



The Trafalgar St James

Staying guests

MARK LUDMON REPORTS ON THE GROWTH OF HOTEL BARS AND THEIR SPECIAL APPEAL

For some years, Artesian at London's Langham Hotel held the top spot in the World's 50 Best Bars. With a new team led by the hotel's director of bars Dino Koletsas and head bartender Gabor Fodor, the bar is determined to maintain its reputation for innovation, creativity and five-star service – a recipe that has made it a destination for cocktail lovers around the world. Its success has prompted the Langham's

owners to transform a neighbouring former banking hall into a new destination, The Wigmore, due to open this summer. Described as a “modern British tavern”, it is being developed with consultancy Gorgeous Group and Martin Brudnizki Design Studio – two specialists in top-end bars and hotels – with food by top chef Michel Roux Jr.

The Langham along with other hotels such as The Savoy and The Connaught are world leaders in bar excellence, reflected by London's dominance of the hotel bar shortlists in Tales of the Cocktail's Spirited Awards every year. Other hotel groups have been investing heavily in bars such as Accor Group's stylish new Bokan at Novotel London Canary Wharf and O'Callaghan Hotel Group's Tamburlaine in Cambridge.

Malmaison has reaffirmed Chez Mal at its Newcastle upon Tyne hotel as a

destination through a refurbishment that has brought a luxurious interior of suede and leather seating and stunning crown-shaped lighting, created with Dakota House of Design. In Wilmslow in Cheshire, The Stanneylands has undergone a £1.7m transformation into an elegant boutique hideaway that includes The Tap & Pantry. Designed by DV8 Designs, the beautiful new bar and dining area brings the outside in with hanging bird cages with foliage and



Computer image of The Wigmore

SIX AT THE VARSITY

Six, a rooftop bar and brasserie with panoramic views, opened at The Varsity Hotel & Spa in Cambridge last year. Its popularity led director Will Davies to source new equipment to meet the increased demand, including a Scotsman MXG modular icemaker that produces gourmet supercubes and a Scotsman N 0622 which makes nugget ice. “The MXG is a relatively small-footprint machine but it produces loads of ice and helps us keep up with over 1,000 covers per day,” Will says.





feature lighting in the existing pitched roof.

Due to be unveiled this autumn, The Trafalgar St James will be Hilton's new incarnation of the former Trafalgar Hotel in London's Trafalgar Square. It includes The Rooftop – formerly Vista bar – which will be a year-round bar offering views across central London with Mediterranean-style lounge and dining areas across a larger space than before. Downstairs, the hotel will have a new all-day restaurant and bar, 1805, and a private club-like lounge, Biblio, that will host live music and other events.

For the past four years, The Luggage Room at the Marriott London Grosvenor Square hotel has drawn people with its cocktails and spirits selection, especially rums and Irish whiskeys, accessed by its own discreet separate entrance. Inspired by 1920s style and glamorous travel, the elegant cocktail lounge was designed by Fabled Studio, a hospitality specialist whose other projects include Hilton's five-star Conrad hotel in Dublin – home to Lemuel's Bar & Lounge. "I think it is so important for bars in hotels to be treated as destination bars with their own identity to create a convivial and glamorous environment," says Fabled Studio's co-founder Tom Strother.

At the Hilton London Paddington hotel, a new destination bar was unveiled in March, 146 Paddington. Located near to

GRAND HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY

Since opening last year, The Tailor Bar at NH Collection's Hotel Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam has quickly gained acclaim, not least for its cocktail list under award-winning bartender Tess Posthumus. The interior designed by Studio Proof is vintage chic – huge antiqued leather sofas with rich blue velvet armchairs and a snug with dark, deep-buttoned padded walls. Highlighting the natural variations of the brick wall behind the bar, lighting includes 60 vintage filament bulbs suspended from dark timber and polished brass frameworks.

"We wanted to create a venue that would become a destination in itself as well as being deeply involved in the history and design of the rest of the hotel," says Studio Proof's creative director David Morris. "Therefore, we decided to embed the story of the original owner, Wilhelm Krasnapolsky who started his working life as a tailor, into the décor. We developed a substantial custom rug based on tailors' cutting patterns, fitted the bar counter with a brass ruler edge, and installed curiosities such as tailors' mannequins and giant gold scissors."

THIRD PAGE
PORTRAIT
57 MM X 262 MM



Fox@Connaught



The Tap & Pantry

QUARTER PAGE
PORTRAIT
88 MM X 128 MM



PRINCIPAL HOTEL GROUP

With hotels in Edinburgh, Manchester and York, Principal Hotel Group works with drinks suppliers such as Hi-Spirits to ensure they have a spirits and cocktail offering that differentiates them within the on-trade. "It's important for hotels to have a distinctive cocktail list to give them the edge over mainstream bars but at the same time as providing an existing and niche spirits offering," explains the group's national bar training manager, David McLeman.

Hi-Spirits helped Principal to create a dedicated gin bar at The Refuge in Manchester (pictured), featuring gins such as Brooklyn, Langley's and King of Soho, while The Principal York has developed a gin and tonic list with different garnishes. Its latest project is transforming the Hotel Russell in Russell Square into The Principal London, due to open in the autumn with a new destination restaurant and bar under bar manager Sean Fennelly.

