



### Nuphonic's new venue is another DJ bar with a dancefloor and a difference...

**S**pectacular sound, a rich musical heritage, a fantastic location and maximum integrity: when the dust settled at the corner of Calvert Avenue and Shoreditch High Street, a new generation clubbing gem emerged from the gloom. Bridge and Tunnel is dance music grown up; the result of five years of searching for the perfect venue, and Nuphonic record label's return to its roots.

Nuphonic's famous association with Hoxton's Blue Note drymarked the label in to the cultural history books. After two successful years building one of the capital's most significant musical venues, in 1997 some key members of the Blue Note team resigned to concentrate their efforts on their developing record label. Their intention was to build and expand the label, working with music they love, but they also longed for their own venue. "After the Blue Note I really started missing the live aspect - that's what really drives me," says Nuphonic boss Sav Remsi. "The direct response you get from the dancefloor, watching how tunes go down. That's what it's about".

2002: DJ bars are de rigueur. Anti-superclubbing makes for intimate, musically diverse, super clubbing. Experimenters and innovators, you'd expect a Nuphonic venture into club ownership to be firmly at the front of the anti-corporate backlash. And you'd be right, then some.

Significant renovation has converted the former bank into what's shaping into one of the more interesting venues in London. Bridge and Tunnel ignores the Shoreditch rule that all bars must have a random selection of soft furnishings and ironic 70s wallpaper. Instead, it embodies a pared down, functional aesthetic which has sound quality at its core.

Designed by architects D'soto, the two floor space has been subtly treated to create two intimate rooms, each with it's own bar and sound system.

The ground floor provides 'the refinement that we all deserve': namely table service of drinks and classic cocktails, plus a daily food menu of fresh home cooked foods and a studio quality sound system and dj booth. With its 4ft thick walls, the converted basement vault underneath is perfect for rough and heavy sounds, and is reminiscent of the brilliant, sweaty dancefloor at the mid nineties Blue Note. Highly-specced DJ booths, huge amp racks and powerful

Funktion One speakers characterise both rooms. There's no bar / restaurant / club split: it's truly hybridised, genuinely multi-functional set-up. Depending on the occasion, the basement can be run together with the ground floor programming or as a separate event. The basement also provides the stage for occasional live showcases and exclusive DJ presentations.

"We set up a team to put the club together," explained Sav. "We really built the place around people's expertise and knowledge, and took on board their particular field - from sound to security - incorporating it all in to the design". Crucial to this dynamic was John Trotter of Electracoustic, whose brief was to install 'the best sound system in any bar anywhere'. If music's your mecca, you want your place of worship properly specced.

"I want a club programme in a bar format so you don't have to pay to get in," says Sav. "We spoke to our mates and asked them to DJ, and promised the best equipment everywhere. This place is about the music. I didn't want any corners cut, and I've known John a long time. I knew he was right for the job".

No corners cut means a big budget and lots of quality. A lot of money has been spent behind the scenes: spend that won't necessarily be noticed by customers, but that will ensure the longevity and licence of the place. Despite the £540k budget though, costs haven't been passed on to customers. Food and drink is reasonably priced, and even the cocktail list rarely breaks £5 a drink.

"We've created a space where we can cater for an older generation of clubbers," says Sav with a smile. "People who want good music but without the rigmarole of traditional clubbing. We want to provide grounded and rooted people with the respect and service they deserve".

Bridge and Tunnel's relaxed and undemanding vibe makes it an instant winner with DJs. It's a home from home, but better, cos who's got CDJs in their lounge?

"We've created a home for artists and DJs to play - they're liking it cos the pressure of the dancefloor is relieved here," says Sav. "They don't have to get the floor going, so they don't have to play the tunes that are obvious. They can be really experimental and play what they play at home really - we think our ▶



audience want to be stimulated by the music".

Nuphonic haven't advertised excessively, haven't put huge signs up, and they're not promoting like crazy. Instantly, they're part of the community, fitting in and enhancing the musical, social and even cultural offering of the area. Its specialist programming and distinct vibe are already bringing the right groups down.

"Friday morning this place was a building site, and by the evening we were serving people," says Sav. "We turned a non-entity into a space that people go to. Already we've got regulars. A whole new sub-culture is springing out of nothing. It's kind of, what's the word? Profound. Being responsible for that is kind of humbling. It makes me proud".

**NIGHT**  
REVIEWS



**ELECTRACOUSTIC @ BRIDGE & TUNNEL**

Designed and installed by Jon Trotter's Electracooustic Ltd. With input from Nuphonic and Funktion One, Bridge & Tunnel's sound system is impressive. The ground floor system consists of Funktion One Resolution 2 and F118 loudspeakers in the main bar area with PMC studio monitors in the acoustically treated ancillary areas. High specification, convection cooled hi-fi amplifiers by Canadian manufacturer Bryton sit in a glass-fronted air conditioned rack cabinet on view to the public - after all sound equipment is beautiful. XTA DP series controllers and DBX valve compression are also in the signal chain. The downstairs system is a five way Funktion One system arrayed like a giant hi-fi at one end of the room and comprising Resolution A floor loudspeakers, F118 enclosures and the new Infra-Bass sub-bass enclosures. Res Two mid-high in-fills are used at the other end of the room. This floor is powered by MCE2 amplification throughout, with XTA DP series controllers and the Empirical Laboratories 'Fator' compressor/analogue simulator. Both floors are equipped for DJ use with full links between them.

The new Formula Sound PM-100 decoupled mixers are installed and a lot of consideration has been applied to the phono sources as the venue is full very vinyl based. The Technics decks are mounted on acoustic mats on top of concrete slabs, which are in turn neoprene isolated from the concrete and steel surround. The Shure cartridges pass through discrete phono stages by German hi-fi manufacturer ClearAudio. The new Pioneer CDE-1000 CD players are also in evidence. Jon Trotter comments "This installation was a pleasure to do because of the enthusiasm and commitment to sound quality of Sav and David (Hill, Sav's partner in Nuphonic) and their fellow workers. We have tried to take the best principles of high end hi-fi and combine these with the finest pro-audio products available to create a really special result. We are now at the stage of adjusting and fine tuning the room acoustics on both levels to let the sound equipment really shine and that involves constructing and hanging custom acoustic panels and drapes. When this work is complete this venue is going to be really something. Interestingly this was the first venue I recall where



the vinyl source was so clearly superior to the CD program from the very first listen. Finally, we have to confront the noise emission issue, which every installer will be familiar with and is the bane of most London venues nowadays. As the venue is in an old bank we have the benefit of three foot thick walls, the builders have carried out considerable noise isolation measures and the leakage to the street is absolutely minimal".

**CREDITS**

**Bridge and Tunnel** 4 Calvert Avenue Shoreditch E2 7JP [www.bridgeandtunnel.co.uk](http://www.bridgeandtunnel.co.uk) [www.nuphonic.co.uk](http://www.nuphonic.co.uk)  
**Owner** Nuphonic Records **Interior Design** D'Soto **Lighting & Sound Installation** Electracooustic Ltd.