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Club Profile: Vanguard

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WHERE FUNCTIONALITY MEETS FLEXIBILITY



In today's slimmed-down, budget-conscious world, SR companies are looking for new ways to increase their profits. Regional companies are booking summer festivals, rodeos, monster truck pulls, etc. Live sound engineers — after weathering through a packed summer season — look to corporate events and smaller gigs to make the house payment. Even clubs that typically cater only to touring musicians are multitasking.

Set in the heart of downtown L.A., the 21,000-square-foot, more than 1,600-plus capacity Vanguard (www.vanguardla.com) has opened as an amalgamation of a live sound venue, a nightclub, a host to Sunday-morning church services and peripheral events, such as banquets, wedding services and award ceremonies. With such a diverse clientele coming in, the owners at Vanguard had to find an audio system that would be just as flexible as its clients.

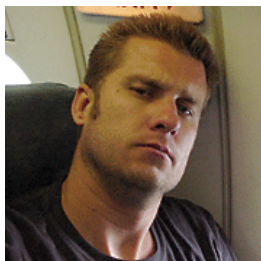
THE PLAYERS

Owner/CEO Jordan Birnbaum — who works alongside partner Pasquale Rotella of Insomniac Events and general manager Misty Mansouri — was referred to Steve Leiberman of SJ Lighting (Chicago) by mutual friends; he was hired on as the designer for the club's lighting, sound and video systems. Apparently, Leiberman's reputation preceded him, as he had already designed numerous top-notch clubs around the country, including Crobar in New York and Chicago, Nocturnal in Miami and Ice in Las Vegas. Leiberman designed the hanging truss and lighting rig in Vanguard's main room, which also includes scenic-treated stone walls and a curved bar lit by high-tech LED fixtures. The club also sports a cherry-wood dancefloor, a large indoor balcony terrace overlooking the main room and an Asian-inspired outdoor patio, complete with fountains and a giant Buddha.

Leiberman contacted Sound Investment in Chicago, a company that he works closely with. As Sound Investment is in Chicago and Vanguard is in L.A., Leiberman handed the job out to Sound Investment's Adam Ward, who is based out of Las Vegas and heads up the company's West Coast office.

Ward went into the job expecting to install a small, budget-conscious sound system, as audio gear was not high on the owner's to-do list. However, when Ward had a look-see at the venue, he found that the size of the room would require the owner to upgrade the original audio spec and purchase a better sound system. "[The owners] had a price in their head, but once we went in there and talked to them," Ward recalls, "we advised that for what they wanted to do, they did need to spend more money and they realized that."

Ward concedes that the budget still did not have room for a \$60,000 — or even a \$30,000 — console. This may seem a bit detrimental to a club that is hoping to attract more live sound events — especially when many tours are not carrying full production and rely on a venue's in-house gear. However, Vanguard is banking on the appeal of the installed Funktion One sound system, which has seen



Sound Investment's Adam Ward

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