

Facts & Figures

Owner: Myth, Maplewood

Type of Project: Adaptive reuse of a shoe store as a nightclub

Architects: 20 Below Studio, Minneapolis (interior architect); NAI Architects, Inc., Maplewood

General Contractor: RJ Marco Construction, Inc., Little Canada

Size: 36,636 square feet

Construction Time: March 2004 - September 2005

The Need: An entertainment hot spot in suburban Minneapolis/St. Paul

The Challenge: Transforming a two-level shoe store into a spectacular three-story nightclub in the Las Vegas style

Supportive Team Members

Boe Ornamental Iron Inc.
Structural, Miscellaneous & Ornamental Metals

Lakeridge Electric
Electrical Contractor

M.G. McGrath, Inc.
Architectural Sheet Metal

Metro Sound and Lighting, Inc.
Audiovisual

Twin City Garage Door
Garage Doors

Twin City Hardware
Doors/Frames/Hardware

20below



Photos courtesy of Michelle Litvin

Maplewood, Minnesota

Myth

Residents of the Twin Cities no longer need to travel several states west to get a taste of the bright lights, superb entertainment and sexy, alluring style of Las Vegas. With the completion of Myth, located in the nearby suburb of Maplewood, a little bit of that nightlife mecca has come to them.

With an expansive dance floor, a sizeable stage and the capacity to accommodate more than 4,000 patrons, Myth is a new hot spot for entertainment. The three-story club features seven bars; a distinct, sunken dancing area; three VIP suites; multiple mezzanines and balconies offering spectacular views; and state-of-the-art concert facilities aimed at attracting large-scale national acts.

"Myth fills the void between small clubs (1,000 person) and enormous arenas (10,000 person)," explained Heather Rose-Dunning, principal, project designer for 20 Below Studio, the project's interior architect. "It provides different experiences for every type of visitor, all of which feel intimate and accessible. It is a dance club, a swanky lounge, a hip bar [and] a private suite. It offers something for everyone."

For the architects, the major challenge was transforming an existing 20,000-square-foot shoe store into a cutting-edge nightclub/concert

venue nearly twice its size, said Jackie Gaston, marketing manager for 20 Below Studio. "The client asked that a design concept previously untested in the Midwestern market be developed: to bring the high energy and over-the-top style of a Las Vegas venue to Minnesota. The design solution was executed by infusing the space with light, energy and a healthy dose of sex appeal."

To help the design team get a feel for what he was seeking, the owner took team members on an excursion to Las Vegas to view firsthand the style and appeal of the city's entertainment complexes, said John Gaspar, lead architect for NAI Architects, Inc., one of the project's architects.

The end result features elements such as walnut-clad paneling, sculpted plaster friezes and intimate lighting in the lounge areas. Custom sofas, ottomans and cocktail tables combine to create the ambience of privacy within the soaring club, said Gaston.

Aside from the aesthetic challenges of turning a boxy store into a swanky nightclub, there were the structural ones. To accommodate the club's needs, the project team had to double the area of the existing two-level building and add a third floor. In addition, engineers had to remove a bulky column

piercing the center of what was to be the dance floor. The solution involved a large beam that spanned the area, providing an uninterrupted dancing surface, said Gaspar.

Prior to Myth's opening, many people questioned the owner's decision to locate the club in suburban Maplewood instead of within Minneapolis or St. Paul, but there was a well thought out plan behind the site selection. "The owner has a knowledge of the entertainment business, and he picked the location because it was close to both downtowns, on a major freeway, and had a large parking area [where] the parking would be free," said Gaspar.

Gaston called the choice both inventive and challenging. "Rather than locating the club in the heart of the entertainment district, Myth is located where people live — a suburb located 15 miles from the downtown core," she said.

In the end, a once-drab structure was transformed into a sleek, stylish entertainment hub. "Myth exceeds expectations, delighting patrons whether they are there for a concert, club night or private party," said Gaston. "The resulting [36,636]-square-foot space is not only beautiful, but also a chic breath of fresh air for the Twin Cities nightclub/bar scene." ■

— Cortney Casey