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May 2010 Issue

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■ The heart of the hotel is its bar fed by Amina speakers

GEORGIAN STYLE MEETS HIDDEN TALENT

Sound Ceilings UK used Amina hidden speaker technology to transform this Georgian boutique hotel.

Sound Ceilings UK has been in business for twenty years offering a complete audio design service to commercial installations for nightclubs, marquees, pubs, hotels, conference centres, country estates, restaurants and retail stores.

One of the company's flagship products is the jbn Sound Ceiling, developed by Swedish manufacturer jbn Sound Solutions. This system provides a resolution to stop noise problems, confining the area of high-level sound and reducing the volume heard only a few meters away by 50%. With the technology, venues are able to deliver truly multi-functional spaces where some areas can cater for dancing and others for dining. The company also carries out a lot of installs using Amina hidden speaker technology available from Redline Distribution.

The London based Bingham Hotel marries the

surroundings of a Georgian Grand House with state of the art technology. The hotel wanted to provide an AV solution to serve both private and corporate clients, without compromising the Georgian style interiors. Sound Ceilings says the challenges presented by the sensitivity of the interiors were solved by employing Amina invisible plaster-in loudspeakers.

At the heart of the Bingham is its bar, where eighteenth century high-ceilings and cornices blend with understated art deco décor and integral to the welcoming atmosphere is the discrete use of music.

Isador Gorgevik, manager of the hotel, says: "At the Bingham, we believe a lounge bar should be a place to relax, enjoy a drink and unwind in front of the fireplace. The room is the star, and we wanted a solution that was sympathetic to the Georgian features." Sound Ceilings specified two Amina AIW5X 80W invisible speakers located in the ceiling to deliver the sound without a blemish on the bar's decor.

For those unfamiliar with Amina's products, the company says that unlike traditional pistonic loudspeakers, its speakers work in the same way as natural musical instruments do, such as the acoustic guitar or piano, with the vibration created in the body of the instrument



Even the restrooms are equipped with Amina speakers so guests don't miss out on the music

producing the sound. Rather than strings, the speakers use excitation drivers which set up tiny vibrations in the soundpanel. These transfer from the soundpanel through the plaster, paint or wallpaper that is placed on top and then excite air molecules at the surface. These then excite other air molecules and so on until the sound reaches the listener.

THE GARDEN ROOMS

The popularity of the hotel had driven demand for an events space, but any new area would need to carry through the subtle interior approach. The hotel's proprietor (Samantha Trinder) identified several unused storerooms at garden level that could be converted and thus the Garden Rooms were born.

The plan was that this large, low ceiling, area was to be developed into three flexible interconnecting rooms which, when opened into one large space, caters for up to 90 seated and 150 standing.

The first issue to address was space. As a converted basement store, the ceilings were low. Loudspeakers jutting into the room would create discord with the design and feel of the room, whether consciously or subliminally. Again Sound Ceilings chose Amina speakers installed into the ceiling. The Hotel says it was the ideal solution as, not only does it have a sound source that disappears seamlessly, but it can be painted or wallpapered over. The interior designers were delighted as this gave them free reign to decorate and took up zero space, whilst still providing the necessary quality of playback.

Amina argues that its system has several other important benefits. One is that the sound created evolves from many parts of the soundboard making it very diffuse. The company says this means there are less distinct echoes and any sound reflection is essentially constructive rather than potentially phase destructive – adding to the sound, not diminishing it. The manufacturer says this makes them ideal for 'acoustically reflective' environments, just like the low ceilings in the Garden Rooms.

Amina says a further benefit for the Bingham was the way that Amina Loudspeakers generate sound over a very wide area. The manufacturer says this results in the sound energy being less directional and so it fills spaces more evenly. Amina says the sound sweeps through the room and the hot and cold spots normally associated with traditional pistic ceiling speakers, are significantly reduced, while the detail of higher frequencies is retained.

Stephen Bristo, managing director and founder of Sound Ceilings, says: "Many of the audio issues the development threw up were solved by installing Amina speakers. This has resulted in fruitful use of space and an AV system that has flexibility to treat each room as a separate entity as well as one large space.

"In each of the three function rooms in the Garden Rooms we installed a pair of Amina AIW3X 40W speakers in the ceilings. This meant that each room could have its own audio or could be fed from one source. A Sound Ceiling Dancefloor system was installed in the ballroom to give very high sound pressures localised at that point." Steve adds: "The special attributes of the Amina speakers have been employed through the rest of the garden level complex. Sound from the central system is fed through to Amina speakers located in the corridor ceilings to ensure guests still feel part of the party, even as they move around the building.

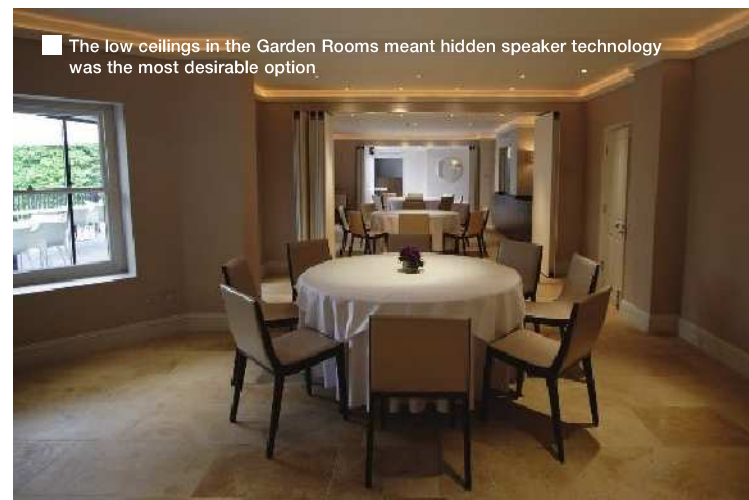
"The attention to detail is carried through to the toilets, where Amina AIW2X's (a two channel stereo version of the technology) are plastered into the ceilings to ensure that the sleek black chic minimalist interior is maintained, and the patrons don't miss a beat. And as they are protected by a layer of plaster there are no concerns over moisture ingress or damage."

Steve concludes: "At the Bingham, what started out as a search for a loudspeaker solution to be inconspicuous in the Georgian style bar, turned out to be a revelation that helped the disused basement transform into vibrant multi-faceted function rooms. But the real winners are the guests who enjoy a flexible 21st century AV experience without disturbing the interior design that this hotel is renowned for."

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The low ceilings in the Garden Rooms meant hidden speaker technology was the most desirable option



The lower level storage floor was converted into a multi-function events space