SONIC DESIGN STUDIOS

Sound designed as architecture.

A GUIDE FOR ARCHITECTS & INTERIOR DESIGNERS

The Architect's Guide to Specifying Audio Systems

How to integrate exceptional audio as a design feature.

sonicdesignstudios.com

01

AUDIO AS ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE

The embedded spatial component

Sound is not an accessory to architecture. It is a spatial force, carrying weight, occupying volume and shaping how a room is perceived before a single word is spoken. Yet audio is usually the last discipline invited to the table, either bolted onto a finished room as visible equipment, or buried in ceiling voids and stripped of any relationship to the space. We reject both conventions.

At Sonic Design Studios we treat the loudspeaker as a designed element of the architecture, an object that deserves the same consideration as a lighting scheme, a joinery detail or a commissioned artwork. The speaker is visible by design. Specified with sculptural intent and finished to suit the material palette, it is integrated so completely that the room reads as a single composition rather than a space with equipment added to it.

An acoustic identity that carries real physical presence while belonging entirely to the design. Sound that is felt as much as heard. A room that reads as one image, and speaks before anyone in it does.

02

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 of a space, shaping mood, reinforcing narrative and lending a room an intangible quality that distinguishes the exceptional from the merely competent. By engaging audio from the earliest concept stages, design teams unlock a dimension 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, so non-technical staff manage sophisticated systems with confidence.
4	Enhance the perceived premium quality of the environment through material continuity between the visual and the sonic.

03

PRESERVING INTENT

Why the schematic phase is the only true window

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

Schematic Design THE IDEAL

The only window for truly seamless integration. Speaker locations inform spatial layouts and sightlines, acoustic treatment is embedded in the material palette from the outset, equipment routing is planned alongside services, and budget is 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, and specifications can be locked to prevent suboptimal 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 decisions already made. Acoustic problems become significantly harder to solve, and any integration carries a visual compromise. The system serves the building; the building no longer serves the system.

During Construction IRREVERSIBLE

Provisions not made are now disruptive, costly or off the table entirely. Remediation replaces design, and the outcome is the retrofitted look the whole approach exists to avoid.

04

THE THREE PILLARS OF INTEGRATION

A framework for exceptional audio

I	Composition & Placement	Audio equipment is intentionally visible. We specify sculptural, design-led loudspeakers as considered elements within the spatial geometry, coordinating placement with architectural features, lighting and joinery, and finishing them to belong to the material palette. The speaker is not hidden, and it is not on display for its own sake. It is resolved into the composition, so the room reads as one image. Cabling and supporting equipment are 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, using 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 nobody can operate is a failed system. We specify intuitive, elegant control designed for daily use by non-technical staff, and every installation concludes with a structured handover, operational documentation and an ongoing support framework.

05

SOUNDPROOFING & ISOLATION

Containment sets the *ceiling*

Before any system is chosen, one factor sets the limit on how good and how loud a room can be, and it is rarely the equipment. It is how well the sound is contained. Get this right and every option remains available; get it wrong and even the finest system must be constrained.

Floating floors, isolated ceilings and acoustic lobbies consume real depth and shift finished levels, which is exactly why they belong in the design now, not later.

WHAT WE ARE BATTLING

Airborne: music through the air, leaking via gaps, doors and light constructions. Managed with mass and sealing.

Structure-borne: bass through the slab, walls and joists. The hard problem, and the one a neighbour feels.

THE THREE LEVERS

Mass	Dense, heavy constructions resist sound.
Decoupling	Separating the room from the building.
Sealing	Acoustic doors, seals, a lobby or airlock.

06

SYSTEM DIRECTIONS

Three Directions, One Standard

Whatever the space, a system can be specified to one of three broad directions. The right one follows from the brief and how far the room must go. The standard of design, integration and tuning does not change between them.

I	Refined ATMOSPHERE FIRST	EXPERIENCE *Elegant & discreet*	ARCHITECTURE *Low to moderate*	High-fidelity, discreetly integrated loudspeakers with measured low-frequency support. For spaces led by atmosphere and conversation, where sound sets the tone rather than dominates it.
II	Performance FULL RANGE	EXPERIENCE *Real energy on demand*	ARCHITECTURE *Moderate to high*	Full-range coverage with dedicated subwoofers and genuine headroom. For a restaurant that evolves into a late-night venue, a members' space that builds through the evening, or a residence made for entertaining. The most common direction.
III	Reference CLUB GRADE	EXPERIENCE *Felt, not just heard*	ARCHITECTURE *High*	Point-source mains, a dedicated low-frequency array and full source or booth provision. A club-grade experience, viable only when the architecture is designed around it from the outset.

07

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 and bespoke joinery, so hardware is integrated rather than imposed.

Manufacturer Neutrality

We are genuinely brand independent, specifying sculptural, design-led loudspeakers from leading makers and selecting the right instrument for each room, never a manufacturer's distribution agenda.

Hospitality & Residential Specialism

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

Customisable Finish

Regardless of manufacturer, the loudspeaker is finished to belong to the scheme. Custom finishes let a visible speaker sit within the material palette as a designed object, not a piece of equipment.

Early-Stage Modelling

Predictive acoustic modelling in early design phases identifies reverberation and zoning challenges before they become construction problems. Prevention, not remediation.

Operational Handover

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

THE NEXT STEP

Make audio a design feature

Request an Audio Integration Review, a thirty 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 and isolation risks, identified before they compound.
3. A clear path from concept through documentation to commissioning.

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ENQUIRIES
hello@sonicdesignstudios.com

STUDIO
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