





The first of two London venues in this issue offering a new kind of clubbing for the capital: Ben Watt's Cherry Jam has just about everything but the logo...

Discovered by Alan after 18 months spent scouring venues from East London to Kensington, the 200 capacity Cherry Jam is arranged over two floors with split level basement, on Porchester Road, Royal Oak.

Powell Tuck Associates were brought in to design the venue.

Julian Powell Tuck explains: "It was Ben Watt who introduced us to the development team for this new venue - we had already designed his house and studio, and we've got a history of working within the music business. We understand sound and architecture". The site was a restaurant of dubious reputation with a 2.00am entertainment licence in a run-down terrace. The designer's role on a very tight budget was to design a 'friendly club for people who want to enjoy great music'.

Part of Powell Tuck's task was to increase capacity in the premises, which they achieved by adding a bar and performance area in the basement, with a back-up kitchen and WCs on the ground floor. "Our main concern was sound isolation to keep escaping sound to a minimum", comments Julian, "as people lived immediately above and behind the premises". Escaping people was also a key factor for a potentially heaving basement space.

The design is simple and robust both to achieve the budget, and also to respond to the brief to make a no fuss music venue. Major structural and ground work was carried out by main contractors Fileturn Ltd. Specialist acoustic wall and ceiling linings were constructed, and an independent ceiling built on its own steel structure was isolated from the remainder of the building with rubber shock mounts to absorb low frequency sound, and sound insulation/lining to the perimeter walls.

Levels in the basement were adjusted to accommodate layers of sound isolation. It was a huge job: Fileturn Ltd excavated by hand and took over 20 lorry loads of demolition material away. These level adjustments have also helped create a series of spaces, which are intimate without feeling claustrophobic.

Cherry Jam is the embodiment of Watt's anti-superclub mentality, determined to be a part of the community rather than to dominate it. This has an impact on the club's external branding (non-existent) and on interior design and vibe, and it also affects the sound system. From the start Ben and Alan had planned a multi arts

programme, and sound was going to be of prime importance. Based around the principle of creating a hi fi sound environment Mark Metcalf of Blue Box Company chose Funktion One Resolution loudspeakers for the main system, and Genelec studio monitors for the bar area. Ben roadtested the Funktion One system and instantly agreed on it for the club. "It's compact and flexible," he says, "offering scope for both pre-recorded and open-mic music".

The main system consists of two Res2s flown left and right of the stage and augmented by 2 F118s supplying low bass, and a rear fill of 1 Res2 hi pack and 2 additional F118 bass enclosures. Says Metcalf "One of the main briefs for the architects was sound insulation as the venue is in the heart of a residential block. The consequent sound proofing coupled with the compact size of the venue have resulted in some very neutral acoustics and the Resolution system fills the space effortlessly with very clean dynamic sound". The Genelec 1029As supplement the main system to provide a balanced sound throughout the venue.

The system is driven by the new QSC Powerlightz series amplifiers and XTA DP226 digital processors. The DJ front end is controlled by the ubiquitous Pioneer DJM600, fed by 2 Technics SL1210s and 2 Pioneer CDJ 500S CD players. Central control is provided by a Cloud CX242 zoner. The DJ monitoring is provided by Nexo PS8 (discreet yet powerful) with a Nexo LS400 providing copious low end and all driven by the Nexo PS8 amp and controller. The DJ and performance areas were designed by Ben himself, who was very keen to keep the profile of the booth at low level to involve performers with the crowd, breaking down the superclub mentality and any tendency to idolise the DJs.

Aiming to establish itself as a landmark focal point for the social and creative buzz of west London, Cherry Jam is proposing a rich calendar of events, promising amongst other things twenty-four-seven art exhibitions, live music, DJs, film clubs, event launches and fashion shows, but above all aiming to be a vibrant local environment where Londoners can come to eat, drink and socialise.

Functional, modern and warm: Cherry Jam rocks it. Strike another blow for the grown-up, big club dancefloor converts: this one's for you.

CREDITS

Cherry Jam 58 Porchester Road W2 (Royal Oak Tube)

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Owners Ben Watt & Alan Grant

Interior Design Powell-Tuck Associates

Sound Installation Blue Box Company

Main Contractors Fileturn Ltd