

CLUB

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INTERNATIONAL

LOTUS BLOOMS IN D.C.

THE INDEPENDENT

stands apart in san fran

BANG

blows up cincinnati

▶ Lotus, D.C.

Journey to the center of the flower.

▶ By Justin Hampton
▶ Photos by Frank Thomas

With D.C.'s successful dance club Fur in their portfolio, owner Michael Romeo and Virginia sound and light specialists Ohm Productions (ohmproductions.com) had only themselves to top while developing their first lounge. So when it came time to transform a former office space into the swank and otherworldly bar/restaurant/nightclub Lotus Lounge, Romeo expected Ohm to devise an interior that would amaze his upscale clientele. "I told them, 'I want to do

(queuellc.com), cordoned it off into three different areas: the sushi restaurant in the front, which greets patrons when they walk downstairs; the cellular room, which contains a bar; and the Lotus Room in the back, which is also accessed via private elevator. The honey-combed walls, geometric arches, flowing lines, and the placement of the custom banquettes and ottomans, create a "Fantastic Voyage"-style excursion the patron

something that's never been done before and I don't want to copy somebody's ideas," Romeo recalls. "I had no budget [limit] for lighting and sound. We want to franchise [Lotus], so I wanted [it] to be very unique." Romeo's initial desire to include a sushi bar gave rise to the singular concept of the Lotus flower. That symbol would guide the design of the 5,000-square-foot rectangular space. Lead architect Michael Francis of DC-based Queue, LLC

takes into the heart of a flower. "As one moves through the club, the cell structures morph and enlarge," says Francis. "Once in the Lotus Room, the elements engulf you."

Breathing Lights

Francis designed around the equally ambitious lighting scheme, created by Ohm's Ryan Rafferty. Alongside head rigger Charlie Weiner and master electrician Naaman Wood, Rafferty developed and constructed



CHRISTINE COTTER Los Angeles Times

FREE TICKETS: *Lamb of God is scheduled to play at the Ozzfest in late July in San Bernardino.*

Different drummers

On the alternative front, a few festivals will offer glimpses into a better world, one untouched by wasteful consumerism and commercial entertainment policies. Bless.

May 11-13: Lightning in a Bottle

Fresh from Coachella, La Tribal event promoters the Do-Lab host a three-day camping excursion filled with beats (Bassnectar, Lawgiverz, Kid Beyond and more), green workshops and art installations.

■ Live Oak Campground, Highway 154, Santa Barbara; weekend pass \$120, day passes sold on day of event. Tickets available at Thunderbolt Books, 512 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, (310) 899-9279, or through www.lightninginabottle.org.

May 26-28: Topanga Days Country Fair

The Memorial Day hippie bazaar includes belly-dancing exhibitions, healing arts demonstrations and performances by John Doe (X) and Mike Stinson. Make sure to find good seats for Monday's parade.

■ 1440 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Adults \$15, kids 6 to 12 and seniors \$7. For info: www.topangacommunityclub.org/topdays07/index.htm.

clouds or water, or a custom-made movie created by Ohm video tech Craig Macon – to an Element Labs Versa DRIVE D2, which routes the image to the individual pixels on the wall.

Ohm intended for the wall to forcefully shift hues and ambiance within the room, rather than act as a large video screen, therefore accounting for the low resolution that only hints at the video content being screened on it. "We didn't want it to be a video wall," asserts Rafferty. "Unless you're going for that kind of thing, like a video club, it does detract from the human

the Element Labs Luminar pixel wall that dominates one side of the cellular room.

More than 50 feet long and six feet high with 40,000 feet of cable nestled inside, the wall is the biggest of its kind in North America. Painstakingly assembled by Rafferty to fit within the fabricated honeycomb polymers designed by Francis, the individual circular pixels placed on the wall project a low-resolution video image initially selected by the lighting tech using the Avolites Azure console. A DMX signal triggers a Mac media server to send a video image – a stock shot of

interaction within the club."

In addition to the wall, Rafferty also created three distinct areas, or "pods," on the ceiling of the cellular room, where four Robe 250 AT washes and two Robe 250 AT spots encircle a ziplight consisting of a 12" x 12" Element Labs LED panel. Francis chose to texturize and curve the ceiling with rubberized material Barrisol (barrisolusa.com), which according to Francis "allows the moving lights to wash the curvaceous elements [of the ceiling], gently warping the imagery."

