

BEST SUPERCLUB



AVALON, BOSTON

The in-house techs at Boston's original Avalon, last year's winner in this category, have been especially busy this year with a hardcore overhaul of the club's massive main room lighting system, meant to extend its dominance in Boston's bustling college club scene. Designer Richard Warboys described the 2003 renovations as "major, in-house improvements that, by January, will be a brand new system." Included is a whole new truss system, a new laser, and an atmospheric LED outfit. The Color Kinetics system includes neon on the trusses, and a matrix built for scrolling messages. Warboys said, "LED is everywhere right now, but it's never been used on the dancefloor. We got rid of all our par cans and just use the LEDs. The washes are so rich that people don't even notice if the laser isn't there." The digital revolution has also come to Avalon's rebuilt DJ booth, which will soon include Technics' new CD players. —DC



LEVEL, MIAMI

The building at 1235 Washington Avenue in Miami Beach has been many things. It originally opened its doors in 1934 as a French casino and nightclub. A few years later, it was converted into a movie house. Eventually, it became Club Z, and then Club 1235, Deco's, Club Passion, Paragon, and Glam Slam. Finally, in 1999, the right people came together at the right time and place, and Level was born. Under the guidance of impresario and haute couturier Gerry Kelly, the mammoth nightclub flourished. Kelly took advantage of the club's multiple environments to provide something for everyone. Each night had a different theme, and each room had its own unique vibe. The 44,000 square foot space was soon packed five nights a week, with an exotic mixture of SoBe club kids, performance artists, runway models, jet-setting party people, and a bewildering assortment of famous faces. "I had about 298 celebrities come through the door," remembers Kelly, "from Faye Dunaway to Barbara Streisand to Jack Nicholson, people that you would never expect." The secret of Level's long-term success? "I think that anybody who owns a nightclub... should be entertaining their guests," Kelly opines. That simple directive certainly worked for Level. Hopefully, the next occupants of this magical space will also heed this advice. —JL



ON BROADWAY, SAN DIEGO

On weekends, the 25,000 square-foot On Broadway Event Center in downtown San Diego transforms into the city's most happening nightclub, and one of the most consistently packed large rooms in North America. Complete with a computerized light show and 90,000-watt sound system, On Broadway offers three music formats under one roof: Patrons can dance upstairs to hard and progressive house, venture downstairs to move to the latest designer hip-hop and R&B, or chill in the swank Ultra Lounge and go retro with hits from the '70s and '80s. And with more than 100 speakers, two 70-inch video monitors, bubble and confetti machines, DVD capabilities, satellite-fed music, a laser shooter, and lights that can turn the main room into a rainbow of 52 colors, all designed and installed by local outfit The DJ Store, On Broadway's audio/visual system surpasses anything in San Diego, and makes it a rival club for the rest of the nation. —LG

SOUND FACTORY, NEW YORK

■ If you want drama you've come to the right place, because Sound Factory is going to give it to you. Whether it's via elaborate theme nights with costumed performers and club-wide decorations, or high-profile resident DJ oustings, or the aggressive presence of super-powered sound in every nook and cranny (we're talking major fill speakers here), the Factory is the ultimate to-the-hilt underground experience for clubbers both straight and gay. The clubbing institution's rich history began with its first life at 230 West 27th Street (first SF, then Twilo, now Spirit) and Junior Vasquez's musically explosive residency there.

The club moved to its current 46th Street home on December 31, 1996, but this year attempted a return to the after-hours glory of its original incarnation by replacing seven-year resident Jonathan Peters (who himself fashioned a party so loyally attended that it made it onto MTV's radar) with Vasquez on Saturday nights. But even without a high-profile jock, the Factory is impressive: You won't find a more dominating sound system in NY (Crown power and custom GSA boxes), or a more loaded light rig (Clay Paky Stage Colors to Elation Color Spots to an old Coemar Venus). All that stretched over four levels full of secluded couches and secret corners? That's New York clubber paradise. —KLM

