Martin Audio BlackineQ for Manchester's Satan Hollow



Satan’s Hollow is one of Manchester's most famous and long-running alternative nightspots, serving as a cornerstone of the city's rock, metal and punk scenes for well over two decades. True to its name, the venue leans heavily into a gothic, infernal theme, with a distinctive circular main room where the central dance floor surrounds a circular central stage. Tasked with delivering a major sound upgrade in the venue's devilishly challenging space, Neuron AV turned to Martin Audio's BlacklineQ Series loudspeakers.

"Having been open for 25 years, the ageing sound system was long overdue an upgrade," says Alex Morgan of Neuron AV, "but the venue operators also had a growing ambition to expand their live programming." Morgan describes the previous setup as a hodgepodge of speakers accumulated over the years and, unhelpfully for live use, positioned firing inwards towards the central stage. "For the venue, this meant setting up an entirely separate PA to host bands, finding somewhere to store it between events, then clearing everything away before returning to club operation,” he explains. “The process was time-consuming and made dual operation in a single day a real challenge, creating a practical barrier to putting on more live shows."

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Neuron AV's brief, then, was about more than simply replacing an ageing system. "The question was: could we make live events easier to deliver, while creating a better club system at the same time?" says Morgan. "I thought about how we could do this. You'd need more speakers to cover the different areas, but presets could turn speaker zones on or off, removing that rigging headache every time." A regular specifier of Martin Audio, Morgan knew the BlacklineQ range - sourced through Martin Audio partner Penguin Media Solutions - would prove the ideal solution.

BlacklineQ delivers high-output performance with Differential Dispersion - wider up close, narrower further away - making it well suited to the venue's layout. The final system comprises 2 x 15", 8 x 12" and 6 x 10" cabinets. The installer provided three selectable presets: Club turns the stage into the main dancefloor, with four Q10s providing high-impact coverage and the wider system covering the venue’s circular space; Live reconfigures the system as a conventional left/right PA with subs and front fill; Large Live brings additional loudspeakers around the room into play, creating 360-degree coverage radiating outwards from the stage for larger shows. "BlacklineQ is equally good for club nights and live audio," Morgan says. "My view is that speakers should just be good for everything. If it's a well-designed speaker, it should put out what you put into it. BlacklineQ was absolutely the right choice for this."

Subwoofer duties are handled by four dual-18" Martin Audio Q218s, stacked in pairs and mounted on custom dollies. "The venue simply unplugs the subs from their club position, wheels them over to the stage, plugs them back in, and changes the preset," he says. "I'm really impressed with them too; they're a fantastic sub for the money." Amplification is provided by Martin Audio's own range. "I went for those specific Martin Audio iKON amplifiers to ensure they're on manufacturer presets, keeping everything under warranty as a complete system."

The system was fully modelled before installation using Martin Audio's DISPLAY software. "Because the venue is such an unusual shape, I needed to see how the coverage behaved,” Morgan notes. “DISPLAY was very easy to use. I had the venue plans, built a SketchUp model from them, and imported that in. It did exactly what it said it would."

The install also had to work around the venue's operating schedule. "They're generally shut Monday to Wednesday, and they took Thursday as well for the changeover," Morgan says. "We went in and got all the cabling in place beforehand, then stripped out the old system, got the new one in, configured it, and had it ready for doors." Morgan praises the support of the Martin Audio and Penguin teams throughout the project: "I've known Dylan and Charlie at Penguin for quite a few years. They've been great with support, checking stock, and ensuring on-time delivery."

The result has been a resounding success, as Dom Hirst, General Manager, Satan’s Hollow concludes, “Satan’s Hollow now has incredible sound quality and a much easier to manage live mode thanks to the unique 360-degree Martin Audio

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BlacklineQ system design by Neuron AV. Their team went above and beyond to ensure the sound was tuned perfectly and all corners of the Hollow sound incredible!”

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