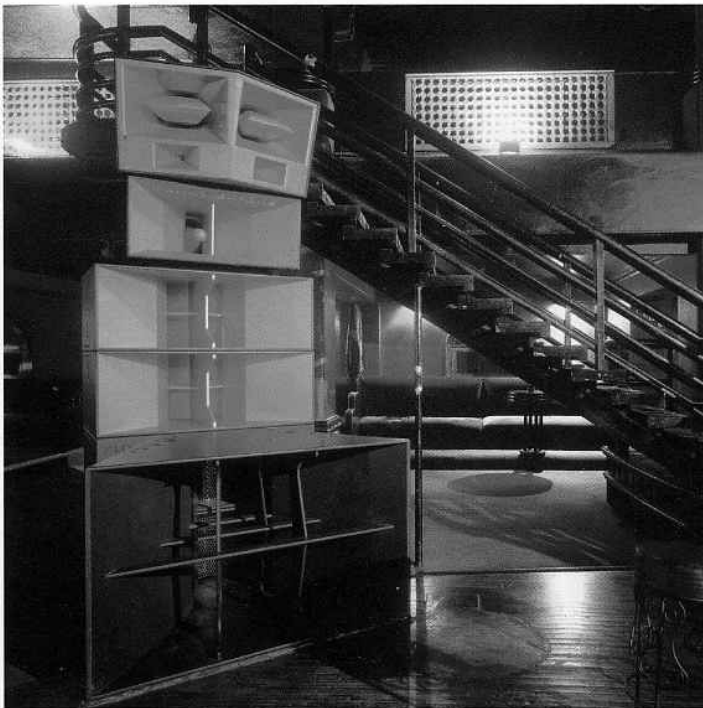
format of intimate sets from top DJs that has been a staple of the Po Na Na chain. Taking on the role of musical director for Po Na Na, Gaydon rolled the Headflux concept out at branches around the UK.

Gaydon has the necessary rock credentials. Having studied music technology at Oxford, he spent his early career as part of the electro-prog band The Egg, before coming to Barvest's attention as a successful promoter. With support from various drinks brands, enabled him to book large name acts to play intimate series of nights at Barvest venues. The bookings have been so ennumerate that Gaydon has been given a bookings assistant, and Barvest have now charged him with trouble shooting underperforming venues.

Funktion One @ Hammersmith Palais. After auditioning the Funktion One system, Mark Metcalf of Blue Box audio created a flexible Funktion One dance arrangement which can be easily dismantled and reconfigured to cater for the various roles of the venue. David Bruml explains the specially-formulated dance stacks, four of which loom imposingly at each corner of the venue.

"The Funktion-One 'dance stacks' are a state-of-the-art series of sonically and visually imposing loudspeaker systems designed specifically for the club-world. Different combinations of dance stack components can be combined to facilitate precise specification and control of bass content and mid-high dispersion. The rear stacks at The Palais include Double Infrahorns for

thick and luxurious super-low bass, twin F218s for tight and well defined bass punch. Upper-bass and low-mid speed comes from the DS15 horn-loaded 15" device. The DS210 supplies mid-range and high frequency power and definition to match the exceptional low-end combination. The front stacks comprise four F218s, 1 x DS15 and the new DS310 triple-head to meet the Palais' wide dispersion requirement. The purity of the Funktion One design approach completely avoids the usual pitfall of system EQ with its associated phase problems. This purity leads to incredible transient delivery which combined with the sheer physicality and lack of distortion of these systems provides club-goers with totally involving and pain-free musical experiences."



Returning the Palais to its roots demonstrates in microcosm Barvest's determination to get the music right across their estate, suggests Gaydon.

"With the new licensing laws coming in, we need to make sure that our point of difference is clearly stamped across the Barvest estate. Ours are commercial brands which operate six nights a week, but are not defined by drinks promotions, discounting, food or an overly cheesy atmospheres. We are defined by our music policies, which are rigorously thought out and appeal to a music-savvy audience." Barvest's portfolio of nights include a rock night for the students, dance nights, and the phenomenally successful

Schooldisco.com night, one of the longest running nights in UK club culture.

Meanwhile, the Palais has entered a new era of scheduling, simultaneously jockeying for trade and bookings with Shepherd's Bush, Ministry of Sound and the Astoria, and establishing its future success as an attractive and flexible space for promoters, corporate hire and touring acts.

Mark Metcalf of Blue Box audio enjoyed a hands-on involvement with getting the sound system right, talking the requirements through with both Gaydon, venue manager Matt Talbot, and founder of Schooldisco.com Bobby Sanchez.

As well as the dance stacks on the

main floor, a set of Funktion One Res 4s provide side fills in the gallery area, with more Res 4s in the VIP bar, supported by F-218 bass enclosures. Meanwhile the gallery bar has taken ownership of a set of F88 units and F-118 bass units. However, the focus of the refit has been placed firmly on the dance stacks, explains Metcalf.

"The dance stacks are dance oriented in design, but work exceptionally well for live. The sound delivered is flat and clean with no EQ required, and lends itself perfectly to the transition between club night and live music. We've gigged the set-up already with different sounding live acts: Katie Melleur, the Dandy Warhols, and a few reggae acts.

Katie Melleur's agent said it was one of the best sounds he'd heard."

Under the guidance of Gaydon, Talbot and Metcalf, the venue's long and distinguished history has been given the right conditions for a long and illustrious future.

CREDITS

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