

BEST LIGHTING SYSTEM

AVALON BOSTON, RICHIE WARBOYS/HIGH OUTPUT

Chris McMeen is in love, and not just with his fiancé. Boston-based supplier High Output's nightclub specialist just can't keep his hands off the lighting system at Avalon. The former NYC bouncer calls the superclub "my favorite place to hang out and feel that energy I grew up with at places like the Saint and Palladium." Avalon's main room is his and designer/installer Richie Warboys' lighting laboratory, a perennial work-in-progress that might feature super-high-end Vari-Lite fixtures one week and a 40,000K strobe the next. But the base on which all the embellishments sit is just as extraordinary. We'll let the star-crossed McMeen explain: "The system is just awesome in its size and intricacy. It has a huge amount of small scanners [Clay Paky and High End] that create a cool level of baseline beams, which I think is a key to a nice system. Also, they can really flood the room with strobe light to finish off a crescendo of the DJ. Then of course there's the moving truss system: If it's in low it really contains the crowd, and when it goes up high it opens the room up and makes it seem like a huge party with just waves of people dancing everywhere. The energy level in there is just so great. That's totally due to the fact that they keep adding to the system every year – they just put in a new Le Maitre fogger – and updating the old stuff so it still works." – KLM



Thomas & Thomas Photography

DREAM WASHINGTON DC, WASHINGTON ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGIES

Dream opened in 2001 as a three-floor, multi-room space holding 7,500 dancers. The main room light show, on opening night consisted of only eight fixtures. Shortly thereafter Washington Entertainment came in to fix some sound problems and decided to make an offer for a light re-install too. Today's Dream is another place with 30 Coemar iSpots controlled by Martin LightJockey, a sheer mass of intelligent lighting capable of wowing audiences with rows of chases and the occasional, effective unison show of lumen force. Holding these soldiers is a floor-wide 5' x 5' square grid of tube steel on which any number of fixtures can be attached. This solved one problem - that the room's ceiling was also a roof deck, making ceiling installs difficult - but made another: The club's owner now has a propensity for grand visions, desire for constant upgrades and love of flashy fixtures now that he's seen his lights. - DC

LEVEL MIAMI, SOUND STAGE SYSTEMS

Level's history is notorious, built by Al Capone and once owned by Prince, and Sound Stage Systems has been there for a lot of it. When Level's management gave the call, SSS already knew the crawlspaces, attics and high ceilings well, and when they heard, "We want the best club there is," they knew it was going to be a great job. A monster Martin Professional rig was the best fit for the hulking theater with 48 moving yoke fixtures, 18 mirror fixtures and over 100 stationary lights of various brands. The "wow" factor really kicks in when the motorized truss creeps down from the vaulted ceiling to just above the dancers' heads. Timed with a great DJ buildup and burst of light, this can set the floor on fire like nothing else. Level is probably one of the biggest intelligent light shows in the world, allowing the LJ's almost limitless programming capabilities and the crowd an unparalleled visual experience. – DC

MODA CLEVELAND, SJ LIGHTING

Forget the pretty blinking things – SJ Lighting principle Steve Lieberman knows that the real heart of a lighting system is its console, and his install at the swanky new Moda features a special one. The grandMA UltraLight is MA Lighting's smallest controller, but Lieberman calls it "the next evolution in control systems," a fully-loaded board with all components built in, including a touch screen and software-based effects engine. For the lights, Lieberman knew he had an already lovely room to work with and "tried to maximize the space without overdoing it." The system is half intelligent (Elation Color Spot 575's and Vision 575's) and half conventional, with a three-foot mirror ball as the attention-hogger. When he's guest-LD-ing on big nights (like Josh Wink's recent Thanksgiving set), Lieberman likes to "keep it dark," and use the High End Dataflash strobes "as an exclamation point only." Everything is mounted on a custom ProSpan truss system with CM Lodestar chain motors, a Skjonberg motor distribution panel, and ETC SR12 sensor rack. – KLM