



The half-tube shape of Süss Fel Nap's main hall on a typical DJ night (photos: James Cumpsty)

A system upgrade in a Budapest basement venue is having wide-ranging business implications, Dan Goldstein discovers

Basement jacks

Comprising a long, half-tubular main hall, a smaller chillout area and a number of tiny, cavern-like drinking and dining spaces, Süss Fel Nap is Central Europe's night venue scene in microcosm. Known locally as Süss, the club has been a key component of Budapest's nightlife since first opening its doors seven years ago. Located in a previously unused commercial basement in the centre of Pest on the east side of the river Danube, Süss has historically been a no-frills venue with décor and systems to match.

who also took measurements that were to be used as the basis for a system tender. Three designs were submitted and the final vote went to a Meyer Sound-based setup from Chromatica. In keeping with the hall's mixed use as a venue for both live and DJ-played music, the system has two distinct modes of operation. The FOH system comprises two Meyer UPA-2P powered compact narrow-coverage loudspeakers and two USW-1P compact subwoofers, augmented by a UPJ-1P compact 'VariO' enclosure for delay coverage in the middle of the hall. For DJ

The USW-1Ps have been fitted with custom grilles for protection, while all the remaining enclosures have been hung with heavy-duty rigging. "This place can get pretty busy and one night we had people actually hanging from one of the speakers," laughs Makaay. "The speakers only weigh about 30kg each, but the rigging can support 400–500kg easily."

Needless to say, protecting the enclosures is hardly going to be a big worry for the Süss when the key reason for investing in the system is to attract more punters through the door – and attendances are up 40% since the new setup went in.

"In western Europe systems like this are commonplace, but in Hungary it's not so often that DJs, for example, get to play on a system as good as this," Makkay reflects. "Now good DJs are flocking here because they know they're going to sound good, and that in turn pulls in more people."

Success breeds success and, as Molnár points out, word quickly gets around if a venue owner has found a successful formula. "The system here goes pretty loud – up to 110dB – but it's not necessarily a question of level. It's just more comfortable to be here, and once people realise that, they're more likely to come back."

"Hungarian clubs tend to be small – this one holds 300 people – and there isn't much competition between them. The owners all talk to each other about what's working and what isn't. We're working on three more club installations right now, because people are realising that good systems can pay for themselves very quickly." ■

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Space is still at a premium in such locations but, increasingly, venue owners in this part of Europe are finding they can gain a swift return on investments in upgraded audio, AV and lighting infrastructure. Last year, the Süss club's owner Gyozo Szalontai decided the time had come to upgrade the sound system in his main hall, partly as a result of complaints from visiting audio professionals.

"The bands and DJs who came here weren't satisfied with the system, and that was partly to do with the acoustics," says Imre Makkay, managing director of local systems integrator Chromatica. "Our response was to suggest not just an upgraded audio system but a programme of acoustic treatment."

The latter was carried out by acoustical consultants Andor Fürjes and István Törzsök,

acts, the delay speaker is switched out and two further UPJ-1P cabinets come into play in the rear half of the room, with an additional UPJ-1P which is used as a DJ monitor box. A wall-mounted rotary control allows DJs to vary the output level of the latter.

Settings for the different loudspeaker setups are stored in a pair of dbx DriveRack 260 processors but, after Meyer Sound's Károly Molnár tuned the system with the company SIM3 technology, relatively little further processing has been required. "There are a few little frequency corrections, some limiting and compressing – there's a master compressor and limiter on each channel – but nothing else has been necessary because the response of the system is very linear," maintains Makaay, who supervised the installation alongside Chromatica's technical manager Tamás Dóra.

www.meyersound.com
www.dbxpro.com
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Basement views (from left): the Süss bar area; close-up of the Meyer UPJ-1P used as a DJ monitor in the main hall; and the installation team – Imre Makkay (Chromatica), Károly Molnár (Meyer Sound) and Tamás Dóra (Chromatica)