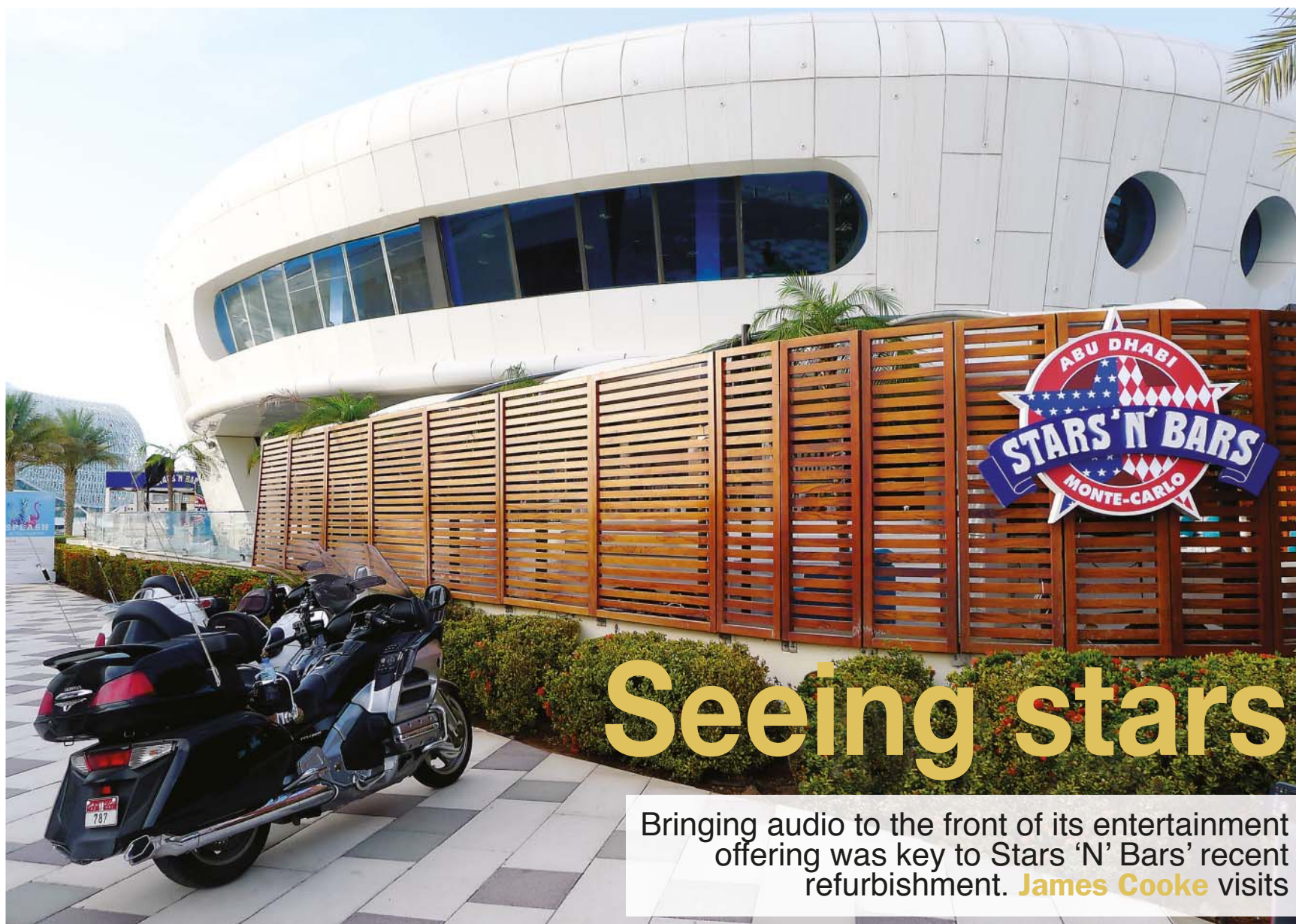




Seeing stars

Bringing audio to the front of its entertainment offering was key to Stars 'N' Bars' recent refurbishment. **James Cooke** visits

INSPIRED BY THE SPORTS BARS MADE FAMOUS IN THE USA, Stars 'N' Bars on Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit takes a page from the books of Hard Rock Café and Planet Hollywood. Autographs and memorabilia of some of the world's top sporting stars fill the space on the walls not covered by a television screen, showing a range of sporting events from around the world.

But it is not only collectables adorning the restaurant's walls, A/V technology is also a vital component of the Stars 'N' Bars offering. 'We recently underwent a complete renovation and wanted to emphasise the sound system as part of the entertainment,' says Stars 'N' Bars general manager, Randolph Hernandez. 'We were looking to start booking top DJs and to stage a lot of live music. We play music from an iPad during the day and, being a sports bar, for all the big games and sporting events we'll have the commentary on.'

Mr Hernandez comes from a music background, having managed and toured with bands in his native New York. Along with the venue's owners, he did some research and spoke to several vendors before opting for a Funktion One solution. This brought Stars 'N' Bars into contact with the British manufacturer's local distributor and systems integrator Em-Tec.

'The client loved the quality of Funktion One systems installed by Em-Tec across the UAE and wanted to have the same top-quality,' proclaims Em-Tec general manager, Andy Williams. 'The focus was on quality sound and perfect coverage across the venue. Stars 'N' Bars offers its customers various events and is divided into different zones, with a separate lounge area outside and a restaurant area. Together with the client we came up with a system design that allows individual zone mixing throughout the venue, allowing them to choose the sound sources for each area as required.'