These lights, too, are controlled using the Azure, and Rafferty praises the console for its versatility and ease-of-use: "[If I] need a personality profile, I can have one next-dayed to me by just about anybody at the company. That's something I need, because we have to be able to move on a dime sometimes with this business." He also reports favorably on the Robe lights, which provide diverse color options, minimized operation volume and reasonable price points, he said.

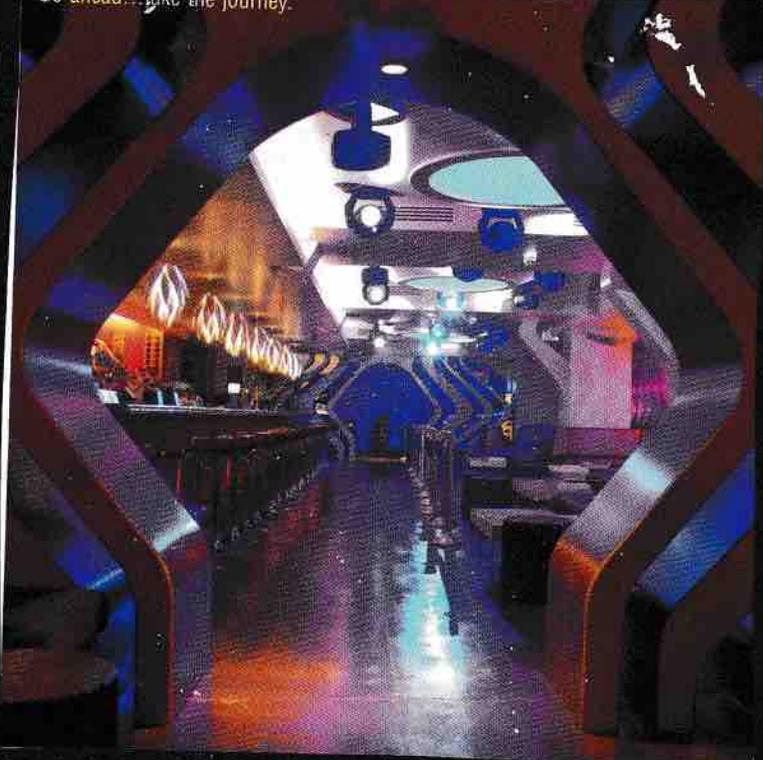
As an added feature, Lotus also went for the Kryogenifex liquid nitrogen effects system. Kryogenifex atmosphere manipulator Alejandro Gonzalez outfitted the cellular room with two Kryo "curtain" nozzles, and the Lotus room with two low dispersion nozzles. Because of the club's size, both types disperse just enough mist to fill the room comfortably. In keeping with the design strategy, the nozzles and tubes of the system were carefully concealed, and the system can be operated either from a Kryo box in the DJ room or by remote control.

