

The town of Castlegar in Western Canada, with its population not much over 7,200, is perhaps not the first place you would expect to find a super-slick nightclub. It is, at first glance, a working man's town, a cluster of communities nestled in the majestic wilderness, there to administer the lumber mills and coal mines of the West Kootenay mountains. To find Element in this setting is, in short, something of a surprise.

The 600 capacity club, which on opening in June of this year became the third largest licensed establishment in British Columbia, owes its location to a roadtrip undertaken three years ago. At that time, current owners the Vassilakakis family already ran a successful club in Penticton (some 300km from Castlegar), but were on the look out for a new venture. When their long-time lighting designer suggested Castlegar, after driving through it on the way to visit the Vassilakakis, they struck up a partnership and set about making the club a reality.

The team did not go into the project blindly, as Florio Vassilakakis remembers: "I did a lot of research - both demographic and statistical - and there's basically 65,000 people in our trade area and no nightclubs, so to me it seemed like it was untapped really. There were some bars

here, but nothing like what we built."

Element is located on a corner lot in the downtown area of the city. The building - which takes up half a block - is entered via the main door right on the corner. Inside, the main room with its 700 sq ft dancefloor is overlooked by a horseshoe-shaped mezzanine level which curves around the two outer walls. This area, with its discrete booths, operates as a lounge-and-grill from 11am everyday and serves as a filler bar for the club as the gloaming approaches. Perhaps the most surprising thing about this club-in-the-wilderness is the quality of finish. This is all the more impressive when you discover that, because of budget constraints and the loss of their partner and lighting go-to guy (who had to drop out very early on in the project), much of the design and technical work was carried out by Florio, his brother George and cousin Fred. It seems that being forced to go it alone has been a blessing in disguise. A lack of detailed technical knowledge has allowed them to tackle problems without any preconceived ideas as to what would and would not work - a freedom which, coupled with their incredible attention to detail, has resulted in a slick finished product.

"To be honest, a lot of the people who walk in here don't even ►

## VENUE

### CANADA



► notice the little things we were nit-picking about," remarks Florio. "Like the ceiling; it's got this stepped effect and we've actually mounted all the MAC 250 Kryptons directly to it, so all you really see is a little pod coming out of the ceiling. You think 'Jeez no-one is going to see it,' but at the end of the day it does look a lot better. From other installs I've seen where it's all truss mounted it looks really busy, but this just looks really clean because there's hardly anything up there."

Florio, now the de facto lighting designer on the project, was keen to include some top quality lighting effects. "I had many ideas from the places I had travelled," remembers Florio. "I always make a point of visiting nightclubs anywhere I go from Vegas to the UK, Vancouver, Athens and other European cities. Making these ideas reality was really much easier than I thought. Research on the internet and help from our local sound and lighting company pointed me in the right direction. About six months before construction started I was lucky enough to meet Martin Pro rep Clayton Hubick from Edmonton."

To show the Vassilakakis team exactly what was possible, Hubick made a special trip to Castlegar, bringing with him a laptop loaded with lighting effect footage. "Florio had always liked the look of moving head fixtures and really wanted to include that in the final design," Hubick recalls. "The Krypton was the obvious choice. Because of the club's high ceiling, we needed a fixture that could give us a strong impact. I also showed them the Wizard Extreme, and the effects possible by using four of them as a centrepiece, along with Martin's optional Wizard multi-coupler - they loved it. Atomics were added to the rig, simply because they're incredibly bright, and the light show just would not be complete without them!"

With team Vassilakakis learning as they went along, Florio kept in regular phone and email contact throughout the project, offering advice on everything from the best type of data grade DMX cable to recommended maintenance schedules. It was during this period that Hubick won Martin Professional's Distributor Sales Rep of the Year award. "I can see why he did," says a grateful Florio. "He did things which he didn't need to do and we didn't expect him to do, but he's that kind of guy - he went above and beyond."

In addition to Martin Pro gear, further effects come courtesy of twelve 1000W parcans above the stage, eight 2' Pulsar ChromaPanels colouring a feature wall, and 300' of Advanced Lighting LED strips. "To be quite honest, I had no idea who they were," says Florio of the latter. "I just searched around on the internet and got hold of this company called Advanced Lighting. They sent me a sample, which was about 25% the price of some LED strips. It wasn't as bright, but for our application it didn't need to be." Florio got in contact with Advanced Lighting's National Sales Manager Paul Benton who, like Hubick, was ►



#### SIGN SELECTION

Florio/Vassilakakis on his choice of Advanced Lighting for Element's external signage:

"I got talking to Paul Benton about doing some valance and bottle work and he told me that he also does sign modules. Rather than making just 16 inch strips, they do four inch strips with caps and seals, so you can bend them into a sign can. We priced out the sign using neon and basically doing a sign out of LED was going to be about the same price, but that included all the LED I was doing inside the building as well. So both the signs on the building and all the valance on the bar are lit up with LEDs."



