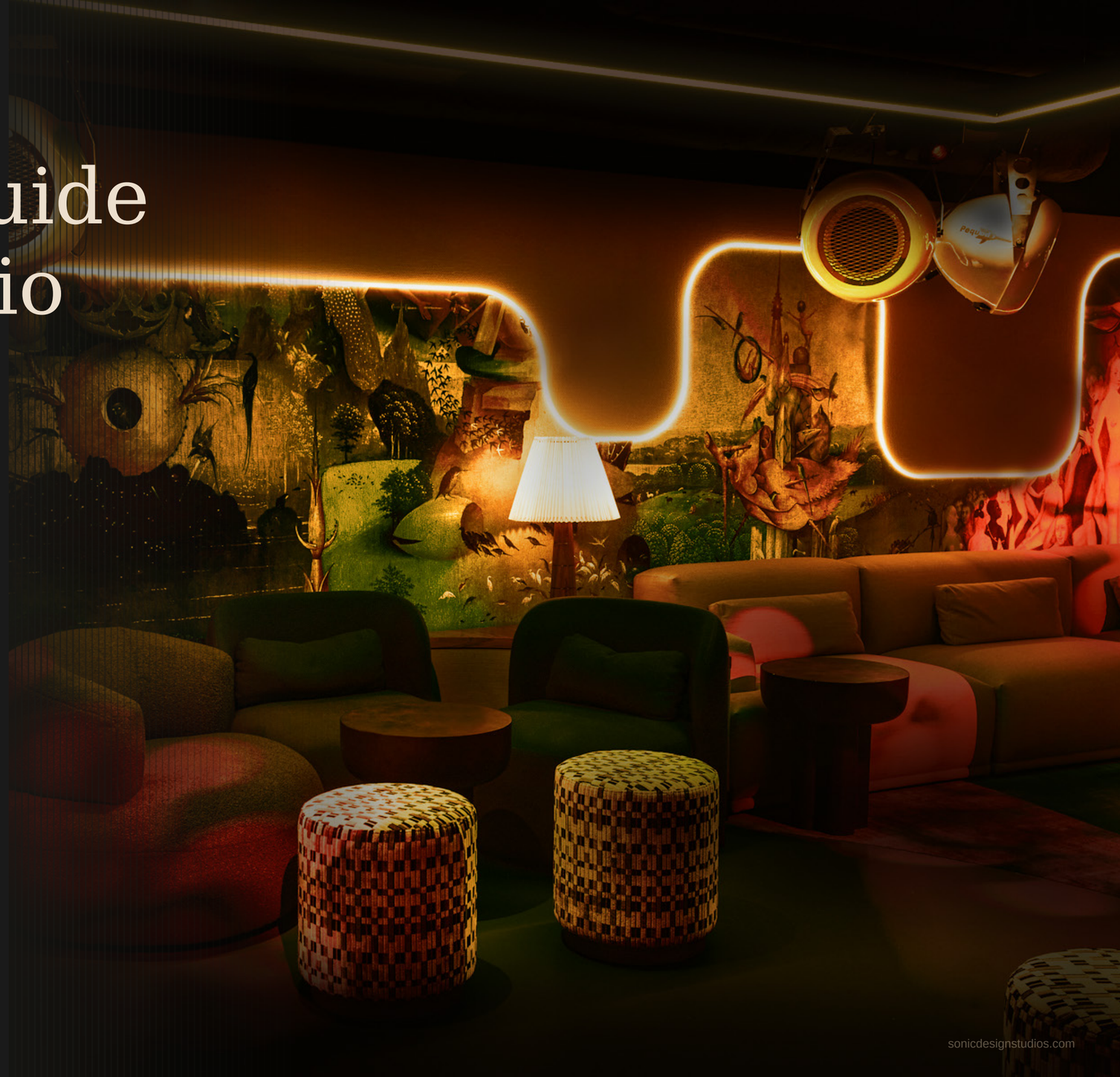
The Architect's Guide to Specifying Audio Systems

