

Alpha Male

Germany's Dynacord makes a splash stateside with the introduction of "brute" speaker system, Alpha Concept.

Product manager Jeff Taylor explains.



By John Landers

erman firm Dynacord has been building pro audio gear for over 50 years, but the brand was only recently introduced to the United States market. Part of the Telex Communications family, which also includes EV, Midas, Klark Teknik, and others, Dynacord is already well-known throughout Europe, and is becoming increasingly popular within the North American sound reinforcement industry. Dynacord Cobra PA systems, for example, are being selected by many leading mobile contractors due to their portability, modularity, and superb sonic performance.

Nightclub sound is, of course, a very different animal, and Dynacord's purpose-built Alpha Concept system is the choice of some of the finest venues around the world. Elite clubs in Bulgaria, China, France, Romania, South Korea, Spain, and Switzerland have all embraced it. In North America, Toronto's premiere dance club, Boa Redux, became the first kid on the block to get Dynacord's top-of-the-line system. Superstar DJ Paul Oakenfold was quite impressed with the sound: "This is the first time I could hear the difference between vinyl and CD on a system this big," he reportedly remarked after his inaugural Boa set.

During this year's Winter Music Conference, the Alpha Concept was officially introduced to the US nightclub market. Celebrated Miami superclub Space unveiled a massive new Dynacord sound system that had been surreptitiously installed during the days prior to the conference. The reaction [*see sidebar*] was both immediate and massive. Club owners, installers, and, most importantly, patrons were all happily surprised – almost overwhelmed – by its impact and clarity. Suddenly, everyone was talking about the Alpha Concept.

To learn more about this sonic phenomenon, CSI caught up with Jeff Taylor, Dynacord's US Product manager since February 2003, before which he worked at both EAW and Mackie. A tall, gregarious, and knowledgeable audio industry veteran, Taylor has been around long enough to distinguish between PR and actual performance, but he's still young enough to appreciate the energy and attitude of the nightclub scene. Due to his role in bringing this uber-system to the US, Taylor is definitely the Alpha Concept go-to guy.

I've read that Dynacord actually designs, manufactures, and combines the various components of their audio systems.

That's accurate. That has a lot to do with the breadth and power of Telex brands and manufacturing facilities all over the world. Obviously, Dynacord utilizes EV transducers whenever possible.

So, Dynacord is more than just a loudspeaker company?

Dynacord has always been well known for manufacturing systems solutions. That's one of the characteristics that makes them different from most other manufacturers. The Cobra system, for example, is a turnkey rig. It comes complete with an amp rack, amplifiers, digital signal processing, and a connec-

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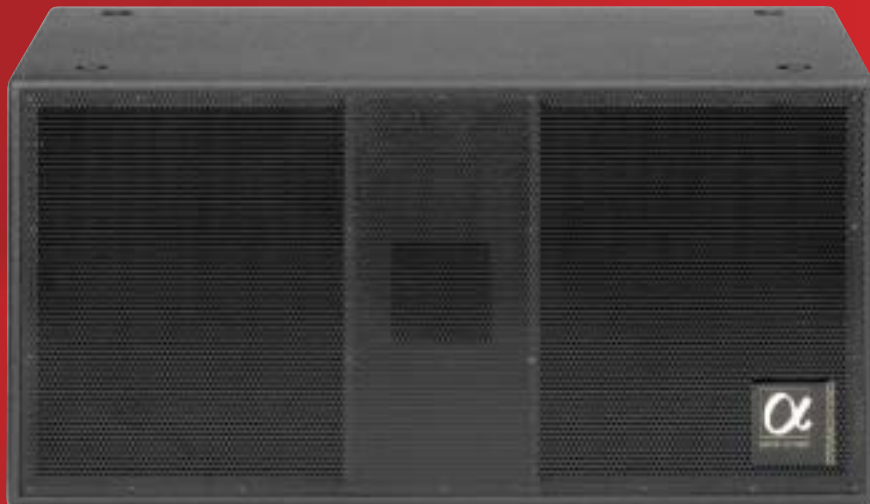
tion panel that's all pre-wired, assembled, and tested before it's sold. When you buy a Cobra system, which is considered a pretty good size reinforcement system, as soon as you get it out of the cardboard, you can plug it in and turn it on. With most portable sound components, you buy a set of amps, you buy a rack, you buy a

separate processor, and try to wire it up yourself.

