

## **MEYER SOUND LOUDSPEAKERS DRESS UP AUDIO FOR ABERCROMBIE & FITCH**

**NEW YORK, February xx:** Daring designs are central to Abercrombie & Fitch's identity. First established in 1892 as a supplier of rugged clothing, the name has come a long way in its century-plus of existence. Today, its line of casual clothing for men and women stands as one of the boldest brands in retail, and its hundreds of retail stores make an equally impressive impact.

Now the clothier has taken retail environments even further with its new, 36,000 sq. ft. flagship store on Manhattan's highly competitive Fifth Avenue, enticing shoppers with a uniquely rich sound experience powered by Meyer Sound UPM-1P, UMS-1P, and MM-4 loudspeakers. Encompassing four sales floors with high ceilings, sultry lighting and a demure but upbeat vibe, the precision of the sound system is a critical component to setting the store's club-like feel.

"Abercrombie & Fitch expects every aspect of their stores to be stimulating – they don't want anything plain and ordinary, and that philosophy definitely extends to the sound system," says David Schwartz, President of Essential Communications, the NYC-based A/V designer and integrator for the project. "They expect extremely high fidelity, and reliability is a key issue: It's a 7-day-a-week operation, and when you rely that heavily on a sound system, you simply can't have it go down."

The decision to use Meyer Sound loudspeakers for the Abercrombie & Fitch flagship store was made in particularly dramatic fashion, with Essential Communications selecting them as his weapon of choice in an intense shootout scenario. "We were one of three companies in an exclusive group of contractors invited to the company's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio," Schwartz explains. "They told us our expectations were that this flagship store would have a precedent-setting sound system – something that had never been done before."

"One thing that the executives said during that meeting was that they wanted a 'theater-like sound.' Once I heard that, it was crystal clear to me that I was going to use loudspeakers from Meyer Sound. To me, Meyer Sound and theater are synonymous: Virtually all of the Broadway houses use Meyer, for example. That, coupled with previous successful experiences using their loudspeakers, convinced me it would be a natural fit."

Things got even more interesting when the time arrived for the competing contractors to demo their systems, with all three being instructed to set up and present in full view of each other within the raw confines of the store's construction site. Essential Communications' design was the only one to incorporate Meyer Sound speakers – and emerged as the clear winner.

“Everyone at the shootout – both observers and decision-makers – were almost shocked at the simplicity and performance of the system,” recalls Schwartz. “They couldn’t believe that we had been able to use so few speakers to create a richer sound than they ever imagined was possible. It was amazing to them that a box as compact as the UPM-1P could have an amplifier inside, but I had a lot of experience with it and knew the capabilities of that loudspeaker.”

The fact that the UPM-1P loudspeaker and the UMS-1P subwoofer are self-powered loudspeakers was an important factor in the decision to include them in the initial design. “I’m a strong believer in self-powered loudspeakers,” Schwartz says. “In an environment like this, they’re a huge benefit because you don’t have to try and drive the amplified signal over long cable runs -- that’s a big store, and many of those loudspeakers are quite a distance from the head end.

“The subwoofers line the north and south side of the store, and what we wanted to do was almost create the feeling of one giant subwoofer, with a push-and-pull effect that makes the store almost feel like it’s breathing. That effect is amplified by the fact that shoppers don’t really know where the sound is coming from, since the UMS-1Ps are built into the store’s cabinetry and camouflaged by customized grilles.”

No fewer than 139 Meyer Sound MM-4 miniature wide-range loudspeakers bring full, highly controlled sound to the equation, teaming with the 45 subwoofers to make the sound uncommonly strong, clear and even, with no perceptible change when moving from zone to zone. “The MM-4 has a tight coverage pattern, and therefore we thought of the speaker as a spotlight,” notes Schwartz. “We used it to focus sound into areas we wanted sound to be in, with a carefully planned overlap from speaker to speaker. There isn’t a dead spot in that store.”

With Meyer Sound loudspeakers in place, the resulting sound in Abercrombie & Fitch’s flagship store is a milestone shopping experience. “It was one of the most challenging projects I’ve worked on,” David Schwartz concludes. “Abercrombie & Fitch’s attention to detail in everything, including the sound system, is incredible -- they know that consumers expect to hear great sound everywhere they go now. Meyer Sound played an important role in making it happen, in a store that sets a new standard for audio quality in retail.”