

The Architect's Guide to Specifying Audio Systems

How to integrate exceptional audio
as a design feature.

Audio as Architectural Language

A manifesto for the embedded spatial component

Sound is not an accessory to architecture. It is a spatial force, carrying weight, occupying volume, and shaping the way a room is perceived before a single word is spoken. Yet across the industry, audio remains the last discipline invited to the table: buried in ceiling voids, concealed behind plasterboard, stripped of any relationship to the material language of the space.

We reject this convention.

At Sonic Design Studios, we treat loudspeakers as sculptural centrepieces, objects that deserve the same design consideration as a lighting scheme, a bespoke joinery detail, or a commissioned artwork. When specified with intention, audio hardware becomes part of the spatial geometry: anchored within the architectural rhythm, coordinated with material finishes, and integrated so precisely that it reads as indigenous to the environment.

The result is an acoustic identity, a layer that carries physicality while remaining perceptually discreet. Sound that is felt before it is noticed. A room that speaks before anyone in it does.

The Design Opportunity

Elevating spatial quality through sound

Well integrated audio is not simply a technical requirement. It is a powerful instrument for architects and interior designers to elevate the human experience within a space, shaping mood, reinforcing narrative, and lending a room an intangible quality that distinguishes the exceptional from the competent.

By engaging audio from the earliest concept stages, design teams unlock a dimension that most projects never reach:

- 1 Cultivate a distinct and memorable atmosphere, one that guests recall long after leaving.
- 2 Strengthen the overarching brand experience across every zone and transition.
- 3 Support operational usability, enabling non-technical staff to manage sophisticated systems with confidence.
- 4 Enhance the perceived premium quality of the environment through material continuity between visual and sonic design.

Preserving Intent

Why the schematic phase is the only true window

Every design project follows a familiar arc: from concept schematic design, into design development, and finally to construction documentation. Audio integration is uniquely sensitive to timing within this sequence. Unlike a finish sample that can be swapped at DD stage, the spatial consequences of loudspeaker placement, cable routing, and acoustic treatment compound with every phase that passes without engagement.

Schematic Design — The Ideal

This is the only window for truly seamless integration. Speaker locations inform spatial layouts and sightlines. Acoustic treatment is embedded within the material palette from the outset. Equipment routing is planned alongside services, and budgets are allocated before value engineering erodes intent. At this stage, sound is architecture.

Design Development — Viable

Speaker types can still be coordinated with the aesthetic. Acoustic modelling identifies reverberation problems before they are built into concrete. Specifications can be locked to prevent suboptimal contractor substitutions. Integration is possible, but the design is no longer shaped by it.

Construction Documents — Compromised

The design is locked. Audio must now fit around existing decisions. Acoustic problems become significantly harder to solve, and any integration requires visual compromise. The system serves the building; the building no longer

During Construction — Irreversible

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 loudspeakers as focal points within the spatial geometry, coordinating their positions with architectural features, lighting schemes, and joinery details. Cabling is integrated within bespoke millwork, invisible to the occupant yet accessible to the engineer.

II. Acoustic Design

Superior hardware in a poor room sounds mediocre. We align material selection with acoustic treatment, utilising predictive room modelling to identify and resolve reverberation, flutter echo, and low-frequency anomalies before construction begins. The room is designed to receive the system, not merely to contain it.

III. Operational Simplicity

A beautiful system that no one can operate is a failed system. We specify intuitive, elegant control interfaces designed for daily use by non-technical hospitality staff. Every installation concludes with a comprehensive handover programme, operational documentation, and an ongoing support framework.

Case Study Claude's at Chotto Matte

A subterranean members' lounge, Soho, London

The Context

Claude's is defined by atmosphere rather than scale, a subterranean members' lounge where intimacy and sonic precision carry the entire guest experience. The space is compact, intentionally immersive, and designed to transition seamlessly from social lounge to late night listening environment.

The Architectural Challenge

Low ceiling planes demanded controlled, directional output without vertical diffusion loss. Integrated LED geometry and curved wall treatments created complex reflective surfaces that would amplify any acoustic misstep. The design language left no margin for visible compromise, every element within the space carries deliberate aesthetic weight.

The Resolution

A curated Pequod Acoustics system was specified: Ostro and Ovoid 18 loudspeakers for primary spatial coverage, Borea for low-frequency reinforcement, and Zephyrus for near-field detail in intimate seating zones. Each component was selected for controlled, coherent output within a visually sensitive environment, positioned as deliberate sculptural elements within the architectural composition.

The Result

Physical engagement that is felt rather than announced. Guests experience tonal continuity as the space transitions from relaxed social ambience to immersive late night listening, without a single visible speaker disrupting the interior narrative. Presence is achieved through spatial geometry rather than volume, reinforcing the room's identity at every hour of operation.

The Sonic Design Studios Advantage

Independent consultancy for design led environments

Sculptural Integration

We specify statement loudspeakers as spatial elements, coordinating placement with architectural rhythm, lighting schemes, and bespoke joinery. Hardware is celebrated, not concealed.

Collaborative Finishes

We work directly with interior designers to align speaker finishes and acoustic treatments with the project material palette, ensuring material continuity across every surface the guest encounters.

Early Stage Modelling

Using predictive acoustic modelling during early design phases, we identify reverberation and zoning challenges before they become construction problems. Prevention, not remediation.

Manufacturer Neutrality

We remain brand independent, curating sculptural hardware from makers like Pequod Acoustics to ensure performance aligns with the architect's specific vision, not a manufacturer's distribution agenda.

Hospitality Specialism

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

Operational Handover

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

Ready to make audio a design feature?

Request an Audio Integration Review

A 30 minute working session reviewing your concept, layout, and design intent. We will cover:

- 1 Speaker zones and placement principles tailored to your spatial geometry.
- 2 Early acoustic risks and mitigation options identified before they compound.
- 3 A clear path from concept through documentation to commissioning.

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