



Steam & Rye

Nightlife entrepreneur Nick House has teamed up with model Kelly Brook on a new party venue in the City of London

For the tabloids and celebrity magazines, the star name behind bar and restaurant Steam & Rye in the City of London is model Kelly Brook. But her business partner is as much of a star in the bar and club world: Nick House, co-founder of internationally renowned London venues such as Mahiki and Whisky Mist. And a "startender" heads up the bars: Andy Mil, who has worked at London Cocktail Club and Match and represented the UK in the Diageo World Class global final.

They have created a spectacular 550-capacity space inspired by the "glamour, decadence and idealism" of America in the 1920s and the Gilded Age of the late 19th century. Open from 4pm weekdays and 6pm on Saturdays, Steam & Rye parties on till 3am, featuring dancing and live music with an Americana and rock 'n' roll theme.

It has been developed in a Grade II-listed building that was once a New York-based bank but most recently Harvey Nichols' Prism Brasserie & Bar. Nick says he was partly inspired by two Martin Scorsese movies, *Gangs of New York*, about mid-19th-century Manhattan, and *Hugo*, set in a Paris train station in the 1930s. "My journey started almost a year ago as I began to source film set designers, alternative thinkers, illustrators, chefs and mixologists who could help shape my vision into something special and incomparable."

Nick brought in award-winning TV and film production designer Jonathan Lee who was briefed to create "a journey of escapism through the eccentric and eclectic world" of a fictional 19th-century American railway tycoon called Beamish Bettenbaum. "The design theme I developed is based on wealthy eccentricity from a period of great invention, exploration and decadent style," Jonathan explains. "As in designing a film, I set out to have the 'audience' immersed in this world and take them on a journey through it."

The venue is split into four main elements, starting with the Main Hall and Station Gardens which are modelled on New York's Grand Central Station and feature high ceilings, panelling, a bar, a stage and an Eastern Pacific Steam railway dining carriage. A winding stairwell leads to the mezzanine, called the Cargo Hold, crammed with stuffed animals – including a giraffe – and other ephemera, offering a view over the main hall and more space for dining. In the basement is the First Class Cocktail Carriage, based on a train carriage and furnished with rich velvet and leather booths, with its own long bar.

They worked with leading bar and club designers Tibbatts Abel, transforming the formerly sedate banking hall into "the personification of exuberance", explains Tibbatts Abel director Adrian

Abel. "We needed to be bold to convert a comfortable but sterile restaurant into a must-experience phenomenon." Like the interiors, the food is based on classic Americana, such as barbecue spare ribs, clam chowder, smoked pulled pork, and steaks cooked on a Josper Grill, under chef Andrew McLeish.

The cocktail list has the same inspiration, with drinks listed under headings such as Beamish's Gunhotious Curiosities, priced from £8.75 to £12.50. These include the potent Yippee Ki Ay, mixing Monkey Shoulder whisky, Buffalo Trace White Dog, Grand Marnier, genever, Sebor Absinth, port, madeira, bitters and lime juice. For sweeter palates, the Monica Lewinsky combines Disaronno amaretto, Sailor Jerry spiced rum, dark chocolate sauce, vanilla, hazelnut, caramel, milk and whipped cream.

You can also sip out of the heads of some of America's past presidents, with vessels from Bespoke Barware based on the figures carved into Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. They include the Abraham Lincoln, made with Waqr pisco, newly launched in the UK, plus Mahiki Coconut Rum, mango, pineapple, chilli and lime. The Theodore Roosevelt uses Sugar Puff syrup and camomile tea, mixed with Johnnie Walker Black Label whisky and condensed milk, while the George Washington combines bubble-gum infused Don Julio tequila with Aperol, almond syrup, pineapple, cranberry and lime.

As the bar's name suggests, it specialises in American whiskeys, especially rye, and was one of the first to stock Bulleit Rye in the UK. Alongside a short wine list strong on champagne, it offers American craft beers such as Huber Premium Lager, Goose Island Honkers, Anchor Steam Porter and several Samuel Adams ales.

For Kelly Brook, it is an impressive nightlife debut. "I have always been inspired by the glamour and opulence of 1940s Americana," she explains. "We've teamed up to deliver something extraordinary. There is nothing like it in London."

Where to find it

147 Leadenhall Street
London EC3V 4QT
Tel: 020 3701 8793
www.steamandrye.com

Who did it

Design: Tibbatts Abel, Jonathan Lee
Main contractor: WFC
Design features: Cheeky Tiki
Sound: Funktion-One
Lighting: TEI, Into Lighting
Barware: Bespoke Barware
Heating and ventilation: HMS