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A New Look for Two Hotel Bars in Midtown

Is Midtown the new center of New York night life?

It's not bloody likely, but two Times Square-ish hotels are giving it a shot.

Both the Dream Midtown on West 55th Street and the W Times Square, on West 47th Street, are giving a



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swank-over to already existing bars with the hope of attracting a little more excitement.

This week, in a space previously named Bar 55, the Dream Hotel will unveil the Rickey. Managing partner Matt Strauss describes it a "craft cocktail bar."

"We wanted to give it a fun identity for Midtown, and bring the craft cocktail from downtown to uptown," said Mr. Strauss, who added that the hotel is also in the process of redoing its rooftop space.

When he was developing potential ideas for the Rickey, "I did a lot of personal research, going to mixology bars," said Mr. Strauss. He explained that during that research, he rediscovered the Rickey cocktail, which is typically made with gin or bour-

bon, a half of a lime squeeze and some carbonated water.

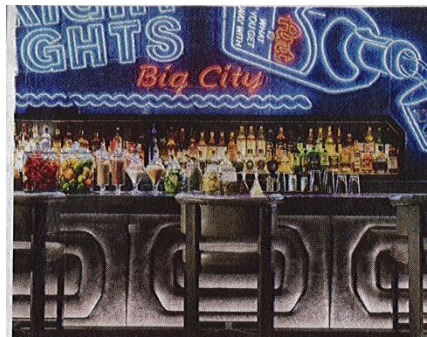
The cocktail was supposedly invented in 1883 by Colonel Joe Rickey, said Mr. Strauss, who described Mr. Rickey as a lobbyist who not only really liked lime juice, but was also particularly good at taking senators around Washington, D.C. and closing deals with them.

"So we want to make fresh cocktails and help people close deals," said Mr. Strauss.

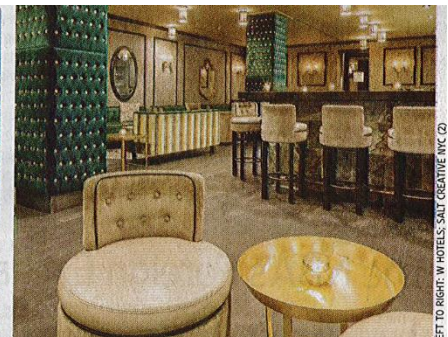
The space has been designed as "very turn of the century with a lot of modern twists," Mr. Strauss added, including plush velvet sofas, antique sconces and steam-punk lamps.

Drinks have been created by Johnny Swet, who has also designed cocktails for the Skylark, Café Clover and Jimmy at the James Hotel. A mirror board alongside the bar will feature daily fresh fruit specials that can be mixed into drinks, including the seasonal pomegranate Rickey, with vodka, Pama liqueur, pomegranate seed ice, ginger beer and lime.

Mr. Strauss said there aren't many craft cocktail bars in Midtown. At the Rickey, "you'll get a carefully crafted cocktail and not have that over-the-top Brooklyn



Left, a neon installation at W Times Square's Living Room. Right, the Rickey at the Dream Midtown. Below, the Rickey's Jerry Lee Lewis.



LEFT TO RIGHT: W HOTELS; SAU CREATIVE; NYC CO

attitude." Meanwhile, a few blocks closer to Times Square, the W is about to finish its latest burlesque act, by showing off a newly refurbished Living Room. This is essentially its lobby bar, even though this particular hotel's lobby isn't on the ground level. Among the additions is a mirror behind the 39-foot bar that is actually a neon installation that activates at night, designed by Lite Brite Neon in Brooklyn. With illustrations of a muscular sailor and a pair of lips drinking a beverage, the piece serves as

a homage to a Times Square of yesteryear that was definitely dirtier—but maybe a teensy bit more fun—than the one we have today. There is also a piano that is not quite a piano, but rather an abstract communal table disguised as a grand piano, because who really wants one of those? Ted Jacobs, the vice president of brand design at Starwood, which operates the hotel, described this piano sculpture as "an ode" to the nearby Broadway community. And to answer the question, "Where do you put a DJ

booth during the day?" the Living Room has placed it in a brass and dichroic glass geodesic dome. The "DJ ball" is inspired by the Times Square New Year's Eve ball. By day, this edifice acts as a screen; by night, it spins to reveal the booth. An adjacent photo booth takes pictures, yes, but it also projects them in the bathrooms. "It's a homage to the peep show," said Mr. Jacobs. "It's

flirty and voyeuristic, but in a 2015 kind of way." The DJ ball is the not the only nod at the Living Room to New Year's Eve. Behind the lobby's welcome desk is a light installation that doesn't tell the time, but instead counts down the days, hours and minutes to Jan. 1. "It's about celebrating every day," insisted Mr. Jacobs, who, naturally, hopes that people will be celebrating those days chez the W Times Square.

