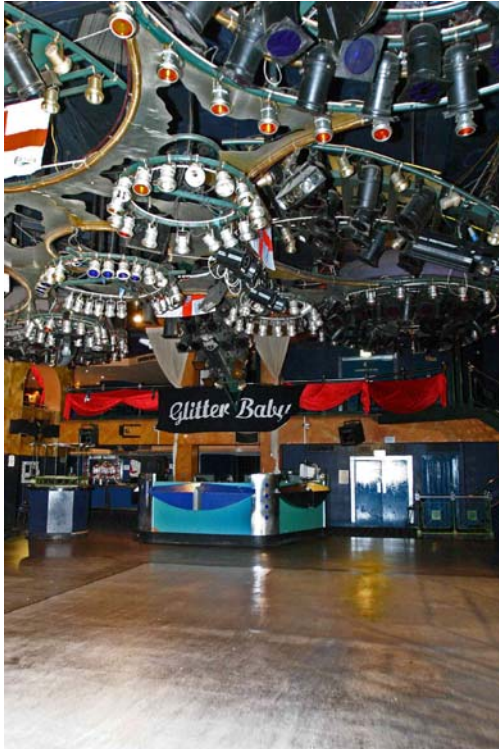


Equinox Nightclub

The Equinox is the biggest night club in London. Situated in the prime location of Leicester Square at the very centre of London nightlife, 1800 clubbers dance into the early hours four nights a week in the attractively appointed venue. It is also a very popular location for corporate events.



Being right at the heart of London brings with it obligations. The police and Local Authorities always take a close interest in the way night-clubs are operated, and the bodies responsible for Leicester Square, Westminster Council and the Charing Cross Police, are leaders within the UK in policing and entertainment regulation in metropolitan areas. So does the manager of the Equinox face constant intervention from these two public bodies?

“Not at all”, says Dave Joyce, General Manager of the Equinox. “We maintain such a close level of co-operation with weekly three-way liaison meetings that it is a team effort with all of us working to the same goal – creating a great experience for the customers we want in our club, and deterring those we don’t want. Both the police and Westminster Council are very helpful in achieving this aim. They also have specific knowledge of

wider threats. For example, I am fairly experienced with the range of club issues, but it’s the police who keep up with broader issues that could apply to us because of our location, such as terrorism.”

It was this constant attention to reviewing and improving security that led to the recent upgrade to the CCTV system at the Equinox. The major replacement programme saw 25 new cameras installed, feeding into a central manned control room with two Digital Video Recorders.

The first camera is located outside the front of the club on Leicester Square, a Vista Protos camera with PTZ control in a vandal resistant housing, and capable of covering the area to a distance of some 60 metres. The majority of the 24 cameras within the club are also Vista Protos, in this case fixed VPC 9432 models. Andy Fielding, Director of installers DES of Chorley, explains his choice. "One of our specialities at DES is night clubs. In designing a system for a club, a key issue is light. It is not simply an issue of the low levels of light in most areas, and a décor that is often itself very dark, but also the strobe and colour lighting that intermittently illuminates the field of view of some of the cameras.

"We usually choose Protos cameras for challenging light conditions. We then use vari-focal lenses with manual iris - the Vista VM35V814 - rather than auto-iris, even though this sounds wrong in conditions of changing light levels. We do this because auto iris lenses cannot react to the speed of change of the light of a club, and spend much of their time at the wrong setting, so a manual lens performs better."

At a technical level, there are a number of reasons for the level of performance of Protos cameras under low light conditions and strobe lighting. First, the EXview™ chip works to a very high spec, so the basic electronics produce very good images, and it is particularly sensitive to low light. Second, the VPC 9432 can when required address the problem of back lighting through peak white inversion, reducing the tendency of high light levels in part of the image to darken to rest of the image. The impact of back lighting is reduced wherever it falls in the image, whether at the centre or the outside. Third, the Protos has a "flickerless" option, reducing the impact of flicker from strobe lights and other sources.



As well as the total of 20 Protos cameras, there are four discreet Vista VFD fixed domes and one Vista PowerDome™. Every entrant to the club passes a high resolution camera on entry to ensure identification of everyone in the club, and all exits to the club are monitored for comings and goings. The camera images are displayed in the central control room, manned whenever the club is open, with a specialist security system operator keeping a close and active watch on all activities. The central storage for the 25 camera system comes from two 16 channel Vista



Triplex™ Columbus Digital Video Recorders, 320 gigabyte VCT16e320s, which are backed up by 1 terrabyte of VAIDe storage to collectively provide sufficient space to store images for 31 days.

Dave Joyce sees the CCTV system as a vital and effective part of his total security operation.

“I know of no club CCTV system in the UK as big as ours in terms of the quantity of cameras, and it acts as a massive deterrent. A security practice across our company is incident mapping – looking for any patterns of problems - and these exercises show the new system has had a major impact. We are also subject to unannounced visits from our central audit department, and these prove that the system is working well. Finally, the police regularly walk the building with sniffer dogs, and the low level of positive results underline the success we are achieving. The system helps us get on with our core business – which is running the biggest and best club in London.”