Let's talk about the Alpha Concept. I know this is considered a new product launch in North America, but isn't this system already available in Europe? Yeah, it's been around for some time in the rest of the world, and it's been quite successful.

Obviously, the Alpha Concept isn't a line array like the Cobra systems, but what else sets it apart? The design process was, "What do we need to do to build the world's best club system?" Basically, they built a huge box with multiple components, that's really tailored to the characteristic

From top left: The Alpha B1, Jeff Taylor, the system at Infinite Audio's showroom, the appreciative crowd at Space.



The Switch

The audiophiles behind Miami's Space go with Alpha.



Oscar G (and others) gets an Alpha earful at Infinite's showroom during WMC.



Alpha's debut performance at Space.

So, what would cause a savvy, successful nightclub owner to tear out a perfectly good sound system? Louis Puig, the owner of the Space in Miami, explains it like this: "I am a sound enthusiast, aficionado, and freak. The sound system at Space is the product of my 30 years laboring as a DJ, designer, installer, and owner in this business." Sound, Puig believes, is one of the keys to success in this fiercely competitive business. "True clubbers don't stop to spot a blown out light bulb or an indigo blue cashmere curtain, but they sure do notice when a blown speaker rattles or the highs are too bright," he says.

For installer Lord Toussaint of Infinite Audio, the ideal way to eliminate such problems and simultaneously achieve maximum performance is with the Alpha Concept system and Dynacord's proprietary Intelligent Remote Integrated Supervision software. "IRIS allows

you to control up to 255 amplifiers and have real-world diagnostics, onboard test generation, and monitoring," Toussaint says, "so that you can see their impedance curves when installed. Subsequently, whenever you want, you can run an impedance trace on the system." So club owners don't have to wait for speaker components or amplifiers to fail before taking corrective action? "When you have IRIS, you can sit in your office upstairs, without ever setting foot on the dancefloor, and you can run internal tone generation on every transducer in the entire system, on every amplifier channel, and anybody that doesn't come up like the day it was installed reports to you on the screen." As for the Alpha Concept speaker system, "it achieves an unprecedented level of efficiency and sonic quality," Toussaint maintains, "and those two don't always go together." Dynacord's unrestrained design process certainly resulted in a unique product line. "It's big, it's bulky, and it's impractical for anything except a nightclub application," acknowledges Toussaint. "It's a brute of a system," he declares, "and it sounds great."

—JL

multiple loudspeaker designs to create the sound that they wanted.

They were forced to combine different transducer brands, which can be tricky. This is a one-box solution. It's got the size to create an optimal acoustic response, without a lot of unnecessary, complicated, proprietary processing and control like other systems require. It all comes down to the components used, which are all EV, and the cabinet construction, which is a specific type of wood, made in Europe, that's as dense as possible to keep resonance down. The horn mouth on the front of the cabinet, which is very big, dictates the frequency control and pattern control of the cabinet. It provides the maximum impact, or the thump in your chest on the dancefloor.

Having that sheer size provides you with a number of advantages. Club owners like a lot of thump. With comparable systems, all of the mid-

high components use 15-inch transducers, like the Alpha does, but none of them are horn-loaded. They're all just front-loaded. Our Alpha system utilizes two 15-inch woofers that are 1,000-watt rated, four-inch voice coil woofers. It's the best 15-inch model that EV makes. Two of those are incorporated in the one horn-loaded Alpha top, so you get increased efficiency due to the horn-loading, better pattern control, and more impact – more SPL – on the dancefloor.

I can assure you, from personal experience, that it has a pretty dramatic effect on the end-user. So, the speaker was a no-holds-barred design, specifically for the club market. I assume that's true for all four-speaker cabinets in the Alpha Concept system?

Dynacord pretty much looked at each box on a case-by-case basis, but they've always been known for innovative techniques in cabinet design.

Can you mix and match the different components? It can be tailored to the application needs. Dynacord would never say that any one

speaker is right for every application. You can mix and match, but consult either a dealer or our sales team to get some assistance.

