

CATO

Housed in a building that was originally home to the first OCBC Bank in Singapore, CATO, a new restaurant and bar, may not be the first nightlife venture to occupy the space, but one of its owners, Arjun Singh, plans to change that by establishing the CATO brand as a permanent fixture in Singapore and has high hopes for expansion too.

Located on South Bridge Road, CATO has plenty of nearby competitors so it was important to make it stand out from the crowd. This began with the room aesthetics, which merges old-world rustic charm with rough and industrial décor. The double storey conservation building retains its historic cultural allure as distressed steel, dark stained wood and rough-hewn brick walls accentuate it. However, possibly one of the quirkiest features lies at the window where Arjun has retrofitted and built a trishaw to form the DJ booth. There were a few options for bicycles, however, Arjun wanted something that's been around for the last 60 years, and so the decision was made to go with a Flying Pigeon – one of the first bikes China ever built, which ultimately produces a modern take on a heritage bike.

The view from the window is equally spectacular; visitors to CATO look out onto the Sri Mariamman Temple, a popular tourist attraction in Singapore. It's interesting to note that the Hindu temple sits alongside the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, a mosque that is in view approximately 50m down and the Emmanuel Christian Church, the only place in Singapore where four houses of worship of differing religions are in such close proximity, although the church is not in view from the unit itself.

Indoors and downstairs boasts CATO's kitchen and restaurant, which attracts an early crowd looking for a cosy, yet contemporary atmosphere but upstairs is where the magic really happens. The nine-metre long bar boasts 14 taps of craft beer from around the world, as well as a comprehensive artisanal spirit selection from over 20 renowned boutique distilleries. Owner Arjun described how the project got off the ground: "For me personally, this is my first nightlife venture, however, I have a large group of friends from different walks of life, one of which is our main director and he has been in the nightlife industry for close to 10 years so has lots of experience.

"Another friend of mine was the one who came to me with this interesting project [CATO]. I've always wanted to own a bar, so we met up, we looked at the venue, fell in love with it and the rest is history," he continued. With just three weeks to turn the venue around from its former guise, the pressure was on, which is just one of the reasons Arjun turned to Electronics & Engineering (E&E) to provide the new sound system at CATO.

“I’ve been appreciating the good set ups E&E have been doing all over Singapore, the company has been around for over 60 years. From the initial concept to the protocol, right through the point of engagement, all the way to takeover, it’s by far one of the most professional companies here in Singapore. We had three different vendors in the running, but I felt most comfortable with E&E,” Arjun explained.

The set-up comprises eight EAW JF60Z loudspeakers, which are spaced evenly across the top floor of the building, alongside a single EAW SB150ZP subwoofer to extend the low frequency response. “I sat down with Louis Ling, Sales Engineer from E&E and he basically designed an entire system and ensured it was within our stipulated budget. For the restaurant below, we wanted a more acoustic, a capella concept and for the bar, it’s deep house, so two distinct types of music,” said Arjun.

He is extremely satisfied with the EAW cabinets: “The sound dispersion is amazing, especially given that we have a high ceiling, which is actually a luxury here in Singapore. “The EAWs keep the sound off the walls and ceiling pretty well which helps in keeping the reverberation down.”

In addition to the EAW system, E&E also specified four Ashly amplifiers – two KLR 3200’s and two KLR 2000’s – and a Symetrix Jupiter 8 DSP unit. The Symetrix system allows for flexible control meaning upstairs and downstairs can be playing different music to create different vibes, simultaneously. In the restaurant six JBL Control 26C ceiling loudspeaker are ample enough for the chilled out and relaxing atmosphere required for the eatery.

By its own admission, CATO is a venture that has been brought to the dynamic nightlife landscape of Singapore by a team of eccentric and passionate individuals that hope to an offbeat experience to visitors that will keep them coming back time and time again.