

50
THE WORLD'S BEST BARS
2012

THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS



Welcome

**THE GLOBAL BAR INDUSTRY'S
BIGGEST AND BEST-EVER SURVEY**



Welcome to the World's 50 Best Bars 2012. The first readers of this magazine will be those

who attended the inaugural World's 50 Best Bars awards night. We are so excited to bring this event to the industry - especially during London Cocktail Week. It's an important occasion to recognise the very best in the global bar business.

This year, the Academy of voters grew to feature almost 150 contributors from 38 countries and we believe this is the biggest industry poll of its kind. We have also awarded Regional Winners, Highest Climbers and Highest New Entries. You can read the full breakdown on page 70.

On the list, you'll spot a plethora of new venues. It's great to see so much enthusiasm for quality in every aspect of presenting a new bar. It's also heartening to see so many familiar names here. It takes a special kind of bar to stay in the hearts and minds of a panel of voters who do nothing but visit bars. One thing though - when is the speakeasy trend going to fade? If I had a pound for every mention of an unmarked door, Prohibition-era or speakeasy, I'd be able to afford a round in a luxury hotel bar.

Lucy Britner
EDITOR

CONTENTS >>

5

How We Did It

Lucy Britner offers the low-down on the 2012 poll

7

The World's Best Bar

The bar at the top of its game is profiled by Tom Sandham

8-33

The World's Best Bars

Tom Sandham gives the low-down on bars 1-20

35-57

The World's Best Bars

Lucy Britner rounds up bars 21-50

58

Ones to Watch

The hot prospects for 2013

62

The Academy

Introducing this year's world-class voters

66

The top 'tender

Lucy Britner meets Artesian head barman Alex Kratena

70

The List

A quick look at who's up, who's down and who's new

SUPPLEMENT EDITOR

Lucy Britner

+44 (0)7841 644905
Lucy.Britner@drinksint.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Christian Davis

+44 (0)1293 590047
christian.davis@drinksint.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Jaq Bayles

+44 (0)1293 590048
jaq.bayles@drinksint.com

ART DIRECTOR

Amber Stoddart

amber@stodd-art.co.uk

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

Justin Smith

+44 (0)1293 590041
justin.smith@drinksint.com

SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER

**Carmen Poel
Francesch**

+44 (0)1293 590042
carmen.poel@drinksint.com

SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER

Roger Betriu

+44 (0)1293 590043
roger.betriu@drinksint.com

PUBLISHER

Russell Dodd

+44 (0)1293 590052
russell.dodd@drinksint.com

CONTRIBUTORS

**Tom Sandham
Camper English**

Drinks INTERNATIONAL

DRINKS INTERNATIONAL
Zurich House, East Park,
Crawley, West Sussex
RH10 6AS United Kingdom

TEL: +44 (0)1293 590040
FAX: +44 (0) 1293 474010
WWW: worlds50bestbars.com

Agile
Media Ltd



HOW WE DID IT

Last year we introduced the Academy, a group of people we believe to be among the most influential and knowledgeable bar industry professionals on the planet. Academy members include the likes of Gaz Regan, Salvatore Calabrese, Hidetsugu Ueno and Dale DeGroff; world-class (and World Class) bartenders including Erik Lorincz and Manabu Ohtake; champion brand and category ambassadors such as Ian Burrell and Tomas Estes, as well as bar owners and bartenders from our previous top 50 lists.

This year we welcomed votes from around 150 people in nearly 40 countries. Never before has a group of such quality, number and spread

been assembled, making this the most authoritative international bar survey ever conducted.

Our hope is that the Academy will continue to grow, bringing votes from even more people from around the world.

This year, editor Lucy Britner and US drinks writer Camper English were helped with regional Academy recommendations from Yangdup Lama in India, Kurt Schletcher in South Africa, Des Mulcahy in Australia, Helmut Adam in Germany and Andy Bishop in Russia.

In the box, you'll find the rules for voting and the requests we make of our voters. We have been asked why there are not more criteria to define a 'best bar'. The answer is that it is important to trust the profes-

sional opinion of those at the top of their game. It's not just about the service, the menu and the decor – it's about how that fits together. For example, a voter might hate taxidermy but that doesn't mean they can't appreciate why it would play a part in making PDT or Zetter Townhouse special.

Finally, all votes are confidential. We publish a list of voters (pages 62-65) and the top 50 but we don't disclose who voted for where.

