



Plan B, Brixton

Manc influenced bar culture comes to South London

South of the river, London's bar scene hasn't been as quick to speed as other paces. Over the past few years the capital has seen a number of high profile DJ bars open - Bridge and Tunnel, Cherry Jam, AKA - but there's been nothing to compare with that in South London. Until now. "We wanted to create a Northern style bar in London", says co-owner of new DJ bar Plan B, James Campana. At university in Manchester in the early 90's, James has clearly been left with

an affection for the place - no reference to Dave Beer's post-chemical projects here, or the shining lights of Shoreditch, but straight to the money.

"When I briefed the designer it was with a load of pictures of Dry Bar and Manchester, and I said I want a Dry Bar for Brixton. That bar still has a certain feel about it even after all this time - and I wanted those components in here".

Converting an old Wimpy restaurant on Brixton Lane, just

around the corner from the legendary Brixton Academy, the vision for the bar was one of post-industrial chic - which has been realised thanks to the vision of designer Craig Moffat. Shaped like an inverted b ("not that we noticed til after we'd opened"), the bar is a contemporary mix of textures. Rich leather and frosted glass sit side by side with concrete surfaces and exposed brickwork. Big wooden tables run diner-style down the right hand wall, the left of the room is flanked with

leather-padded concrete bleachers, a pine-panelled DJ booth stands tall opposite a backlit bar, and sightlines which bounce off the hard surfaces of the room always end in the central dining/dancing area. Because the bar has to take a pounding at night, but then operate during the day, the materials used are hardwearing as well as good-looking - really suiting the needs of the operation and the demands of the crowd. According to James, "Brixton has



a fair few similarities with Manchester in terms of the kind of crowds you get in here. There's a rough element, but that actually creates the kind of atmosphere you wouldn't get in somewhere like Soho".

Impressive though Plan B's aesthetic may be, it's the sound that forms the bones of the project. James chose a Funktion One system for the venue after extensive listening tests and stiff competition from other quality brands.

Jon Trotter's Electracoustic, who have a long track record of high quality installations in many different styles of venue, designed

the sound system.

The system works well in Plan B because it follows simple and classic design principles. The main room is served by four flown Resolution Two full range loudspeakers, set well in from the venue walls to frame a square central dance area, with two 2x18" Infra-Bass subs under the large DJ booth. Precautions were taken to minimise the risk of bass resonance reaching the decks: they sit on thick expanded cell rubber compound mats, with the plinth below mounted on steel RSJs with brick pillars linked through to the substrate. There is a long, corridor-like entrance

room, which is served by the new FF-88 wide dispersion double 8" units. These are really a step up from being background loudspeakers and do a good job of filling this potentially difficult acoustic space.

As well as the mixed crowd, and as you'd expect following the investment in the sound system, another thing Plan B shares with the early Dry Bar is the focus on music - something that's at the forefront of the operation. In fact, according to James, it's music rather than marketed 'style' that drives the business.

"We want our own identity," he comments. "What we always

wanted to do is still be here in five years - be as strong then, stronger even, than we are now - and there's not many bars and clubs that can say that.

"The problem with London is there's so much competition. If you try and be the most stylish, the most cool bar, you've only got a few years. Hopefully if we use music to define ourselves we'll have a longer shelf life".

Laudable though its intentions may be, by being self-consciously anti-now, ironically, Plan B is very much of its time. In the emotional noughties, good operators are kids with integrity: ex-city, or else successful creatives, smart,