How to integrate exceptional audio as a design feature



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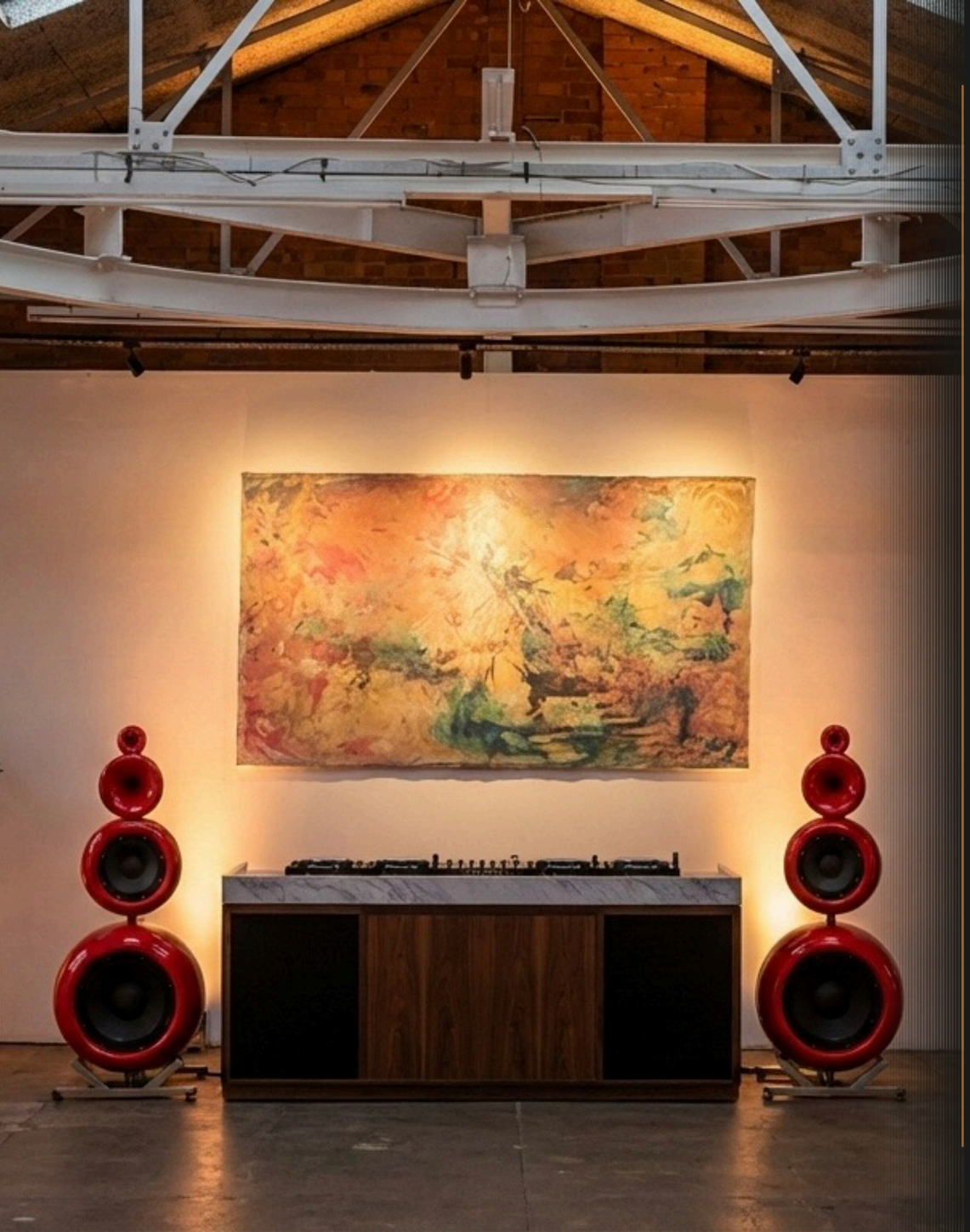