## VENUE

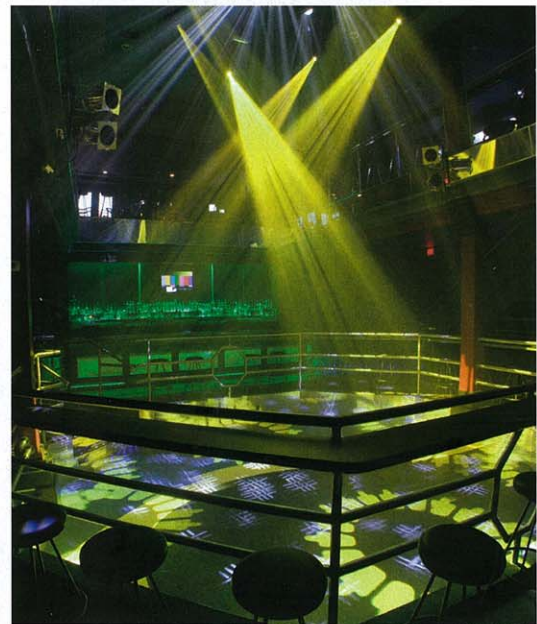
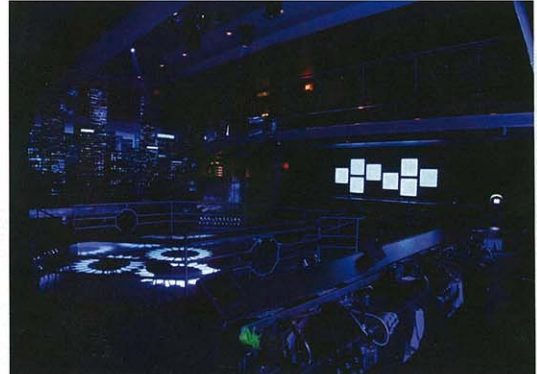
### CANADA

► able to offer some valuable advice.

"He's a really good guy who did a lot of work on this project. We created a design that looked a lot better than it would have done had we used conventional lighting. You could have used rope lighting, but it wouldn't have given the same effect – especially when you can do a light show with bar strobe colour changing – people really like it." The install was completed with a JBL sound system and, while the Vassilakakis team did all the wiring, they wisely left positioning decisions and final connection work to Skaha Sound of Penticton (who, as Martin dealer, also supplied much of the lighting equipment). Living 300km from the project site made the clubs conception a tiring process, but one which has ultimately proved a huge success.

"You know, people come up to us all the time and say 'thank you for bringing this here,'" says Florio. "I've never had so many people thank me for bringing a business to a town – but I guess there really wasn't anything going on here, and we've made something happen, so I think people are grateful for that."

"I think Florio and co have done an amazing job on the venue," exclaims Clayton Hubick. "Element could easily compete with any nightclub in a major city. I'm not even sure that the people of Castlegar BC fully grasp the quality of nightlife that the Vassilakakis have brought here! They should be very proud of what they've created and I'm glad that I was able to be a part of it." **M**



## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

### LIGHTING

8 x Martin MAC 250 Krypton; 4 x Martin Wizard Extreme; 4 x Martin Atomic 3000; 1 x Jem ZR33 Hi Mass; 1 x Martin PCI LightJockey; 1 x Martin Fingers + touchscreen; 12 x 1000W par can; 1 x NSI DMX dimming pack; 8 x 2' Pulsar Chromapanel; 16 x Pulsar Chromafloors; 1 x Pulsar Chromazone; 300' Advanced Lighting eLum RGB; 3 x DMX power packs

### SOUND

JBL Pro 3-way rig; Crown Macro-Tech power amplifier (12500 W); 1 x Ashley Protea Digital Processing/Interface; 1 x Denon Dual CD 2500; 1 x Technic 1200 turntable; 1 x Rane mixer