Audio is played throughout the indoor restaurant area by six Funktion One F1201 loudspeakers and 10 compact F81 cabinets. Low end is handled by an MB210LP and four BR118



bass reflex speakers. A further four F101 speakers cover the outside terrace area. This entire setup is powered by F60Q, E45 and F40Q amplifiers with DSP handled by a QSC Core 110f and control via a TSC-3 digital Ethernet remote controller. Meanwhile, a pair of F101s serve as DJ monitors with an SB210A self-powered bass enclosure, which possesses a three-channel 2.1 amplifier that also powers the F101s. Installed in the outdoor lounge area are six F101s and a BR218 bass reflex enclosure with E60Q-MC2 and E15 amplifiers and an XTA DC1048 taking care of loudspeaker management.

'Placement of speakers was carefully designed in key positions around the venue based on the size and shapes of the rooms in order to create a stereo sound effect in the areas used by guests,' explains Mr Williams. 'Proper location and angling of the speakers enables better control over the sound dispersion and sound coverage. The venue has a lot of audio screens with metal work and highly reflective areas, which could affect the way the sound was dispersed, so it was important that the designed plan was followed precisely.'

The SI's work didn't stop at loudspeaker reinforcement. 'Em-Tec worked with us on setting up all of the stage equipment,' recalls Mr Hernandez. 'We now have a Midas M32 digital mixer.'

The 32-channel console was installed with four QSC KW122 speakers and a KW152, which can be used for monitoring or further sound reinforcement. Radial JDI passive, J48 active and ProD2 stereo direct boxes were also delivered with Em-Tec's own custom analogue stage box. The systems integrator also provided the microphone setup, delving into the Shure catalogue to offer three Beta 98AD/C-X mics, a Beta 91A and two SM57-LCE-X instrument microphones for the drums, a pair of SM81-LCs, three Beta 58A-X and a KSM137/SL.

'Andy and the team at Em-Tec made it very simple for bands to come in and out,' Mr Hernandez says. 'They gave me a tutorial, an overview of how to use the M32, and then I made it my own.'

They gave me the basic training on how to do all the setups and then I learned a lot from YouTube and manuals and by playing around until I got the hang of it. So now I do all of the sound engineering for all of our live music.'

Although he possessed prior sound engineering experience, the Stars 'N' Bars general manager was grateful for the tutelage. 'I used to help bands with their setups at all the different venues that we used to go to,' he remembers. 'It was just a bit of a learning curve using a digital mixing board, especially something like the Midas because I had no prior experience with a digital board and so many channels. The Midas is very high-end and a lot more complicated than the 15-channel desks I was used to. 'Em-Tec also supplied us with all of the amps, the drum kit



F101s serve the outside lounge area



The BR218 sitting beneath the outdoor DJ booth

and DJ equipment as well,' Mr Hernandez adds. This includes a Pioneer DJM-900SRT DJ mixer and a pair of CDJ-2000NXS2 multi-players. Lighting was provided in the form of PixieBeam, PixieSpot, PixieWash and LumiPAR7UTRI fixtures from ProLights, as well as a Nicolaudie Stick DE-3 DMX touchscreen lighting console and an Antari HZ-500 haze machine.

'Another thing that we have is a BYOD technology we found called Audio Anywhere,' notes Mr Hernandez. 'With this system you can listen to any audio from any of the 76 television screens across the entire venue from your mobile phone. So if the commentary from the game that you want is not on, you can open up the free app, tune in to our venue and from there you can choose up to seven different channels of audio programming depending on what's on the TVs or what's coming from the stage. And we have headphones that we provide, as well as docking stations that allow guests to plug in their phone and turn it into a small speaker for everyone at their table to hear.'

With a vast number of television screens and five audio zones, Stars 'N' Bars rightfully considers itself as an A/V-savvy venue. The concept is inspired by the sports bar of the same name in Monte Carlo, and brand expansion is in the works.

'We're opening a location in Dubai by the end of the year and then we're looking to open another four or five locations in the next three years,' reveals Mr Hernandez. 'Two in Dubai in the next two years, then we're looking at Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and once we've saturated the Middle East, we're looking to go

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international: Asia, Europe and eventually the United States.

'I worked mostly with Andy at Em-Tec and we speak the same language,' he continues. 'They're definitely going to do the fit out for the audio system for us in Dubai. The sound system here in Abu Dhabi is great and it's a big part of being able to have a great ambience. Even when the volume is not up high, you can hear clearly and even when the DJ is playing or a band is rocking out, we never hear any kind of distortion and that's a big deal to us. The system has also been integrated with all of the managers' mobile phones so we can adjust the volumes of zones and televisions easily.'

As a client, Mr Hernandez and the Stars 'N' Bars team are clearly impressed with the quality of the installation, the ease of use provided and the service from Em-Tec. Mr Williams is satisfied that all of his client's requirements were met. 'Funktion One speakers are known for their reliability and longevity,' the Em-Tec GM adds. 'We are confident that this system will support Stars 'N' Bars in creating a fantastic ambience for guests.'

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Audio Anywhere allows patrons to tune in to the commentary from a particular TV

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