As in all industries, politics can sometimes rear its not-always-attractive head. So, to ensure the longevity of the list, we keep all votes a secret. And for those who send us emails asking if their bar can feature in next year's top 50, we only get to choose three bars each, just like everyone else. **50**

WHAT WE ASK OF THOSE WHO VOTE

- > Please vote for the best three bars in the world, in your professional opinion
- > You cannot vote for venues you own or work in
- > The venues must still be open
- > You should have visited the bars in the past two years
- > Votes should be given in an approximate order of 1, 2, 3, which is used in the case of a tie



World's Best Bar & Best UK Bar

ARTESIAN

1C PORTLAND PLACE, REGENT STREET, LONDON, UK
 ARTESIAN-BAR.CO.UK

01

THIS YEAR LONDON HAS KICKED NEW YORK BETWEEN THE LEGS AND SNATCHED BACK THE BEST BAR CROWN FROM PDT. And it has done so lapping lovely libations in the luxury of the Langham Hotel's Artesian bar.

The Artesian is a worthy number one and for many will be far from a surprise victor - indeed, it already has a trophy cabinet creaking under the weight of global gongs. At Tales of the Cocktail this year it claimed World's Best Hotel Bar as well as the World's Best International Bartender in Alex Kratena and it is universally accepted that the bar is properly special.

The cocktail menu has attracted much of the credit, and with good reason. It effortlessly blends modern innovation with a classic reverence and each beautifully designed concoction justifies its luxury price tag. The Langham Cobbler, for example, peers into the past for inspiration but challenges current taste buds with a blend of lychee and aged sake; while the Club Netherlands twists a classic in the Clover Club with tongue-tingling floral botanicals from its bespoke syrup.

Elsewhere, a list of gin & tonic variations reminds patrons they are in a very British establishment, this being the first London hotel to have a lift, no less.

Each of these intricate in-house intoxications comes complete with glorious garnishes, a collection of impressive rim dressings that would bring a blush to the most couture of catwalks. Interestingly, most of the edible varieties offer more nutritional substance than a model could shake a limp wrist at.

But if this barrage of modern cocktail choice frustrates your frontal lobe, there's a fine selection of classics. Familiar fellows such as the Daiquiri, Negroni and Old Fashioned are there to restore some balance and satisfy a simpler selection process.

Comprehensive coverage on the spirits list also warrants a thumbs-up and includes an eye-watering collection of rums, each producing region represented in a sterling fashion.

Décor plays homage to classic hotel style but also smacks the more austere features on the cheek with a kiss from a set of purple lips, with lush fabrics and leathers hugging fixtures and fittings. Glassware is glamorous and the ostentatious bar, complete with mirrored pagoda, gives even the most conservative of hotel guests a knowing glad eye.

What perhaps sets Artesian apart, though, is the service. The staff make you feel warmer inside than a Welcome Break coffee, but in a much more welcome fashion. The charm is effortless, an unrelenting exhibition of courtesy. If they deserve a number one shout for any reason, we'd put this at the forefront for, in truth, if the drinks weren't quite right, the décor let the place down and the music policy was a little off, we could still be convinced to return to a bar based on the staff's charm. When combined with all the other successful facets, this makes it a deserving winner. **50**

The cocktail menu effortlessly blends modern innovation with a classic reverence



THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS

Best Bar
North
America

PDT

113 SAINT MARKS PLACE, NEW YORK, US
PDTNYC.COM



02

WHILE THIS SEXY SPEAKEASY MAY HAVE SLIPPED INTO SECOND SPOT THERE'S STILL PLENTY TO CELEBRATE IN ONE OF NEW YORK'S FINEST.

It's almost impossible to write about PDT without mentioning the bar's entrance, a standout feature that, we admit, is as appealing to a lazy journalist as a politician's tapped phone. But far from novelty, the bar's opening gambit remains worthy of praise. For those still unfamiliar, you access PDT through a secret wall in a phone booth in the Crif Dogs hotdog shop next door. It's very cool but is it enough to earn the bar such a lofty position on this poll? No, but it's worth noting that whenever we send non-industry friends to New York we recommend this bar and, without fail, every single one returns with excited chattering about the way you get in. Just goes to show, when it comes to causing a stir, it's worth making an effort with the front door.

