

No stone unturned

Stonewater's PD-engineered cabinets have found a new place to Unwind in Pune, discovers **Simon Luckhurst**

SET ACROSS 1,300M² OF SPACE IN KOREGAON PARK, Unwind is one of the biggest new additions to the nightlife scene in Pune. Inviting guests from all walks to escape from the hassles of daily life, the venue offers three very different ways to unwind: partying the night away in the indoor nightclub, enjoying an open-air concert in the live music area or sipping cocktails at the rooftop bistro. Furthermore, the venue is also serving as a new reference project for Indian loudspeaker manufacturer, Stonewater. In early 2017, the company launched two new loudspeaker series, Balance and Definition, that can boast the distinction of being entirely designed and developed in the UK with British-made transducer components.

Stonewater was already well known for its installation work, having secured contracts in the past in India with international outlets such as Starbucks, Burger King and Domino's. But having partnered with Precision Devices to manufacture its own line of PD-engineered loudspeakers last year, Stonewater has an important first showcase for the new series with Unwind.

Club owner Chetan Naik had a clear vision in mind for how he wanted the new venue to sound, with each area providing contrasting offerings. The internal space was destined to become a nightclub with an emphasis placed on top-quality audio; outside would be a live music venue with more space and freedom to move around; and the bistro terrace would be a chillout zone providing a laid-back atmosphere. Despite strong competition, the contract was awarded to Stonewater following extensive listening tests with the owner. Stonewater's director of marketing, Vikram Shetty, then approached consultant Milind Raorane to aid in execution,

admitting that the pair share a mindset and belief in creating a fresh aural experience in every assignment or project that comes their way.

'My interaction with Milind started at a very early stage in the evolution of Stonewater,' say Mr Shetty. 'I quickly realised that he has a great scientific understanding of the inner workings of loudspeakers, and an intuition for acoustic spaces and the interactions between the room and speakers. Combining these skills with our high-performance products gives us a serious edge over our competitors. The club regularly hosts some of the best domestic and international DJs. Great DJs and a very well-designed audio solution are the most important elements for the success of a club like this.'

'The competition was stiff and we really had to make a difference,' adds Mr Raorane. 'That difference came in our thought process and our approach towards understanding both the electro and room acoustics. For me, the appeal of Stonewater is in the attention it gives to product design, sales and after-sales support. Its products can be compared to any A-list global loudspeaker brand. They offer high-grade components, build quality and intense product evaluation.'

As well as stiff competition from other brands, the project presented Mr Raorane with a number of acoustic challenges to overcome, as the indoor space forms a semi-pyramid shape that creates lots of additional 'pockets'. This was remedied by using extensive acoustic modelling and treatment.

'After internal discussions, we proposed an acoustic measurement of the indoor space, primarily checking the room for spectral RT60 reverberation time and standing waves,' recalls the consultant. The client was present throughout this process, which Mr Raorane feels was



Outside in the live arena

invaluable in helping convey the need for proper acoustic treatment. 'We also proposed an efficient arrangement and quantity of speakers,' he adds. 'I believe our scientific and methodical approach ultimately convinced the client to approve the design and configuration.'

The nightclub space was fully treated using bespoke foam wedge traps of three different sizes in order to address different bands in the frequency spectrum. The acoustic team's focus then shifted to installing the cabling and

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The outdoor live arena utilises a flexible FOH format enlisting a variety of Stonewater cabinets depending on the type of music and size of the audience. To ensure aural consistency with the indoor nightclub, this area also used products from Stonewater's Balance and Definition series. The terrace bistro, meanwhile, houses a smaller background music system formed from eight ceiling-mounted 8-inch STM008s and four 12-inch Microsub12 subwoofers.

The new audio system inside the nightclub was reportedly an instant hit with resident DJs, and the subject of much commendation by international visitors. 'Visiting DJs and patrons have raved about the sound experience,' confirms Mr Raorane. 'Many of them have specifically mentioned experiencing fatigue-free listening for long hours inside the club zone. This was a valuable insight into the club goers' psyche, showing that they can certainly decipher the difference between a good system design and a mediocre job.'

Likewise, the initial vision of Unwind's Mr Naik appears to have been met, as he admits that the sound quality has become the venue's main USP. 'We are extremely pleased with the audio quality of the Stonewater system, which has been the subject of a lot of positive attention from many guest DJs, both from India and abroad,' he explains. 'It is tight, clean, powerful and it doesn't hurt our ears, even when playing really loud. We were also very impressed with the high degree of professionalism, passion and attention to detail displayed by the Stonewater team and Milind Raorane.'

With the Stonewater name becoming increasingly familiar in the Indian pro audio market, projects such as Unwind are key to its continued success. 'Every installation is important to us, be it small or large, and every project goes through a closely managed process that ensures it is designed and executed to the highest quality and technical standards,' says the Stonewater marketing director. 'Having said that, this particular project has the potential to contribute significantly to the visibility of our brand. A large project, if executed well, definitely does not go unnoticed.'

The unique business model presented by Stonewater, which aims to blend high-quality audio from European-made components with a price point that suits the local region, certainly seems to be making waves.

'This, among other reasons, has led to us being the brand of choice for several major companies in the entertainment and retail industry,' concludes Mr Shetty. 'We currently have multiple projects underway in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore, each of which will be a unique install in themselves.'

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The view from the DJ booth



The relaxed lounge terrace

mounting the speakers, with every step of the process periodically monitored and checked. The entire project was completed in just two-and-a-half months. 'It was pretty fast track and decisions made along the way were done so quickly,' recalls Mr Raorane.

Just six 18-inch Stonewater Definition 118 subwoofers – four underneath a raised podium that straddles the bar and the other two at the rear of the room – provide enough low-end energy to keep guests partying until the early hours.

Full-range cabinets include six 2-way 15-inch Balance 15s deployed in a quad arrangement, while four 2-way 8-inch STM008 enclosures provide additional fills.

'Due to the laws of electro-acoustics, any audio system design is fluid and pleasant to the ears when there is phase coherence, time-alignment, a broad frequency response and the optimum headroom for dynamics,' explains Mr Raorane. 'We achieved this at Unwind by selecting specific speaker sizes and using highly accurate placement.'

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