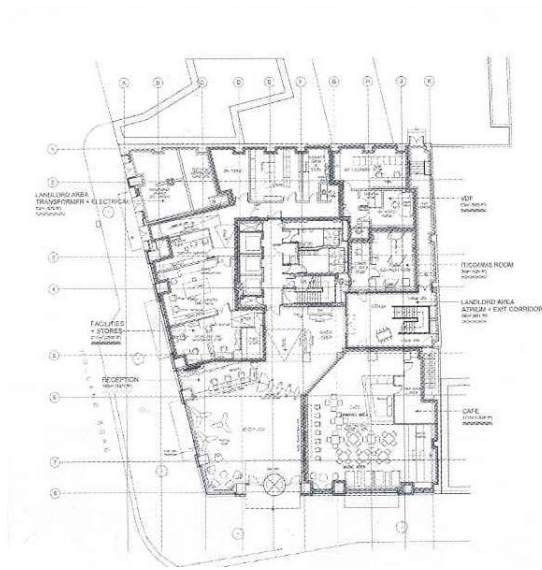


FX Magazine December 2005 – Record Deal

sharp end project of the month.



Details

Project: Universal Music HQ,
London

Designer: McFarlane Latter
Architects

www.mcfarlanelatter.co.uk

Client: Universal Music Group

Cost: £5m

Size: 5,800 sq m

Programme: Started in
early 2004

Designing an office to suit six major record labels, each with its own identity and budget, sounds a nigh-on impossible task, but McFarlane Latter Architects was up to the job, transforming a run-down, eight-storey office block into an enviable HQ for Universal Music. The end result boasts a licensed café, plus a double-height reception, offices and a decked roof terrace.

Architects Ken McFarlane and Paul Savage interviewed key figures at each company, including Mercury and Island for the project. 'Unsurprisingly, the only thing each record label had in common was that they wanted something different,' says Savage. Each company now has its own floor, with its own

layout, but with all receptions, breakout spaces, and graphics designed by Hawaii. Other common elements include the Herman Miller chairs and Bisley cabinets supplied by Natural Elements. 'The finished spaces incorporate the same basic requirements, but are furnished to reflect the very individual character of each label,' explains Savage.

While Island opted for grey sofas surrounded by red, tiled walls, and Mercury felt it best suited a hot-pink meeting area, both are outshined by Polydor's office with its curved vinyl walls sweeping past a brown leather breakout area and brick-effect wallpaper. Its library-style meeting room sports concilLUCE lighting and chain-

McFARLANE LATTER

ARCHITECTS

mail curtains for privacy, or 'to lose the fishbowl effect, as McFarlane puts it.

Such a large-scale refurbishment doesn't come without its problems, as McFarlane Latter, discovered when it came on-site. For a start there was no exterior cladding. 'The base-build contractor was late in completing. As a result we were forced to start the fit-out late, with them still in occupation, while still having to meet the original completion dates dictated by existing lease commitments with Universal Music.' says Mark Richards, MD of main contractor BW Interiors.

But it was all worth it. Universal Music's six individual offices stacked together make for an edgy and eclectic HQ that should have its rivals weeping with envy.