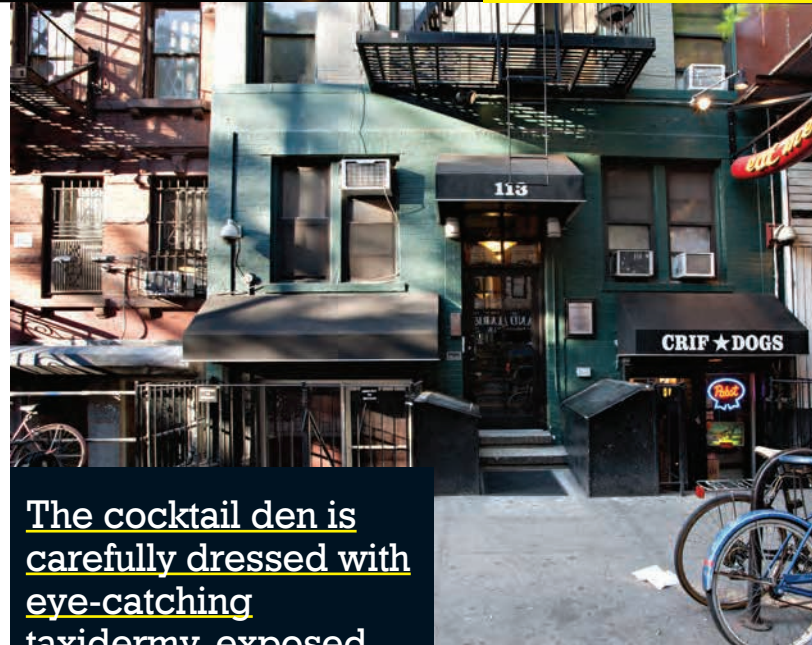
Besides, the idea that you can enter the sophisticated sipping den of PDT via a phone booth in a grungy hotdog hangout is an inspired touch of innovation around the theme of the speakeasy. So fair play to them.

Naturally the bar has a lot to live up to after such an entry and the cocktail den is carefully dressed with eye-catching taxidermy, exposed brickwork, tasteful dark wood ceilings and gleaming bar top. The toilets need a mention. Toilets are important after all, particularly when you're drinking, and the broken mirrored tiling in them is a nice sparkly touch. Low lighting, appropriate music and a sincere smile from the bar staff

all contribute to making both décor and atmosphere here comfortable for a small group of friends or a date who needs impressing.

So, after all that, the drinks need to be solid and this position in the top 50 poll indicates they impress most of the global drinks gurus. The reputation of the cocktail menu was further enhanced this year courtesy of the rather splendid book from the bar's owner, Jim Meehan. *The PDT Cocktail Book: The Complete Bartender's Guide From the Celebrated Speakeasy* is an informative guide to how the project came together and how others might follow the footsteps. The illustrations from Chris Gall enhance its sexy style and the recipes are a reflection of the bar's profound influence on the world of cocktails. That the tome picked up the Best Bartending/Cocktail Book at Tales of the Cocktail is evidence enough of its success.

We won't say too much more here - buy the book, a beautiful addition to any library, it'll provide you with plenty of mixing inspiration and sums up why this bar is number two in the poll. **50**



The cocktail den is carefully dressed with eye-catching taxidermy, exposed brickwork, tasteful dark wood ceilings and gleaming bar top

CREDIT: MICHAEL JANT



The name of the game at Nightjar is 'rare and revived', so expect Switchels and Boxcars, Bee's Knees and Millionaires

NIGHTJAR

129 CITY ROAD, LONDON, UK
BARNIGHTJAR.COM

SUPER
"DRY"
Asahi

IN A SLOWLY, SLOWLY CATCHY MONKEY FASHION, Nightjar has finally crawled blinking into the light from its speakeasy basement abode to receive some acclaim. Now, after a couple of years of murmuring but never shouting about its wares, it seems it is receiving the recognition it deserves.

Had you any lingering doubt about its credentials then this third place on the list should quash them. As our poll was fired around the hundreds of leading bar professionals, Nightjar leapt to mind, perhaps in the howling and screeching fashion actual monkeys are apt to, not quite slowly, slowly, but beating its chest and picking nits out of the other bars' backs.

So why believe the hype? The reasons are manifold. Garnishes alone deserve a mention - word is that the team here arrives hours ahead of opening just to prep them. Fruits are carefully selected from reputable markets at the break of dawn and the subsequent design and crafting of these delicate glass accompaniments is something to behold. They sit on the side of special drinks too.



A true appreciation of the past imbues all imbibing options here, with a menu divided into pre-Prohibition, Prohibition and post-war drinks. The name of the game is 'rare and revived' so expect Switchels and Boxcars, Bee's Knees and Millionaires. A fourth category sees the bartenders flex their muscles with signature drinks, with something extra special up the sleeve in a few sharing options and the occasional bit of barrel aging. They also take pride in the spirits, some of which are pre-Prohibition - including an 1863 Hannisville Rye - and share back bar space with all manner of homemade infusions and bitters.