Given the system's price tag, do you think it's a good investment for a club owner? Absolutely. One of our major selling points is system reliability. We're packaging the Alpha Concept system for club owners with the remote control DSP amplifiers from EV, and software control called IRIS. That's different from what anyone else has in the club world. Paired with the Alpha

Concept system, the RL-series amplifiers can provide not only guaranteed maximum performance for the life of the installation, but also the ultimate in reliability. They incorporate built-in digital signal processing, so you don't need any external speaker processors. You just put the amplifiers in your installation on a network. There are different ways to configure it, but they all can be remotely controlled via a PC, or with a touch panel.

That's clever. Are there other features along those lines? Along with the built-in DSP, there's also a system check function that allows for supervision and monitoring. As soon an installation is finished, you can run a system check, which records the impedance of each speaker cabinet, on every amplifier channel. It basically takes a signature of the whole system. Then, with repeated testing, you can compare that impedance curve to track the break-in of the system. It changes over time. Speaker design is a compromise. The laws of physics dictate a lot more than we do. Over time, there's going to be a retuning of each box. The woofers will break-in; the compression drivers will change, to a degree. The remote control amplifiers with system supervision give you an accurate representation of how your drivers are performing, and how they've actually changed from the original tuning of the system.

Can you correct individual component performance? You can compensate for changes in speaker response over time. You can also compensate for the entire system's response. More importantly, it lets you know if there's ever a failure on the system.

So if a driver's down, you don't have to walk around the dancefloor, with a finger in one ear, trying to find that one bad transducer in a 20-cabinet system. Hoping that your ears are working, get a ladder, call someone in, and stick your face in front of every single box. It happens to every club sound system over time.

That's why sound techs get

Space For Sale

For those of you who want to know what happened to the "old" Space sound system, it's for sale. Infinite is always happy to buy existing audio gear from club owners who are looking to upgrade. "We buy it cash, line item credit, which means that if you have a \$100,000 document with us, and your system's worth \$20,000, now it's \$80,000," notes Toussaint. "We give it to you like cash. That works." So, if you preferred the sound of "classic Space" to "new Space," it can be yours, for a reasonable price. And, if you happen to have an existing club system to trade in, it'll be even more affordable. Interested parties should contact Infinite (goinfinite.com) directly.

paid. Exactly. This takes the guesswork and the trouble out of that. It gives you the opportunity to check the system as often as you want, and it can be reported via email, a page, or an indicator LED. The amplifiers can be programmed to tell you what's going on with the system. It'll also report any amplifier faults, a short circuit protect, a thermal protect, or anything like that.

You'll immediately know if a system is being operated outside of its intended limits. With the remote-control software, it gives you the ability to set up the amplifiers on an IP-addressable network, which allows any contractor, in any part of the world, to go online and verify [system performance]. DSP-wise, you can recall any preset at the touch of a button. One of the advantages, as this market expands and changes, is that you can change from live-oriented music production to a dance club.

Instead of playing around with the EQ, you immediately get the optimal result. And the amplifiers' capability goes far beyond that. They can be programmed for anything you want.

Such as compression, crossover frequencies, time alignment...?

Sure. One dance club that we're working with right now wants a live orientation as well. There are different presets that will

allow for a dancefloor-oriented sound, and then for a stage sound. We can instantly change the sonic image.

So, you can shape and steer the sound however you want. That's one of the things that makes the Alpha Concept different from what's available on the market today. It's a big thing. It's club sound taken to the nth degree.

That's going to benefit the people on the dancefloor who are going to stay longer and come back frequently, because they'll be enjoying that experience even more. That's got to help the bottom line. The club scene is more and more competitive every day, and each club is looking for an advantage to attract more customers over other clubs. Sound is a factor in that. The end-users, the club-goers, have higher expectations now. High-quality car stereos and home theater systems have raised the bar. Because you get the matched performance of our amplifiers, which are designed specifically to go with the speaker system, you know you're getting the maximum efficiency out of the system. That means fewer amplifiers per speaker and less processing per amplifier, which means less wire, less install time, and more room. All of those things lead to savings over traditional systems.