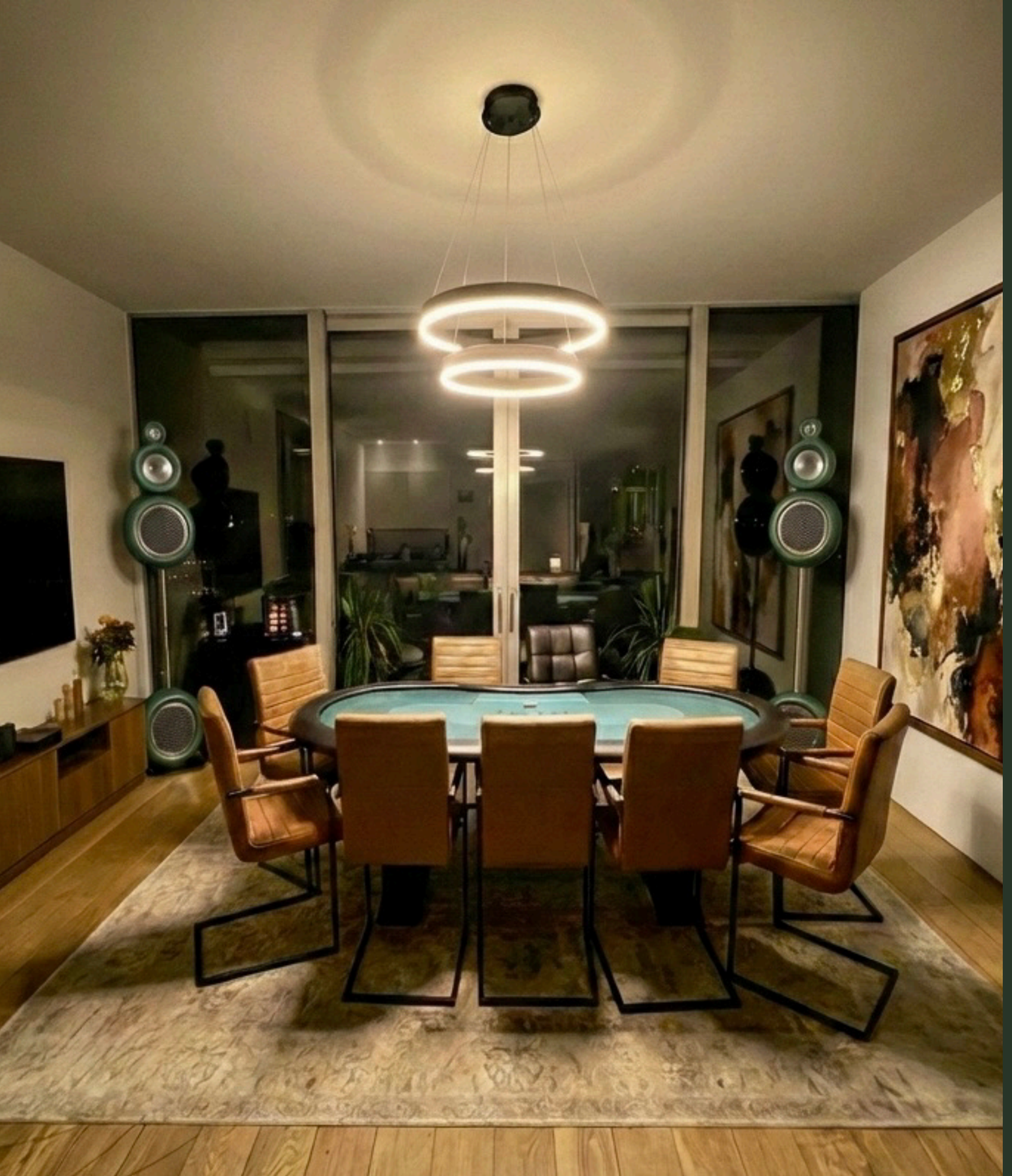
Audio as Architectural Language

Moving beyond the afterthought

Audio systems should enhance both the acoustic performance and the visual identity of a space.

In many projects, speakers are treated as technical afterthoughts. They are hidden away in ceilings or chosen purely for function, entirely divorced from the aesthetic intent.

We believe audio equipment must be treated as a centrepiece. When specified with intention, speakers and acoustic elements become part of the architectural language, contributing deeply to the overall design vision.



The Design Opportunity

Elevating spatial quality through sound

Well-integrated audio is not simply a technical requirement. It is a powerful tool for architects and interior designers to elevate the human experience within a space.

By integrating audio from the earliest concept stages, design teams can:

- Cultivate a distinct and memorable atmosphere
- Strengthen the overarching brand experience
- Support operational usability and staff efficiency
- Enhance the perceived premium quality of the environment

The Specification Timeline

The architectural impact of early integration

Ideal
(Schematic Design)

Speaker locations inform spatial layouts and sightlines.

Acoustic treatment integrates seamlessly with finishes.

Equipment routing is planned, and budgets are allocated before value engineering occurs.

Good
(Design Development)

Speaker types are coordinated with the aesthetic.

Acoustic modelling identifies problems before construction.

Specifications are locked to prevent suboptimal contractor substitutions.

Late
(Construction Documents)

The design is locked, forcing audio to fit around existing decisions.

Acoustic problems become much harder to solve.

Integration now requires visual compromise.

