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SCHRAGER STRIKES AGAIN EDITION - a New Dynasty of Hotels

by Carolyn Burdet

It all started with the nightclub where Bianca Jagger rode a white horse onto the dance floor on her birthday. Infamously lucrative celebrity vortex, Studio 54, held the cool party vibe in New York, where literati spilled into street-cred, novelist screenwriter Truman Capote and Woody Allen brushed the airwaves, and Debbie Harry was goddess of the new wave. Johnny Depp used to be a firefly with Kate Moss, now glides in with Amber Heard, languid in matching white trouser suits.

Their attire matches the décor of the latest project by hotelier Ian Schrager, the creative business mind credited with the concept of boutique hotels that overturned hotel business plans from faceless corporate corridors to design-led hubs for leisure culture.

At the opening night of the New York EDITION, a 41-floor, 273-room hotel in the landmark Clocktower building on Madison Avenue, champagne flows like a river. People, drinking, chatting, flirting, dancing to the pounding sound system. Fashionista Alexa Chung and Daisy Lowe have joined the party after dinner with Grayson Perry. Some of the most recognised faces on our screens are mingling: David Schwimmer is here, look, there's Leonardo DiCaprio. This is the best party since... since Ian Schrager last threw a party. Ian Schrager has an alchemical genius for making people enjoy themselves. "I knew at 11.45pm what the night was going to be," Schrager says. "There was a magic. I knew it was a success." ▶



Miami EDITION Bedrooms



Miami EDITION Lobby



London EDITION Terrace

Beyond London, New York, Miami Beach, EDITION Hotels are in Istanbul, and now plotting pins across the map of the world, in Reykjavik, Shanghai, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and the holiday playgrounds of Bali and Bangkok, and Sanya on Hainan Island, off the coast of Southern China. Schrager insists: "People do not want something derivative, they want the real thing, this is the whole idea behind EDITION."

An assemblage of objets trouvés create a mise en scene for the lobby in each EDITION. Miami has Spanish architecture, Istanbul has gold mosaics, London is stuffed with green velvet, brown leather armchairs and a dining room designed like a museum. Yet across the world, they are designed with an indelible marker pen, to a homogenised standard of high expectation.

London's EDITION occupies a row of Georgian townhouses in Fitzrovia. Ten minutes stroll from the British Museum, the London EDITION is a pastiche of stuffy old Blighty. It's the bar and restaurant where Schrager jet propels 'design' into setting the scene for each locality. The Punch Room is an oak-panelled den evoking comfortable old English country manor house libraries, overstuffed green leather tub chairs and tufted banquettes in teal velvet. The dark brown leather chairs would not be out of place in Sherlock Holmes' study or a 19th century London private gentleman's club. If this isn't Jeeves twirling his umbrella as he strides across the chequerboard tiled floor, I'll eat my bowler hat. ►

Berner's Tavern is a cavernous museum of a banqueting hall, decked with sculptural garlands and goddesses emerging from scallop shells of decorative plasterwork. Two bronze chandeliers inspired by NYC's Grand Central Station scale down the 18-foot high ceilings, bringing focus to walls crowded with art. The picture rail can barely contain the array of framed artwork, photographic portraits and landscapes, curated by Trunk Archive, as if the stacks of a gallery had been given a chance of a lifetime to see the light of day.

Dusty rose chairs, banquettes in chestnut mohair and taupe leather, and round bleached oak tables, take the central dining area, like a grand train station, all in the classic muted colours of a Vermeer painting. A zinc-topped bar, illuminated by amber-lit drinks shelves, presides over the tavern.

The Lobby Bar is less of a lampoonery of what constitutes British. Well, there is an antique billiard table and behind the reception desk is a reproduction tapestry of Louis XV Gobelin Tapestries scenes dating from 1773. The original tapestry hangs in the Drapers Hall in London, and features in the film *The King's Speech*.

