



SOPHIE'S STEAKHOUSE



LONDON, UK
EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Two distinct venues housed in one building, but with one audio solution designed and installed by Diamond AV.

I'm told Soho, London, UK has changed as a location over the last 10 years by Guy Ayres. Technical Director of Diamond AV, an audiovisual design company, Guy has been working in the London nightlife scene for more than 15 years. He made the comment in reference to one of his latest projects, Sophie's Steakhouse - the second outlet of the same name, with the original based in Fulham Road, Chelsea (a previous second restaurant had been opened in Convent Garden, but was taken back by the landlord to be turned into a boutique hotel). The changes come in the form of offices and residencies that didn't tend to populate the area before. So, now when it comes to opening a new entertainment venue, acoustics, sound leakage and noise control are all key factors, meaning equipment choice



• Above Sophie's Steakhouse is accessible at street level and boasts 21 NEXO ID24 cabinets for even coverage across the entire restaurant.

is paramount. In this case, Guy selected NEXO for the job. Sophie's in Soho is located inside an old cinema complex, which is still evident today through the original ceiling, which includes exposed pipework and lighting grids. The building was stripped back to the bare shell when acquired by Sophie's owners, Rupert Power and Sophie Bathgate, and they built it back to what you see today. At street level is the steakhouse, a light and airy space with a chandelier bar and an open kitchen. Rupert and Sophie pride themselves on providing great food, great drinks and great fun - with the former sourced from British suppliers. It's a welcoming atmosphere from day to night, and even has its own private dining room for that extra special occasion.

Using NEXO's NS-1 system configuration software, Guy plotted the loudspeaker placement, taking into account the high ceiling and the glass front of the building. The software also allowed Guy to calculate the risk of noise pollution, to ensure the sound system would not disturb the neighbouring hotel and offices above the restaurant. "Ahead of finishing the design, the landlords brought in their own acoustic consultant to take measurements. We had been given frequencies to work within and we would never break those guidelines. There was one anomaly that cropped up in their report, but it turned out to be noise from an extractor fan! "We use always the right products for the job," he explained. "It just happens that NEXO has, over the last year, been

meeting a very high percentage of our briefs, predominantly with the ID Series. The ID Series is a very aesthetically pleasing box as loudspeaker boxes go. It's a good size and it's a good specification. For this project, it met our audio needs and helped with the design needs, too." A total of 21 ID24 cabinets in white are installed across the restaurant floor. "Even though they are positioned three-metres above the restaurant floor, the dispersion is excellent and, because we can angle them, we can have more control," Guy continued. For example, zoning in the restaurant is done by speaker location. The ID24's aim over and across the central island bar, so that staff are not impacted by high volumes, and there are corner tables with lower SPL. "Because of the number of loudspeakers



in the space, 21 in all, you never have to turn them up too loud.”

The ID24 is tailored specifically for the installation environment. It is a full-range speaker using twin four-inch drivers in a V formation in combination with an HF compression driver. It has a unique user-adjustable horn, easily rotatable without tools by a switch on the rear panel, giving 60° or 120° high frequency coverage. This allows high frequency horizontal dispersion to be ‘tuned’ for the given application. As the ID24 can be mounted vertically or horizontally using a range of fixing options, this effectively gives the user four different directivity options in each cabinet.

Downstairs in the basement is Sophie’s companion, speakeasy lounge bar, Jack Solomons. Taking its name from a boxing gym - and its promoter - that was located in the building during the 1940’s and 50’s, the bar harks back to classic Soho and adds a dose of old school glamour - in complete contrast, yet still harmonious with upstairs. The entrance to Jack Solomons is quite well hidden from street level though, so it’s one of those outlets that you have to know is there, and you need to know the right place to knock to gain entry. The main bar oozes plush furnishing of leather and velvet and houses a full stocked bar specialising in whisky and cocktails. Adjacent, through a set of doors, which are generally propped open when the bar is in operation is a dancefloor, where guests can dance the night away to live bands and DJ performances. During the daytime, the venue doubles up as an event space, hosting conferences and small tradeshows, too.

The main bar at Jack Solomons houses more ID24’s, eight in total and in their traditional black. “Downstairs is set up for a more clubby feeling. So, we added a couple of NEXO ISS110e bass bins flown from the lighting grid which runs round the perimeter of the space.” The dancefloor area is home to another four ID 24’s and a single ISS110e subwoofer. A loudspeaker system so small that it has baffled visiting DJs. “Until they hear the output of these little NEXOs,” said Guy. “There is more than enough SPL for them to play with, and it was important to the venue owners that the aesthetic was maintained throughout all the discrete spaces.”

The sound system across the two floors is powered by just three NEXO DTD1.3 amplified controllers, while processing goes through a BSS Soundweb London BLU-100 DSP before it reaches the NEXO controllers, followed by the loudspeakers. “The secret is that the ID24 cabinets are 16 ohms, which is a godsend. Using these 16 ohm units in conjunction with the new DTD1.3 amplifiers allows me to get maximum use of the processing - the whole system runs on just three amplifiers.” Simple volume controls -

three BSS Soundweb London BLU-3 wall controllers - were also put in place so that even staff are able to operate the levels. The music levels are taken very seriously, so it needed to be easily adjustable to obtain the right mood at any given time. All three areas of this venue are individually controllable due to the distinct set-up of each.

Having been introduced to Sophie’s owners via The Inception Group - a London-based hospitality group that Guy has worked a lot with over the years - it was refreshing to see Rupert and Sophie taken on a similar approach to the group, giving Guy and his team, which also included Sales Director, Dave Crane, a free reign when it came to design. Obviously, everything was approved, but in terms of determining the best product for the job, Guy used his expertise and presented his findings. “I’ve installed so many of these that customers refer to them as ‘Guy’s speakers!’” he said. “Sound quality is what you’d expect from a NEXO badge, but reliability is also very impressive. I am able to promise the team at Sophie’s that they’ll never see me again, because this system will run and run and run.”

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SOUND

33 x NEXO ID24 loudspeaker; 3 x NEXO ISS110e subwoofer; 3 x NEXO DTD1.3 amplified controller; 1 x BSS Soundweb London BLU-100 DSP; 3 x BSS Soundweb London BLU-3 wall controller; 2 x Pioneer CDJ-2000 NXS2 multiplayer; 1 x Pioneer DJM-750 mixer

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