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PLATFORM ONE

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MELBOURNE / AUSTRALIA

An iconic Melbourne institution receives a major upgrade with the installation of a NEXO audio system.



Melbourne's Platform One nightclub has been a mainstay of the city's scene for over 20 years and has played host to some of the world's biggest names in dance music and entertainment. With a cultural and historically significant background, the venue has carved itself as a stronghold among Melbourne's premier event space offerings.

Housed in the iconic Banana Alley Vaults, Platform One is comprised of two long, domed tunnels which stretch over 65m from Flinders St. to the Yarra River.

The Banana Alley Vaults were first constructed in 1892 and were used primarily by local fruit merchants, who rented them for fruit storage. The name 'Banana Alley' was coined after merchants began storing and ripening Bananas onsite before they were taken to market. By the late 1980s, the vaults had all been put up for lease and began serving a variety of retail purposes. In 2001, vaults 7 and 8 underwent a major interior conversion – and Platform One was born.

Since opening its doors, the venue has seen countless internationally acclaimed musicians and DJs grace its multiple dancefloors. The nightclub's close proximity to public transport and a unique underground aesthetic has made it one of Melbourne's most sought-after event spaces for almost 20 years, and in August 2019

it underwent a series of extensive renovations. The multimillion-dollar upgrade includes a completely new air conditioning system, a multitude of new fixtures, internal structural changes, the addition of an addressable venue-wide LED lighting system – over 3km in length, and a complete overhaul of the primary sound system in both the main room and side rooms.

After exhaustive listening tests comparing multiple high-end loudspeaker brands within the venue space, NEXO's latest P+ series was chosen for its compelling balance of pristine sonic performance, weight and physical footprint. Working with Concert Audio Visual, one of Melbourne's premier DJ and audio visual retailers, a scope of P8, P10, P12, L15 and MSUB18 systems from NEXO – supplied by Group Technologies Australasia – was installed throughout the venue.

"We performed two separate on-site demonstrations of a number of different brands for the customer to compare," said Joe Sofo, Director, Concert Audio Visual. "In their eyes, the only true way to choose the right system for their venue was to hear each brand side by side in the venue and A/B their selection of boxes. This way we could not only get the most comprehensive testing for sound, but also judge the size and styling of each speaker cabinet in

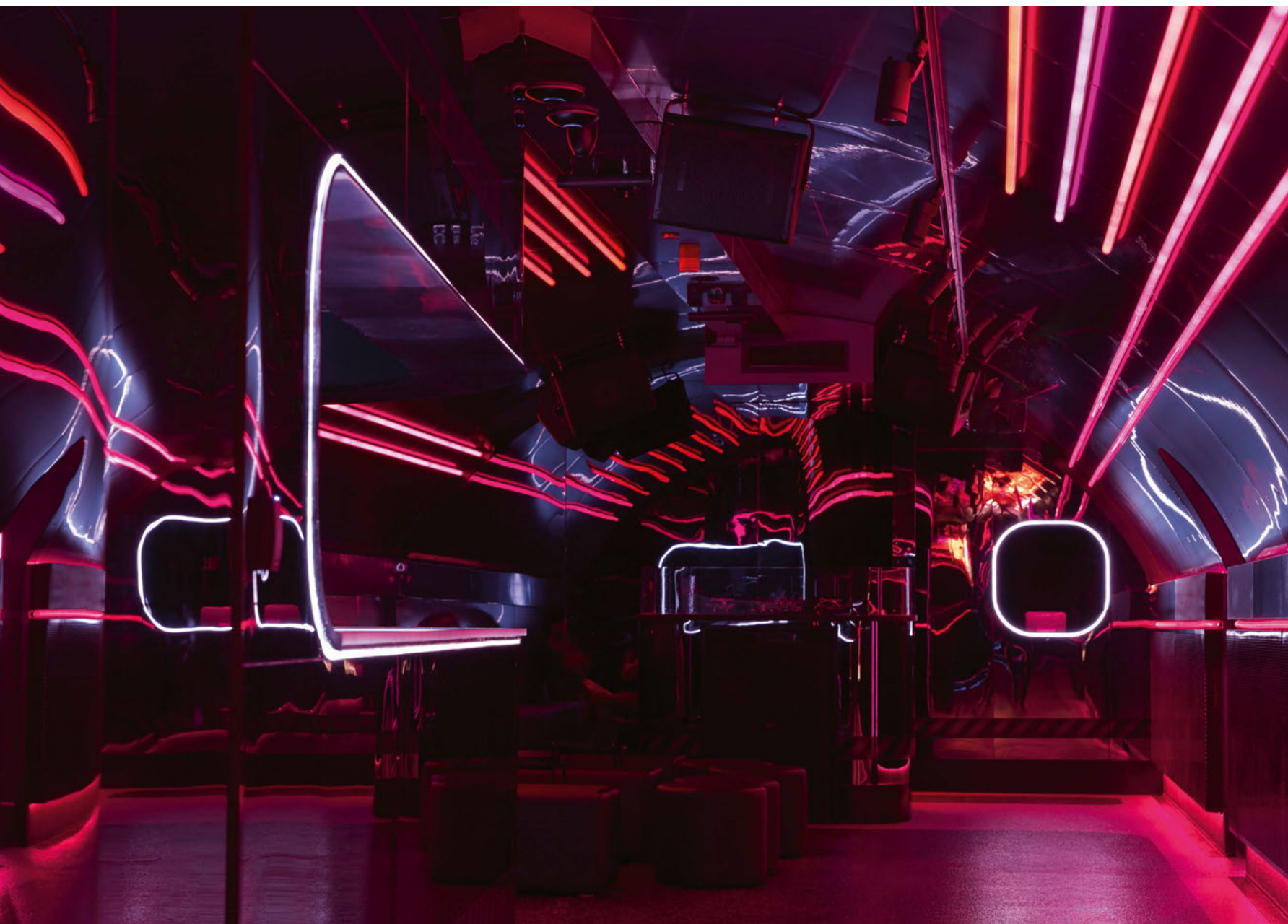
the venue and look at the positions that they will ultimately end up in.” NEXO’s P+ series offers a refined combination of heritage and contemporary design engineering in a range of powerful, compact two-way coaxial speaker systems. Completely designed and manufactured in France, P+ is NEXO’s most recent addition to a set of pioneering technologies in sound reinforcement, that has seen the company become a favourite of installers and production companies for over three decades.

