



3 Cromwell Road

Howard Spooner and Dipak Panchal have started a new chapter at an address in Kensington

The three-storey Georgian townhouse at number 3, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, has had a colourful history. After allegedly being an illegal casino run by John Aspinall, it became the legal and legendary bar, disco and casino The Cromwellian in 1964, attracting A-list celebrities and being the first London venue where Jimi Hendrix played live. Since then, it has been Bratt's, The Hudson Club, The Firehouse and, most recently, Dorsia. The next stage in its history is thanks to Howard Spooner, co-owner of Chelsea club Dukebox, who has been involved in London nightspots such as The Leopard Lounge, Embargo, Crazy Larry's and Public as well as restoring the Hammersmith Palais and Clapham Grand. He has partnered with Dukebox co-owner Dipak Panchal, whose other ventures include Chelsea bar and restaurant Coquine.

They brought in leading club and bar designers Tibbatts Abel to take a "lateral and often risqué" approach to the historic venue, now called simply 3 Cromwell Road. Director Adrian Abel explains: "We looked to create the unexpected, with a complete dark-grey interior mixed with specialist artwork and strong neon symbolism along with animal trophy heads and assault rifles."

With a capacity of 300, it covers three floors, including a cocktail bar on the ground floor; a restaurant on the first floor and a club in the basement. It takes Patrician

design details from 19th- and 20th-century London townhouses, including working fireplaces on each floor, and juxtaposes them with an edgier, more contemporary array of pop culture features such as neon and Kalashnikov rifles papered into the walls. Staff are dressed in tweed and flat caps as a tongue-in-cheek nod to aristocratic service of the past.

The high-ceilinged Drawing Room restaurant has striking elements such as a giant vintage chandelier, a mini grand piano and a vintage table football. To tie in with The Great Gatsby motif of the venue, a quote from the book features in neon on one wall while more quotes are painted on the bathroom walls. There is a bar serving a mix of classic and contemporary cocktails, led by bar manager Anthony Bannier whose background includes Supperclub London, Soho House and Beach Blanket Babylon.

The cocktail bar, The Back Room, is designed to resemble an apothecary, with

warm colours, deep velvet banquette seating, two fireplaces and 20ft-high windows. Showcasing a mix of DJs and live performances, it leads through to a courtyard and garden at the back.

The inventive list of signature cocktails, priced £9.40, includes the MNC, a mix of Hennessy Fine de Cognac, Lapponia Buckthorn liqueur, plum jam, Earl Grey tea and Bittermens Burlesque Bitters. Twists on the classics include the Julep No III, combining Woodford Reserve bourbon with liquorice-based Evangelista Goccia Nera Liqueur, eucalyptus bitters, fresh mint and simple syrup.

Downstairs is The Basement club, where DJs perform each night, with an interior featuring graffitied wallpaper, dance podiums and padded walls with neon touches. The club offers classic cocktails but also taps into current trends with a range of fun sharing drinks.

Operating Monday to Saturday, The Drawing Room is open weekdays for dinner till 1am and on Saturdays for lunch too, while The Back Room and The Basement are both open till 3am. Celebrities and musicians such as hip-hop duo Rizzle Kicks joined the Kensington and Chelsea set for the glamorous opening party, suggesting that Howard and Dipak have hit on a formula that will ensure 3 Cromwell Road continues the address's history as a late-night destination for the rich and famous.

Where to find it

3 Cromwell Road
London SW7 2HR
Tel: 020 3397 7838
www.3cromwell.com

Who did it

Design: Tibbatts Abel
Furniture: Andrew Martin