

Birmingham's latest live venue opens with d&b Subscription-Series.



Forum Birmingham, UK

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Billy Chauhan MD at Forum

The team at Forum have grand plans. Birmingham's latest live venue officially opened its doors in September with all the dynamism of a destination club in the making. With capacity for 3,500, Forum occupies a piece of music heritage, an old purpose built venue that's hosted legends aplenty: Nirvana, The Beastie Boys, Amy Winehouse and Ed Sheeran just to name a few. Having lain dormant for over a decade, Forum brings new life to the historic space; expect to find global DJ nights, emerging and established bands, boxing and comedy. In

short, there's little chance this won't become a hotspot for the city's most discerning entertainment seeker.

For Billy Chauhan, Founder of Global Venues and MD at Forum, bringing a decade-long abandoned building back to life has cultural and economic regeneration at its heart. "We're extremely passionate about preserving Birmingham's musical heritage and in many ways our work culminates with Forum," he explains. "Prior to the pandemic, a quarter of a million people in the West Midlands worked

in the culture, media and night time industries and the relaunch of this historic venue will help to refuel this damaged part of our local economy." Chauhan is not new to the live events industry, and after years of experience he's put sound in a priority position. With d&b having recently extended its commercial options to include the aptly named Subscription-Series, Forum has become one of the first to acquire an in-house system in much the same way as many of us sign up to Netflix. "By opting to subscribe to the system through the Subscription-Series we were able to manage the risk of starting a new business in the aftermath of a pandemic," says Chauhan, "as well as have peace of mind in terms of monitoring and servicing the kit." d&b's new commercial tool has been designed to help accelerate ambitions: business, technical, creative or otherwise. Subscription-Series offers a secure and flexible way to access a system that's rider-friendly, trusted and reliable by reputation - without the burden or liability of ownership. There are no large downpayments required and no hidden costs, just a refundable sign-on fee and a monthly fee; arrangements are as long as you need and start from as little as twenty-four months. As a result, local d&b partner, DMX, has installed V-Series line arrays, flown above stage left and right, with six SL-SUBs built into the stage. D80 amplifiers provide the power. "A lot



of people were proposing different systems – bigger systems," says SJ Grevett, owner at DMX Productions, "but knowing Global Venues we were able to say 'well actually, listen. Use your ears and you be the judge'. With d&b less is often more."

"But, to some degree, choosing d&b required a leap of faith," adds Grevett. "It's not your typical choice for a DJ or dance music venue – it's essentially just an amazingly good sounding black box. But, actually in terms of attracting bands and being able to accommodate such a diverse program, it's going to pay dividends."

"It's about thinking sustainably and part of that is multifunctionality – one system that fits all. Forum's d&b rig can do a bass rave and knock

23 Hz through peoples' bodies; they can also have Jimmy Carr in there – a comedy gig - knowing it'll be crystal clear and deliver the even coverage that's needed. It's about being incredibly rider friendly for artists - having an A-list-attractive solution."

"With Subscription-Series now part of this picture, we're going to see more people in a position to spend the right money on the right product in the first place, alleviating the pressure to upgrade further down the line."

SJ Grevett, Owner at
DMX Productions

With support from the team at d&b UK, DMX Productions, designed and commissioned the system; with Subscription-Series full maintenance and biannual onsite visits come as standard with simplified upgrade options and decommissioning when it's time for a change. In the meantime, if anything goes wrong, the system is remotely monitored by d&b, enabling DMX Productions to be onsite and dealing with the situation promptly.

"During these early days, we've really enjoyed how much support we've had from d&b directly," says Taylor Godfrey, Technical Manager at Forum. "If we've had a question it's been really easy just to pick up the phone and talk to somebody who has intimate knowledge of the system." Knowing d&b, or at least J-Series since its infancy, Godfrey is not new to the brand, but this is the first time he's been behind a system anchored to the walls. So far, it's been a happy readjustment. "One of the main things I'm enjoying is how accessible the R1 software is," says Godfrey. "The capability of the networking is great, it's much more accessible than other systems I've worked with before. We've also been impressed at how powerful the SL-SUBs are for club nights, which is our primary operating



mode at the moment; they're just fantastic. We've got them on the floor under the stage so they really rattle the room, but in a super controllable way."

"The way the system has been installed we need to do very little at user end to 'mould' the room - very minimal effort on the graphic EQ at front of house. The room just sounds great as it is. Everyone's gone in and just been immediately delighted with the sound of the venue"

Taylor Godfrey Technical Manager at Forum.

For Godfrey, d&b's free training program has made his transition from the touring world to venue tech "much easier." So much so

it's inspired the team at Forum to offer up their d&b system to local audio techs'. "It's something we're working on at the moment," says Godfrey. "We're hoping to invite local engineers - the not quite seasoned engineers - in to train on the network and get well versed on the d&b system, to brush up on it and make it more viable for them to use d&b in a touring and festival environment. To help get them into bigger venues."

Subscription-Series has given Forum exactly what it needs right now, with nothing but total flexibility for the years to come. "We were looking for a system that would do justice to our diverse future program," explains Chauhan, "and d&b just ticked all the boxes. The system is so versatile it's coped with everything we've asked it to do so far. The install has been very, very successful."

> System: V8, V12, Y10P, Y7P, SL-GSUB and DS10, D20 and D80