

Playhouse Hollywood Equipped with Versatile Truss, Lighting Fixtures

HOLLYWOOD, CA — When Los Angeles' mega-club Playhouse held its soft opening, the crowd converged on Hollywood Blvd. was large enough to warrant intervention from the LA Police Department — one measure of the buzz surrounding the new \$6 million venue.

Rob Vinokur and Elie Samaha of Muse Lifestyle Group opened the club, putting Playhouse in the same league with a roster of clubs that includes Roxbury, Tantra, NineThirty, The Backyard, Shelter, Chaos and Sunset Room, among others.

Playhouse occupies Hollywood's Fox Theater building, which was renovated by design firm ICRAVE. The club occupies 13,000 sq. ft. on three levels and includes four bars, a VIP section, and some trademark attractions such as aerialist bartenders and waitresses who leap onto overhead trapezes and give circus-style performances.

Since it opened, the club has drawn such well-known guests as Paris Hilton, Ryan Seacrest, Lindsay Lohan and Lamar Odom. But from the beginning, Vinokur and Samaha were committed to creating a multi-purpose venue, not just a trendy nightclub.

"They wanted Playhouse to be part nightclub, part live entertainment spot, and also be able to accommodate corporate events," said Stephen Lieberman of SJ Lighting Inc., which designed the building's lighting system.

Playhouse's diverse range of functions called for lighting that could be versatile, Lieberman pointed out. "The system really needed to be like a 'black box,' where any client could come in and make the space whatever they

wanted it to be. At the same time, it had to have a great deal of design appeal."

To provide this combination of versatility and style, Lieberman went with a truss-based lighting system, built around Design Spot 300 Pro 300-watt intelligent moving heads from Elation Professional. A total of 22 Design Spot 300 Pros are installed on trussing with chain motors throughout various sections of the club.

Over the dance floor, for example, there are four 6-foot pieces of truss, each holding two Design Spots. The motorized system allows the fixtures to be pulled up or down and moved around, depending on what type of lighting is required for a particular event or evening.

The truss itself is powder-coated in black so as to be inconspicuous. "We did our best to make the trussing and equipment disappear into the black ceiling," said Lieberman. "When you pull them down, you don't see a big silver piece of truss floating in the air. We want the effect you see to be the light beam itself and not have your eye drawn to the equipment."

The Design Spot 300 Pro's built-in wireless DMX receiver is another factor that keeps the gear unobtrusive. "One of the Design Spot 300 Pro's big selling points is its wireless DMX capability," said Lieberman. "It was nice not having to run cable back to the DJ booth. We just put one of Elation's EWDMXT wireless transmitters in the booth, and it sends a signal to all of the fixtures' wireless receivers. We have not seen single glitch in the wireless system," he said.

In addition to wireless DMX, the Design Spot 300 Pro has CMY color mixing, an Iris and a motorized Zoom, adding to its versatility.

"The Zoom is a nice feature to have for the club's many special events," said Lieberman. Additionally, there's a Variable Frost feature that can be applied to the Design Spot's hard-edge beam to make it softer and more diffuse, allowing it to do double-duty as a wash fixture.

Design Spot 300 Pros are also used in Playhouse's main bar area off the dance floor, where they help "tie the two sections of the room together." In the bar, Lieberman designed four custom pipe structures to hold the lighting, each of which supports one Design Spot 300 Pro and three Opti Tri Pars, a high-output RGB LED par can also from Elation Professional.

Featuring Elation's Tri-Color LED technology, the Opti Tri Par is powered by 18 3-watt LED lamps, each containing three different-color 1-watt LEDs — red, green and blue — for smoother color-mixing and to eliminate multi-color shadows around illuminated objects.

There's a dance platform above the bottle display in the bar, and the Opti Tri Pars are used to "light performers in that environment," said Lieberman. "Those fixtures have a 25° beam angle, which covers the dancers perfectly and gives a nice, saturated wash in that area." A compact version of the Opti Tri Par, the Opti Tri 30, is mounted inside each piece of trussing to add color as a truss toner.

Lieberman also turned to Elation for the



The truss-mounted fixtures from Elation Professional can change the vibe of the venue from a wild nightclub feel to a more buttoned-down corporate look.

low-resolution LED video screen that sits behind Playhouse's main stage. He used Elation's EVLED 256 37mm LED video panels to construct the screen, which "provides a great backdrop" for DJs and live music performers alike.

The semi-transparent screen "offers good backlighting detail and gives a lot of eye candy to the audience. It really helps push the performers out into the room and creates a 3D look on the stage," Lieberman said.

After working on the Playhouse project for three years, Lieberman said his company "ultimately came up with a system that we feel is as versatile as possible for the different things they were trying to accomplish inside this venue." As far as Playhouse's management is concerned, he added, "I think the owners are ecstatic with the system."

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