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# A Tale Of Two Crobars

New York and Chicago each have their own style

► By John Landers

► Photos by Kristina Colovic and Mike Rosley



New York

Kristina Colovic

While the three-branch crobar franchise (newbie New York, Chicago's original, and middle child Miami) might thrive on branding, the clubs themselves couldn't be more different. The same goes for their lighting systems, the newest two of which sprung from the brain of LA-based designer Steve Lieberman.

New York's grand opening on December 12, 2003, and Chicago's equally lavish re-opening (which revealed a top-to-bottom renovation) on October 25 of the same year posed a huge logistical and creative challenge for Lieberman, founder of LA-based one-man-show SJ Lighting (past projects include Moda Cleveland and Ice Las Vegas). New York was a 20,000-square-foot monster that took almost a year to complete, with the comparatively small but equally involved Chicago project running at the same time. And apart from a shared use of Martin Professional fixtures, these twins were definitely fraternal: "They're two totally different designs. They don't resemble each other at all," Lieberman maintains. "Like, zero."

A half-year after the claustrophobically close openings, we asked Lieberman and the two men he entrusted with his babies – LDs Michael David (New York) and Jim Goodall (Chicago) – to assess the design and installation process, and the nightly operation of two of clubland's most high-profile light rigs.

"I can always look back at any project, take it apart, and find things that I could've done better, or different," says Lieberman. "Sometimes, though, you just need to realize that the job is done. And it looks good."

[www.crobar.com](http://www.crobar.com)

The LD's speak.

## New York: Mike D

Using height, light, and simplicity to make the big room shine.

Michael David, known in the annals of New York club history as Mike D, has one of the best jobs in this business. As LD for crobar New York, he controls an enormous, one-of-a-kind lighting system, which is fitting since he was also at the helm of similarly elaborate rigs at Palladium, Roxy, and Tunnel.

David makes good use of the crobar system's unusual, multi-"pod" design. "Each lighting fixture is on its own, separate motor. That gives it a lot of flexibility, as opposed to having straight trussing," he notes. "I like the individual control."

Being able to raise and lower the system's major components is particularly useful in a cavernous club like crobar. "It can create a lot of different dimensions in the room itself," David remarks. "For example, if the room's thinning out, you keep the lights low. We have a mezzanine area, and

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## Chicago: Jim Goodall

Keeping the energy up with a mix of old and new.

Jim Goodall was one of the riggers on the crobar Chicago lighting installation. Since then, he's been promoted to lighting director, then overall technical director of the Illinois superclub. "We do it bigger, better, and faster up here," he boasts.

Since he's been there from the beginning, Goodall knows crobar's lighting inside and out – and he's usually the man at the controls. "Crobar really wants to be consistent, so I run

lights pretty much every night," he says. Goodall confesses that his life revolves around the nightclub. "I live, eat, and work out all within a block of it," he remarks with a laugh. "It's really sad."

Goodall believes that

the system's high energy-to-square-foot ratio is largely due to the selection of Martin Professional fixtures.

"When Steve originally spec-ed out the system, we were supposed to have MAC 550's. We ended up going to the **MAC 250 Entour** because

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Chicago



Mike Rosley

## STEVE SAYS...

## NEW YORK

## CHICAGO

## SIZE MATTERS

Massive. It's a big room, about 19,000 square feet, with high ceilings and a pretty substantial dancefloor.

About 8,000 square feet total. The dancefloor in New York alone is probably three times the size.

## TIME LINE

We started designing New York first, in early 2003. It took about a year. Halfway through that process, we started working on Chicago.

We actually installed Chicago first, because we didn't have as many problems. It was a little hectic, but we got it done in about six months.

## CREATIVE PROCESS

The lighting design was more of an evolution. We had to massage it into place.

I popped out of bed at three o'clock in the morning with a little light bulb going off over my head. "Oh, shit! I've got it!" I went upstairs and CAD-ed it out all night long.

## INSPIRATION VS. INSTALLATION

By the time New York was done, I was probably somewhere between eight and 10 revisions.

At least 90% of the original design became reality.

## CENTER OF ATTENTION

We put in the first 10-watt copper bromide laser from Laser Net in Miami. It's got two fiber optics heads. It's awesome.

The eye-catcher in Chicago is the trussing. It looks like a rib cage.

## FINISHED PRODUCT

It features eight, three-foot diameter pods – pieces of pipe welded into the shape of an octagon. The pods are flown from high-speed chain motors, so they can fly up and down. On the bottom of each one is a moving light, a PAR, and a strobe, and around the perimeter are one-foot pieces of Color Kinetics iCove LED strip. If you turn all of the lights off except for the LEDs, it looks like an alien ship landing on your head.