Too Late
(During Construction)

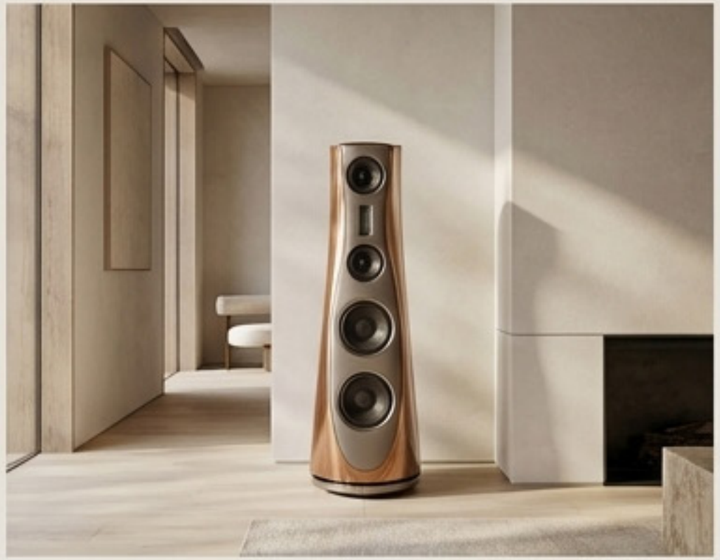
Rework becomes highly expensive.

Aesthetic compromises are entirely inevitable.

Systems underperform despite the high capital cost.

The Three Pillars of Integration

A framework for exceptional audio

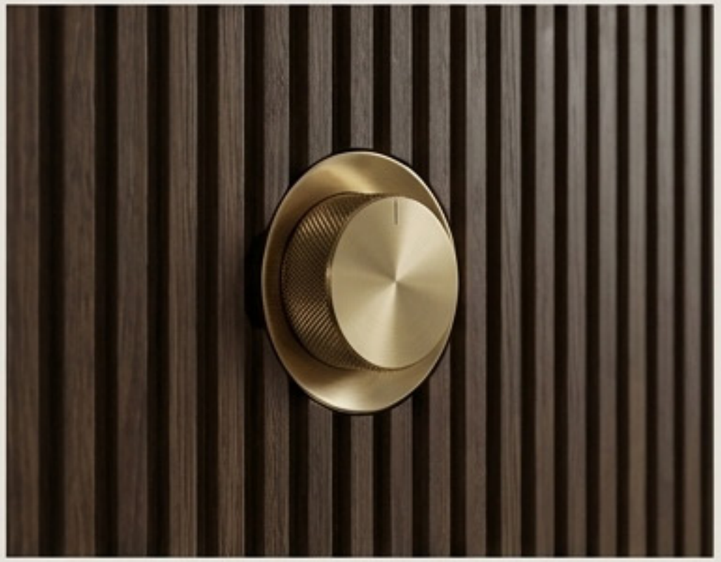


I. Celebrated Placement

Audio equipment can be seen and heard. We specify sculptural, design-led speakers as focal points, coordinating their locations with architectural features and seamlessly integrating cabling within bespoke joinery.

II. Acoustic Design

Good equipment in a poor room sounds terrible. We align material selection with acoustic treatment, utilising room modelling to predict and solve reverberation problems before construction begins.