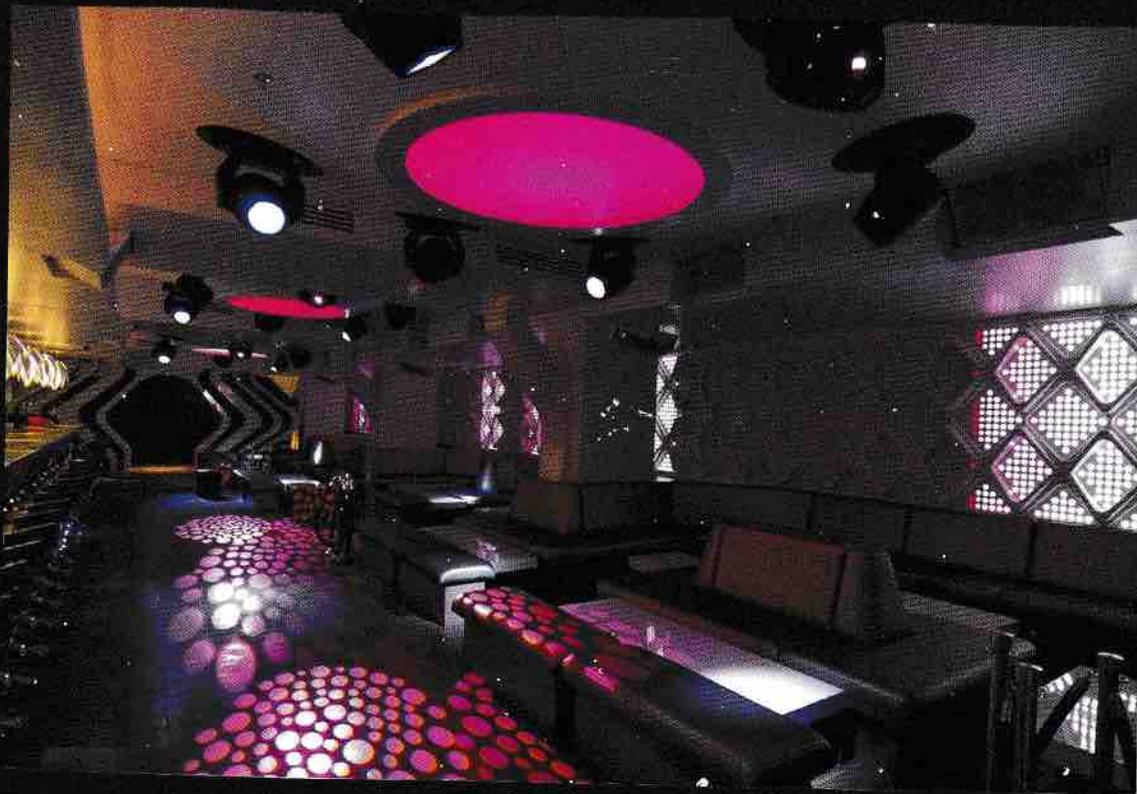
Romeo describes the overall effect: "Earlier, [people are] ordering food, mixed drinks. [But] the whole atmosphere changes a lot as the night progresses. The wall starts moving. The place gets louder, and we have the Kryogenifex that comes out at 12 until two a.m."

Hidden Sound

The volume to which Romeo refers comes from the sound system designed by Ohm's John Fiorito. He supervised the entire build and

Go ahead... take the journey.





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found speakers that could work within the club's conceptual schema. They had to be powerful yet compact, so Fiorito opted for the EAW Avalon series for highs and mids, and the Funktion-One MiniBass 212.

Fiorito customized the Avalon with an upgraded 12-inch driver that contained a larger voice coil, and ordered them in white. The Avalons are positioned using custom-fabricated U-brackets atop the ceiling, and painted white to blend into the background. The Funktion Ones are underneath the banquettes. All are powered by Crest 9200 amplifiers.

"There's a lot of sound in this space, way

more than you actually need, but the reason for that is that we can run it at a lower volume and create a higher sound pressure level," Fiorito explains. "People are dancing, but they're still able to carry on a nice conversation because of these cabinets and the placement of the cabinets."

Filling out coverage in between the rooms are 10 EAW UB50s, which are powered by Crest 8200s. Ohm thankfully avoided cancellation issues because of the club's forgiving footprint, making the acoustical design a relatively painless process.

Signal processing was handled by the

dbx DriveRack. "I use them anywhere I have a two- or three-way crossover," Fiorito says. "In my opinion, you can spend more money, but you're not going to find a processor that's easier to use. The GUI in the interface is excellent; it's very simple to scroll through. You can see multiple inputs and outputs. With other products, you can only see what you're doing on one channel, looking in or out." A Furman Series II PWR conditioner protects the system from any life-threatening power surges.

Alongside Fur and Romeo's soon-to-be-opened rock 'n' roll biker-themed Tattoo, Lotus Lounge raises the bar for its market, thanks to the informed and imaginative choices of its installers. Asked about how this club compares to others Ohm has worked on over the years, Rafferty offers, "In terms of size, it's not necessarily the biggest install we've done. Fur had a lot more in the way of moving lights and rooms and things like that. But as far as emerging technology and just hitting the nail on the head for what we wanted, no compromises, this is number one so far." He adds, laughing, "We're not done yet, though." ○

www.lotusloungedc.com