QUARTER PAGE
PORTRAIT
88 MM X 128 MM

the station, the chic and contemporary interior was inspired by locomotive history, recalling the glamour of the golden age of train travel, with Art Deco touches and a grand piano.

Victorian architecture and Bristol's street art scene inspired the interior of restaurant and bar Keepers which has been created as part of a refurbishment of Accor's Mercure Bristol Grand Hotel. Central Design Studio worked with Bristol gallery and street art festival Upfest to curate over 500 pieces by local artists and collaborated with textile designers Kitty McCall and Midula Dey on bespoke upholstery fabrics.

At the centre of a £6m refurbishment of the 24-storey Hyatt Regency Birmingham in 2014, a new tavern-style bar The Gentleman & Scholar was created. With its retro-style interior, it has a homely and comforting atmosphere, enhanced by the installation of two feature fireplaces. While they look real, they are in fact a Dimplex



Keepers bar



Chez Mal in Newcastle

Opi-myst which uses state-of-the-art technology to create a realistic electric flame and smoke effect. As an ultra-fine water mist rises through the log-effect fuel bed, the light reflects against the water creating a convincing three-dimensional look. The seats near the fire are the most popular in the bar, says food and beverage manager Alexander Eversberg. “We have previously had a real-flame fireplace in the hotel but the maintenance and upkeep was quite intense.”

Having the right music is important for hotel bars, from upbeat tunes in the evening to something more subdued in the morning, says Andy Hill, CEO of Startle which provides background music for hospitality venues. “While interior design and service might be the first that spring to mind when managing a desired atmosphere of any venue, music plays an equally important role. It can be the deciding factor for guests staying for a quick drink or spending the evening in one place as a good music offering can increase dwell time which in turn may result in increased spend.”

Andy says that managing the atmosphere of a bar within a hotel can be complicated. “Operators must ensure the offering not only appeals to residents of the hotel but it must also entice non-residents over the threshold. As such, it’s important to ensure the music playing in the bar sits in line with the overall feel of the hotel while capturing the individual essence of the bar.”



GRAND HYATT DALIAN

Celia Chu Design & Associates has worked on hotels bars for the likes of Rosewood and W Hotels, including the Grand Hyatt Dalian in China. This features a restaurant, club, bar and party room on floors 42 to 44, designed to emulate the interiors of a luxurious beach mansion. On the 47th floor is Viva bar, designed to be distinct from the restaurant and club below, with unique luxurious touches such as gemstone finishes.

HALF PAGE
PORTRAIT
88 MM X 262 MM

While attracting non-residents has become important for many hotel bars, it is important not to forget staying guests, points out Clive Consterdine, sales and marketing director of hospitality epos specialist Zonal. “With the advantage of a captive audience, it’s never been easier to optimise the opportunity through technology.” By integrating a property management system with epos, such as High Level Software with Zonal’s Aztec, hoteliers can extend dwell time in the bar by gaining valuable insight into customers’ behaviours. “Also, through integration, customers can buy drinks and food and charge them directly to their room,” Clive adds.

At Connaught House Hotel in London’s Docklands, Fox Bars & Restaurants uses



Dimplex Opi-myst at
The Gentleman & Scholar



146 Paddington



The Luggage Room

HALF PAGE
LANDSCAPE
181 MM X 128 MM

Zonal's Aztec system at its Fox@Connaught bar, with additional applications such as AdMargin for digital signage and ZCPS for integrated card payments. It has integrated Aztec with cloud-based High Level Software to increase hotel guests' dwell time. They can now have the bill automatically put on their room tabs, resulting in an extra £1,000 in weekly revenue directly linked to growth in bar and breakfast sales from hotel guests alone. "It has been a game changer for us," says Steven Evans, operations director for Fox Bars & Restaurants.



THE HYDE

Rare and fine spirits including whiskies and cognacs are an important part of the allure of The Hyde (pictured), the destination bar that opened at luxury boutique hotel The Royal Park in London in February. The bar offers spirits as old as 125 years, including exclusives and bottles that are among the last remaining in the world.

Whiskies include North of Scotland from 1971, Macallan M Decanter, Strathisla from 1949, Gllenlivet from 1961 and Carsebrige 52 Years Old while it is the only bar in London to stock The Balvenie 40 Years Old. Rare American whiskeys are also available such as Old Mock 1916, released in 1933, Old Overholt 6 Years Old from 1942 and Schenley Reserve from 1940. Cognacs include Tesseron Extreme – one of only seven allocated to the UK – and Louis Royer Eloge, which was released in just 300 bottles, with only 12 in the UK.

Also specialising in cocktails, The Hyde is "one of the most quintessentially British public houses in London", says Laurence Wall, director of operations and sales. "Most importantly, its absolute unique selling point lies with the fact that the bar retains a remarkable 19th-century character providing guests with an intimate and luxurious setting to socialise, celebrate or simply indulge."

The Royal Park was created by Roseate Hotels & Resorts across three renovated mid-19th century Grade II listed townhouses in Westbourne Terrace.

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LANDSCAPE
181 MM X 128 MM