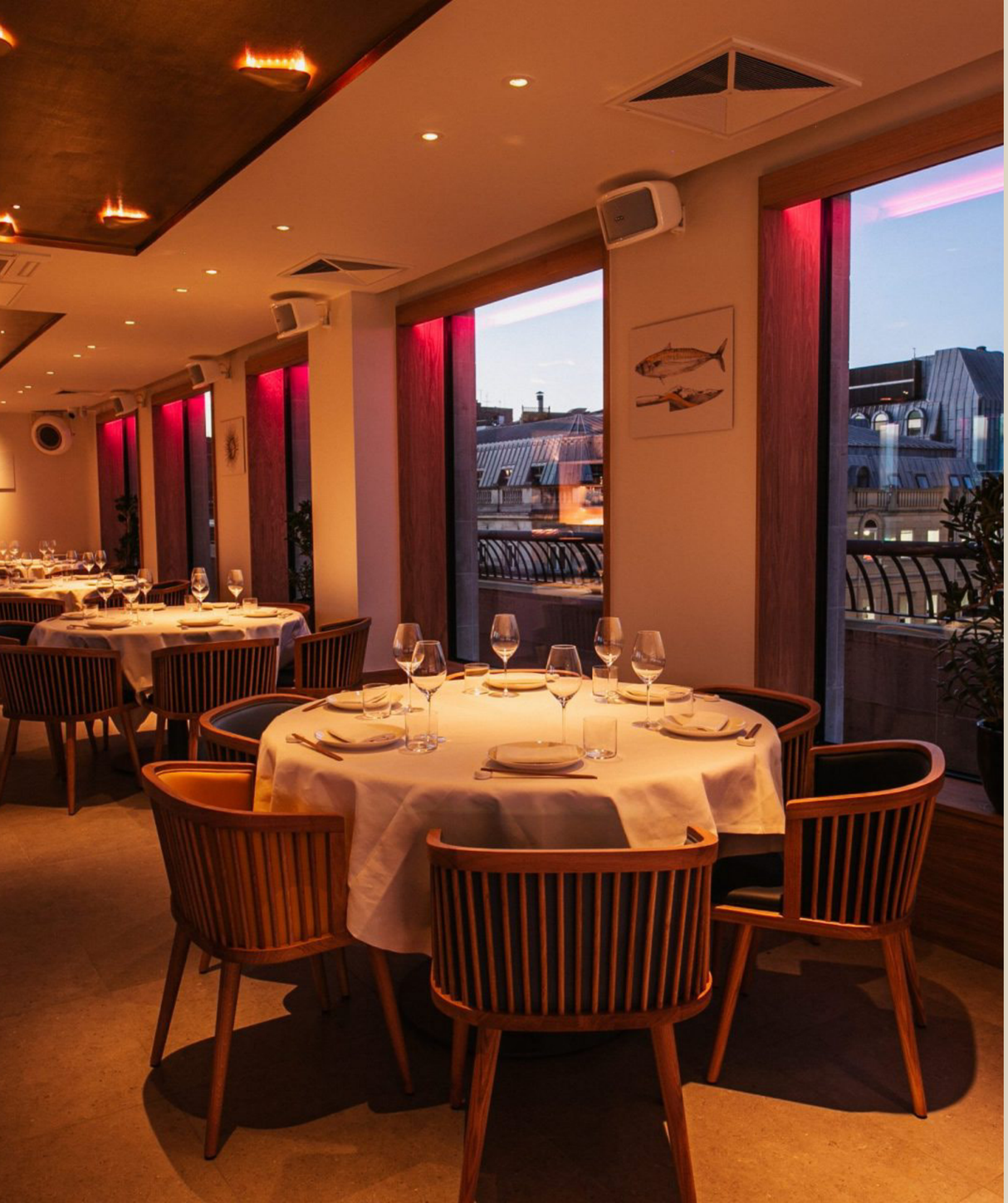
III. Operational Simplicity

Beautiful systems must be effortless to use. We specify intuitive, elegant controls designed specifically for daily operation by non-technical staff, backed by comprehensive training.

Navigating Specification Risks

Common mistakes and the architectural approach

The Risk: Addressing audio too late in the process.	The Resolution: Involve audio consultants early, ideally during the schematic design phase.
The Risk: Treating speakers as technical equipment rather than design features.	The Resolution: Prioritise both sound and visual impact in all project specifications.
The Risk: Visible speakers and cables disrupting the design narrative.	The Resolution: Integrate equipment and cabling directly with the architectural joinery and finish schedules.
The Risk: Ignoring acoustic treatment or making it an afterthought.	The Resolution: Design the acoustics for daily operational use, not just for technical specifications on paper.



Case Study: Bisushima, London

Japanese rooftop restaurant and speakeasy

The Context and Challenge

The venue featured highly reflective finishes requiring acoustic control without visual disruption. Strict planning conditions prohibited visible external loudspeakers, while multiple distinct zones required seamless yet independent control.

The Integration Approach

Pequod Acoustics loudspeakers were positioned as deliberate spatial elements, coordinated tightly with the joinery. The KRA Anaconda system was integrated invisibly within architectural features, accompanied by decorative acoustic panels acting as artistic focal points.

The Commercial Result

Audio was embedded within the architectural language, achieving full planning compliance with zero visual compromise. Controlled reverberation improved speech intelligibility, leading to increased dwell time and atmosphere-driven revenue. Recognised in Architecture Magazine.

The Sonic Design Studios Advantage

Independent consultancy for luxury environments

Sculptural Integration

We specify statement loudspeakers as spatial elements, coordinating placement with architectural rhythm, lighting and joinery.

Collaborative Finishes

We work directly with interior designers to align speaker finishes and acoustic treatments with the project material palette.

Early-Stage Modelling

Using predictive modelling during early design phases, we identify reverberation and zoning challenges before construction begins.

Brand Independence

We remain manufacturer neutral, curating solutions from premium brands to ensure performance aligns with architectural intent.

Hospitality Specialism

Our focus is high-end restaurants, private members clubs and boutique venues where atmosphere and discretion directly impact revenue.

Operational Handover

We commission, tune and hand over an operationally simple system with training and a support plan for the hospitality team.

NEXT STEPS

Ready to make audio a design feature on your next project?

Request an Audio Integration Review

A 30-minute working session reviewing your concept, layout and design intent.

- Speaker zones and placement principles
- Early acoustic risks and mitigation options
- A clear path to documentation and commissioning

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