Soft green velvet sofas and mustard velvet slipper chairs invite you to linger over a cognac from the open backlit shelves inset into the classical arched niches, soothingly stocked with bottles of familiar Hennessy. Leather-upholstered wingback chairs, Christian Liaigre modern blackened steel furniture sits in front of four back-lit antique mirror silver leaf arches, 24-carat gold Salvador Dali inspired floor lamps. ►



London EDITION Reception. Photo © Nikolas Koenig



London EDITION Lobby. Photo © Nikolas Koenig

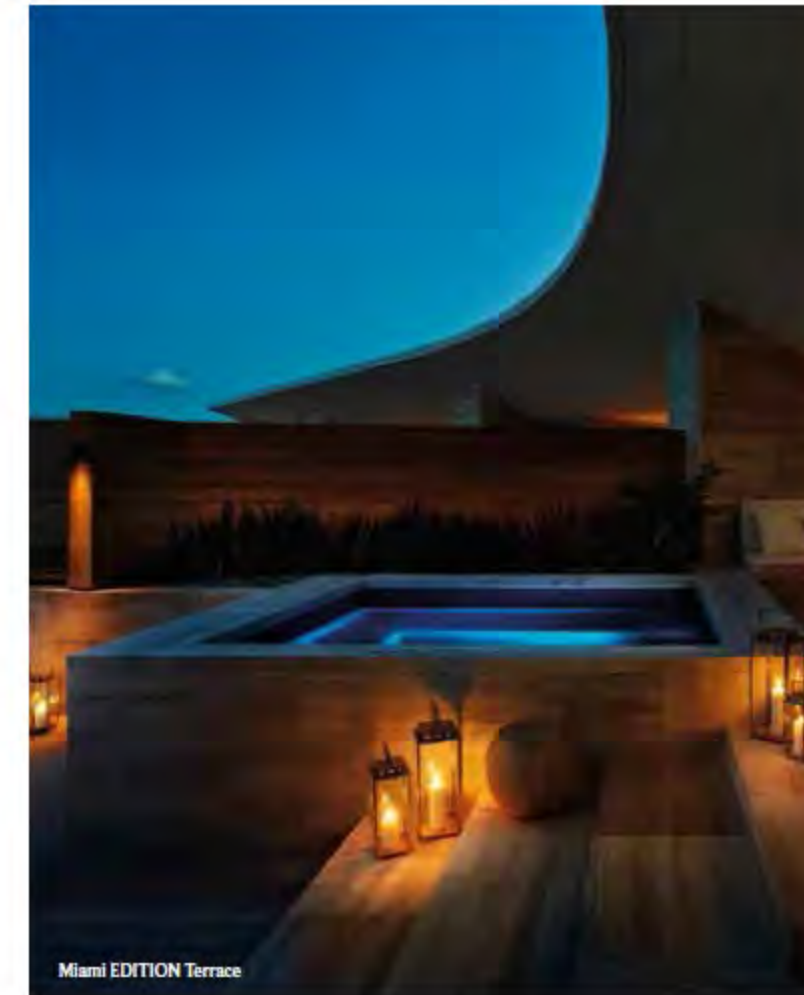
HOTELS

The action at Miami EDITION takes place at the poolside bars, around the Olympic-sized swimming pool and its original diving board. Miami Beach hotel's poolside parties carry its reputation worldwide as the place to go in Miami for a pre-club night cocktail.

Miami EDITION is a collaboration between Schrager and Yabu Pushelberg and is a mix of careful restoration and imaginative new design that preserves the lobby's greatest asset — a direct view of the Atlantic.

A renovation of the historic Seville Hotel, its architect and structural engineer, Melvin Grossman, was a star protégé of Morris Lapidus, legendary progenitor of the 1950s 'Miami Modern' style that redefined resort design in Eden Roc and Fontainebleau. Grossman was part of the evolving 'MiMo' style of architecture: "functional simplicity with a new and often dramatic vocabulary of pizzazz, propelled by a spirit of optimism and sense of fun and joy". This vitality and exuberance is the atmosphere of Miami EDITION, which is a party resort in itself, with 294 rooms and suites, and a rooftop penthouse.