The P+ range’s sleek look and sound quality make them a perfect solution for club audio, while their compact nature and scalability lend advantage to installers faced with tricky architecture such as Platform One’s uniquely shaped rooms and curved ceilings. While the famous tunnels are an iconic feature of Melbourne’s heritage, they are also acoustically hostile with regards to professional sound reinforcement applications. “Aesthetically, the venue is gorgeous and a beautiful example of what a lot of time and money can do to a concrete bunker,” continued Sofo. “However, it is an extremely difficult room with regards to getting good sound. The combination of alucobond ceilings, curved/

dome ceilings, only 3m of ceiling height, a mass of aircon and cable ducts to avoid, hard carbonate flooring and basically no soft surfaces, proved very difficult.

“Facing that challenge we used precise positioning and angles to create a smooth and consistent sound throughout the entire venue. We also used the 40m long tunnel to our advantage when coupling subs and channelling low energy with some amazing results, 47m from the stage.” The advanced technology underpinning the NXAMPMK2, NEXO’s amplifier/controller combination hardware, was engineered to overcome precisely these kinds of hurdles. Combining multi-channel, high powered, networkable amplification with sophisticated loudspeaker processing and control, the NXAMPs work in tandem with the P+ series loudspeakers to deliver a tailored audio experience that is nothing short of world-class.

“The system installation went in seamlessly,” said Sofo. “Quick and easy but spread over a number of months to cater for other trades. Cabling was first to be installed over a few days, then speaker brackets went in while the rest of the trades finished. Finally, the speaker cab install took