### FRANÇAIS

Element est une discothèque surprenante. Non seulement les propriétaires, la famille Vassilikakis, ont choisi la petite ville ouvrière de Castlegar dans une région sauvage du Canada pour établir leur entreprise, mais ils ont en outre créé un excellent établissement qui aurait l'air à sa place dans toutes les métropoles du monde. L'attention au détail est impeccable (dépassant même probablement ce que la majorité des clients remarquera) et reflète le très fort soutien que la famille a reçu de tous ceux qui ont participé à la création d'Element. Clayton Hubick, représentant de Martin Professional, était l'un de ceux-là et s'est déplacé plusieurs fois spécialement pour démontrer l'équipement qui conviendrait le mieux à l'établissement. L'installation impressionnante de matériel Martin est enrichie par des ChromaPanels de Pulsar dans la salle principale et des rubans DEL d'Advanced Lighting pour les bars. "Je ne suis même pas certain que les habitants de Castlegar saisissent vraiment la qualité de ce que les Vassilikakis ont créé ici" remarque Hubick. "La famille devrait être très fière de ce qu'elle a créé et je suis très heureux d'y avoir participé."

### DEUTSCH

Der Element Nightclub bietet einiges an Überraschungen. Nicht nur haben seine Eigentümer, die Familie Vassilikakis, die kleine Arbeiterstadt Castlegar in der kanadischen Wildnis als unwahrscheinlichen Standort für ihr Unternehmen gewählt, sie haben auch eine erstklassige Adresse geschaffen, die sich in jeder bedeutenden Weltstadt sehen lassen könnte. Die Liebe zum Detail ist unfehlbar (sie geht möglicherweise durchaus über die Aufmerksamkeit des Großteil ihrer Kunden hinaus) und reflektiert die enorme Unterstützung, die der Familie von allen an der Schaffung des Clubs Beteiligten zu Teil wurde. Dazu zählte nicht zuletzt der Vertreter von Martin Professional Clayton Hubick, der eigens Reisen zu dem Club unternahm, um die beste verfügbare Ausrüstung zu demonstrieren. Eine eindrucksvolle Anlage aus Martin-Produkten wird ergänzt durch Pulsar ChromaPanels im Hauptsaal und LED-Röhren von Advanced Lighting für die Bars. "Ich bin mir nicht einmal sicher, dass die Leute von Castlegar die Qualität des Nachtlebens vollkommen erkannt haben, die ihnen die Vassilikakis gebracht haben", bemerkte Hubick. "Sie können auf das von ihnen Geschaffene wirklich stolz sein und ich freue mich, daran beteiligt gewesen zu sein."

### ITALIANO

Element è senza dubbio un nightclub sorprendente. La famiglia Vassilikakis, proprietaria del club, non solo ha scelto la proletaria città di Castlegar nelle selvagge distese canadesi come improbabile sede del locale, ma ha creato una venue di gran classe, che non sfuggirebbe in una delle più importanti metropoli mondiali. L'attenzione nei confronti dei dettagli è impeccabile (con particolari sicuramente impercettibili alla maggior parte degli avventori) e riflette il notevole supporto ricevuto dalla famiglia nella creazione del locale. Non da ultimo il rappresentante di Martin Professional, Clayton Hubick, che si è più volte recato presso il club per varie dimostrazioni. Un'impressionante rig di apparecchiature Martin è completato da Pulsar ChromaPanels nella sala principale, mentre strisce di LED di Advanced Lighting sono state utilizzate per i bar: "Non sono del tutto convinto che la gente di Castlegar sia consapevole della qualità offerta dalla famiglia Vassilikakis", commenta Hubick. "La famiglia dovrebbe essere davvero orgogliosa di ciò che ha creato e sono lieto di aver fatto la mia parte".

### ESPAÑOL

El Element es toda una sorpresa. Y es que sus propietarios, la familia Vassilikakis, no sólo han elegido la pequeña ciudad de profesionales de Castlegar, en los páramos canadienses, como inusual ubicación para su operación, sino que también han creado un club del más alto nivel digno de cualquier gran capital. La atención prestada al detalle es impecable (probablemente supera lo que la mayor parte de los clientes apreciarán) y refleja el enorme apoyo que la familia recibió de todos los participantes en su creación. Y uno de ellos fue el representante de Martin Professional, Clayton Hubick, quien se desplazó expresamente al lugar para mostrar los mejores equipos disponibles. Un impresionante conjunto de elementos de Martin se complementa con Pulsar ChromaPanels en la sala principal y bandas de LED de Advanced Lighting en las barras. "Ni siquiera estoy seguro de que la gente de Castlegar llegue a comprender del todo la calidad de la vida nocturna que los Vassilikakis han traído a este lugar", señala Hubick. "Deberían estar más que orgullosos de lo que han creado y me complace haber podido participar en ello."