The trussing really defines the lighting system. It's a 30-foot spine, and off of that spine are six curved ribs. What's cool is, the dancefloor goes off at 20° or so when you come into the room. We made the truss go along that line of the dancefloor. When you walk into the club, you get a nice, asymmetric view of the whole system, rather than looking at it straight on.

## WORD OF THE DAY

Mobile.

Fixed.

## CONTROL FREAKS

I got to pick the console I wanted, so we put in a grandMA Light. The MA line, as of right now, is probably the most powerful console available on the market. It's got a five-year head start on everybody else. There are other great controllers out there, but the software just isn't as far along.

They already owned a nice console – a Flying Pig Systems Hog 1000. It needed a little work, so we tuned it up.

## FIXTURE MIXTURE

**Coemar iSpot 150:** For a 150-watt unit, they were nice, bright, and lightweight. They got the job done at the right price.

**Martin Professional MAC 2000 Profile:** Super bright. Great optics.

**Martin Professional MAC 600:** That's the moving head wash fixture.

**CITC Snow machines:** They're DMX-controlled, so you just hit a button on the console and it snows. You can actually adjust the size of the flake.

**Martin Professional Atomic 3000 strobes:** Very epileptic.

**Martin Professional MAC 250 Krypton and Entour:** The Kryptons are in the VIP. The Entour is in the same class, but with an extra gobo wheel. Since it's the main instrument in Chicago, we wanted to get even more effects out of it.

## OPENING NIGHT

The night before opening. [LD] Michael David and I were there until six in the morning. I went back to the hotel, but I couldn't sleep, because there were still things that needed to be done for the grand opening. I showered, returned to the club, and finished dialing things in.

The worst problem in Chicago was that my dimmers weren't operational for opening night. We needed a critical item shipped from the manufacturer. Fortunately, the system is substantial enough that most people didn't realize it until the second night, when we were finally able to turn those fixtures on.

## FOR \$20,000 MORE

Instead of the grandMA Light, maybe I would've gone with the full grandMA, but that's just the prima donna in me.

I would've loved to put in a bigger console, but the job didn't demand it. I would've liked to see some motors to hoist up the system, but again, that wasn't necessary. It would've been nice from a service aspect, but they own a lift. It would've been just pissing money out the window.

## NEW YORK

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there's no need for the people on the dancefloor to think that there's no one up there."

David also enjoys working with the variety of instruments. "We have stationary fixtures and moving fixtures," he explains, as well as a nice mix of washes and spots. "We have the Martin Professional MAC 250 Kryptons between the balcony and the main floor. The MAC 2000 Profiles are on the pods, along with the MAC 600s. We also have four MAC 2000 Profiles and two MAC 600s on opposite sides of the dancefloor."

Unlike some LDs, David isn't afraid to use soft-edge fixtures during prime time. "When the room is really filled up, it's good to stay on the dark side, but there are highlights in certain tracks where you can light up the room really well," he says. "The hard edge is more of a visual effect, because they have the gobos in them - they bounce around and rotate - as opposed to the soft edge, where you get a full view of the room as it sweeps around."

David also appreciates the system's grandMA controller. "It's a lot simpler once you get the hang of it," he maintains. "I like the Hog - I used it for a number of years - but the grandMA is just easier." The powerful controller also makes it easy to adapt the system for special events or private parties. "We have stage lighting already set up on the catwalk and on the trusses. With the grandMA, you can have everything focused on stage in just two cues," he adds. "When we have corporate events, the fixtures are pretty much on top of where they set the tables, so it's just a matter of adjusting the irises to fit."

Despite all of the advanced lighting technology in crobar's system, David still values simple, classic effects like the nightclub's four-foot mirrorball. "That's usually the staple. As an operator, that's how I open and close," he says. "With a mirrorball." ○

## CHICAGO

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we needed something more compact and lightweight. We have relatively low

ceilings for a big club, and the truss design brings the fixtures even lower towards the dancefloor. The MAC 250's have been excellent. We've had very few problems.

"We've got eight **Atomic 3000 strobes**, all with the **Atomic Colors** with custom gel strings. We replaced the standard gels with more saturated colors, which gives them a similar palette as the Entours.

"Actually, my favorite element is the classic **High End Systems Emulators**. We were able to incorporate the control of those into the **Flying Pig Hog 1000**. The piece of hardware that did that was absolutely incredible. It's one of the best pieces of equipment we've got. I was very happy to put the old Emulator controller up on the shelf.

"We inherited the Hog 1000 from crobar Miami. It controls everything in the club, and it's a workhorse. It puts everything at your fingertips. It's accurate and instantaneous. We don't think of it as old school; it's exactly what we need." ○

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