Grossman's Seville, built at the height of the 1950s hotel boom, with a Spanish theme, was the first hotel in Miami Beach to employ the 'tower-on-pedestal' concept that defines the city's mid-century modern resorts. The building had one of the largest all-welded structural steel frames in USA, to support the 10-storey hotel superstructure above the 6,800 square feet, column-free ballroom at its heart. ▶



The lobby walls are finished in white Venetian plaster with white marble dust, accented in tones of gold. There's a Carrara marble billiard table sculpted in the style of Aldo Rossi, and a classic mid-century Miami resort hotel lobby statement piece of a monolithic white Carrara marble reception desk fronting a 12-carat white gold-leaf illuminated wall.

The palette is sun-bleached and breezy like the climate; white linen slipcovers, natural-bleached leathers, bleached rift-cut white oak and sheer white drapery take the heat out of the humid day.

The resort's lush landscape gardens, designed by Madison Cox, recall the Tropicana nightclub in 1950s Havana, with hidden alcoves, teak lounge seating and hammocks onto a wide stretch of private Miami beachfront. Long-plank Ipe decked pathways lead down to the Tropicale beach area, nestled in a lush landscape of coconut palms, sea grapes, gumbo limbo, screw pines, tropical philodendrons and green island ficus.

Bedrooms are unfussy and unadorned, in unobtrusive taupe furnishings. A faux fur throw softens the crisp bed linen for a cosy touch in chillier climes, while flaxen linen is folded down in the humid hotter climates.

Bathrooms are pared down simplicity, a pale moulded natural stone bathtub. Suites have a outdoor terrace with an expansive view; some of the most spacious even have an outdoor pool on the terrace.

Whatever they say, it's a brand. There is a unified design concept. Bedroom walls in New York echo London, clad in rich dark blocks of wood panelling, or strips of dark wood flooring, skiing skywards to the ceiling, in warm melted chocolate hues, a deeper brown than the wide-plank bleached oak floorboards. ▶

HOTELS



New York EDITION was designed with Rockwell, creating a muted luxury, a space between old-style, high-end luxury and faceless chains, on a far larger scale than the boutique niche. It has a timeless style, a palette of oatmeal and white in rich fabrics and leather, mahogany wood and floors stained in dark ebony.

Inspired by the vibrant colours of Dutch Masters Vermeer and Rembrandt, rose pink, green and blue velvet chairs and sofas are set against an ivory coloured canvas of ornamental restored plasterwork ceilings. French polished dining chairs upholstered in radiant coloured velvet, in the restaurant, the walls embraced by restored landmark mahogany wainscoting.

Bedrooms are monochrome palette, white oak floating desks inspired by Jean-Michel Frank, bronze floor lamps and tables, dark walnut panelled bed headboards and nightstands. Black and white photography from renowned fashion photographer Melvin Sokolsky's iconic 1963 "Bubble" series, and photographs of New York City scenes are perched on dark oak ledges on guest room floors.

With floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Madison Square Park, the lobby of New York EDITION has a sculptural grand staircase of lacquered steel and white oak panelling and silver silk drapery fabric by Christian Liaigre, Jean-Michel Frank-inspired coffee tables, a Christian Liaigre reception chaise and an Erik Kolling Andersen-inspired lounge chair.

Schrager credits his business associate with the birth of boutique. "It was Steve Rubell who coined the term 'boutique' hotels to differentiate us from the big department store chains. Back then, the hotel market was a barren wasteland," he says. "We changed the market."

The hotel industry giants concur. "Ian Schrager's concepts have revolutionised nightlife and hospitality," says Bill Marriott, chairman of Marriott International. "Time and again he succeeds in making people feel as if they are part of something new, unique and special, always eliciting an emotional and visceral connection to the experiences he creates. His concepts have been, and continue to be, widely imitated around the world."

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