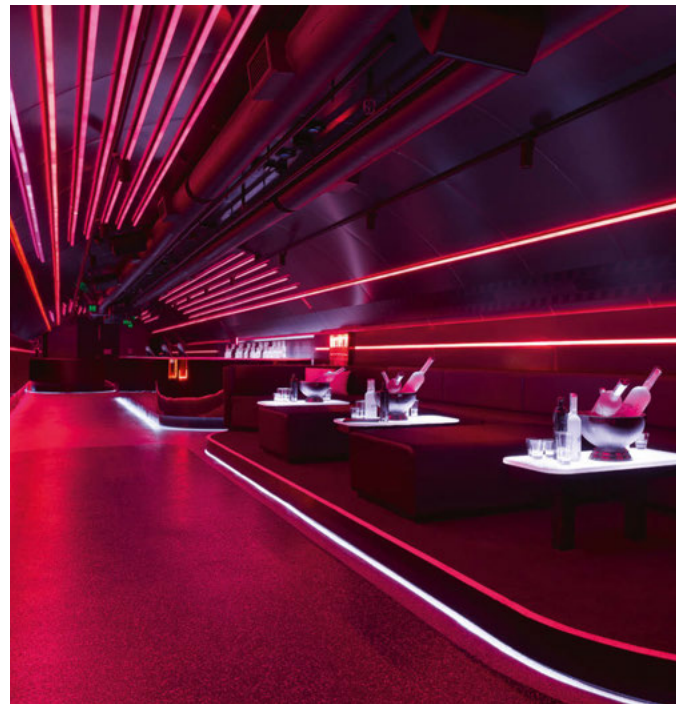


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Left and right:
Platform One is
now capable of
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a few days and another day for commissioning. We spent some time on tuning with the client to ensure they had a few presets for different music genres, and they're now extensively happy with the result.” Engaged in renovations throughout 2020 and the ensuing Covid-19 crisis, management and crew were determined to emerge from Melbourne's dormant period with a nightclub that would rival even the most distinguished international venues. Borce Kajmakoski, Co-Owner of Platform One, says the intention behind the upgrade was to take an already-iconic venue and elevate it to a higher tier. “It was a great venue, but now it's a superclub,” said Kajmakoski. “We were aiming for a sleek, high-line experience and one which also gives an impression of exclusivity. The new lighting and fixtures go a long way in helping establish that feeling, but we also needed to make sure the club audio had the same kind of wow-factor. We feel the NEXO system is certainly up to the task.” Adding to the P10, P12 and subwoofers making up the FOH system, are additional P12s placed as DJ monitors and an ID24 system in the VIP area. NEXO's immersive audio-oriented line, the ID series, was chosen for its ability to deliver full range audio in a super-compact format, well suited to the venue's private booth. Platform One's lustrous new retro-futuristic looks extend into its three rooms, now capable of accommodating over 680 guests. Originally





designed around a neon pink and orange theme, the venue walls can be re-skinned with any colour scheme imaginable thanks to cascading rows of fully addressable LED strips.

"We have 3km worth of 144 pixel per metre RGBW LED strip lights, fully pixel mapped and controllable across the whole club," said Kajmakoski. "It has really taken the club to a new level of uniqueness as you don't see this in many venues around the world, and the control we have with all the LED lights is just second to none."

The LED strips run over 250 universes of Artnet channels for control; there are banks of four-universe Artnet Controllers and power supplies in six custom purpose-built enclosures around the venue, which serves the purpose of cooling, data and cable management, and visual monitoring of the system. After installation was complete, the team spent three months building Advanced Maps in Resolume, ensuring all IP Addresses and Alignment was perfect. The LED Strip is controlled by six high-spec custom-built PCs, each running Resolume Arena with 8K Advanced outputs for full control of each Pixel. Due to the high data rates, a 10 and 40 gigabit network has been installed to manage the backend.

The Main Room DJ Booth is wrapped in 2.5mm Flexible Magnetic LED Screen to display Artist and Club content. The screen is curved outward to follow the theme of the curved tunnels.

Lighting is controlled off its own separate network with a purpose-built rack for all data transmission. Lighting

is run off an MA Lighting grandMA3 OnPC Artnet Node running in Mode2 to ensure the technicians have full and uninterrupted control over all the rooms. This customisable nature extends to the venue audio, where each room can be run as an independent zone or combined from a single source.

"When we are hosting our own regular nights here, the main room will play pop and RnB, and the side room will play house music," Kajmakoski commented. "We are excited to resurrect 'P1 Saturdays'- which was one of Melbourne's biggest regular club events around 2006, along with 'Infusion' which was also running here at the time.

"I have fond memories of Platform One having a great sound system at that time, but standards in audio technology are a lot higher now, and we felt that going for something state-of-the-art, like the P+ series, was the most appropriate choice.

"We needed something that would be suitable for both DJs and live performances, and the P+ series has enough muscle and clarity to cover both."

With the ability to not only excel at the DJ-oriented events that are a mainstay for Platform One, but also deliver enough power for contemporary live music performances, the P+ series reflects NEXO's recent focus on innovative, multipurpose audio solutions. Armed with a major facelift and the sonic excellence of NEXO, it would be hard to argue with Platform One being called one of the best nightclub spaces in Melbourne right now. ■

Above: The LED Strip is controlled by six high-spec custom-built PCs, each running Resolume Arena.