It helps that the team faffing with these fluids are talented, having cut their teeth in some of London's, and indeed the

world's, best bars. As a result they provide the accomplished harmony of service and smile with a sexy stir or shake.

The décor also ticks a few boxes, with the basement space cleverly used. Tin ceilings and low-hanging, dimly beamed lighting are not necessarily original touches - anyone with a short memory will be taken back to Milk & Honey - but it works in a setting that screams speakeasy. Regular live music sets give the bar an upper hand on competitors and this often reflects the ambience - old school jazz with a 1920s-40s bent.

The Nightjar's namesake is a lovely little bird, and in the case of this bar, the bird is pretty, open all night, comes with an admirable work ethic and serves a tasty beverage, making it wife material. **50**



CONNAUGHT BAR

CARLOS PLACE, MAYFAIR, LONDON, UK
THE-CONNAUGHT.CO.UK

HOTEL BARS SEEM DE RIGUEUR IF THIS LIST IS ANYTHING TO GO BY,

this being the second in the top four. Central London also appears to be the best region to visit if you're after a cocktail in one.

The Connaught is among the best and no stranger to the poll of course, placing in the top three last year. Rightly so - it is a timeless Mayfair masterpiece and not so long ago enjoyed a spot of renovation that aimed to fluff up its facade. It worked and the outcome was a hotel bar that blends contemporary and classic chic.

The Connaught is Mayfair at its most indulgent. Sidestep the over-priced motors outside, pass under the portico and receive congratulations from the door man for making it in, and you soon realise you're in the lap of lavishness. The foyer is a bustle of bellboys and Louis Vuitton bag dropping and, before you've had time to wonder if you can afford a room, someone has asked you where you'd like to go. This ethos of exceptional customer care creeps effortlessly into the cocktails.

David Collins is behind the décor and this cubist creation is a little bit special. Chic as it is classic, a walk-through whisks you back to the 1920s with a splash of something more modern. The seats are stern, rich and leather but sparkle against the backdrop of soft grey wall panels and tables are topped with mirrors, bright accents that also enable you to check your tie is straight or lippy hasn't smudged.

The seats are stern, rich and leather but sparkle against the backdrop of soft grey wall panels and tables are topped with mirrors

Once seated you can wait for the trolley to make things simple, or you can watch the bartenders head back to the bar with your order and perform. Their subtle motions of mixing won't distract from conversation unless you need them to and the performance is like a silent movie.

It's no exaggeration to say one person can maketh a bar - look at the Savoy and its illustrious incumbents over the decades. So to give a portion of the Connaught's credit to the staff is certainly appropriate. And while running a bar is a team sport, Ago Perrone deserves a good slice of the credit pie. Revered around the world for his exceptional drinksmithery, he has collected all manner of trophies and after winning the Best International Bartender prize at Tales in 2008 he subsequently helped the bar earn the World's Best Cocktail Bar at the event in 2012. **50**



AMERICAN BAR AT THE SAVOY HOTEL

THE STRAND, LONDON, UK
FAIRMONT.COM/SAVOY

SUPER
 "DRY"
Asahi

LIKE A TRICKLING, TRAIL OF CONDENSATION RUNNING DOWN A PERFECTLY CHILLED GLASS, the Savoy is a bar dripping in reassuring British cocktail history. Take Harry Craddock, one of the most venerated bartenders in cocktail history and the author of the first edition of the *Savoy Cocktail Book*, a celebrated classic in its own right. Craddock exemplifies the spirit of bartending and has bestowed upon us a multitude of majestic classics.

From Craddock right through to the current crop of cocktail creatives behind the stick, the American Bar has been hosted by and indeed host to some of the most colourful characters in drinking history and fired out more than a few enduring classics along the way.

Of course, history alone isn't a laurel to rest your bar on, and the Savoy's more recent facelift was widely publicised, with a bevy of beady eyes waiting to knock the place down a peg or two. When the dust drapes were dropped some felt too little had changed, perhaps to the bar's detriment. The designers seemed keen to maintain the heritage of the American Bar though, so there were no dramatic scars on the new and improved scene. But as time has passed we've all learned to appreciate the decision not to stretch back the skin to hide the wrinkles.

What we find then is a dogged nod to Art Deco decor that befits a venue of this era. True fixtures and fittings might fit into a price bracket for those with gold teeth, but there's nothing gaudy about the set-up, indeed such teeth would be set back in the mouth with a knowing but not showy confidence - molars if you like.

It's classic but comfortable and excellent service means even those of us with small change in our pockets won't feel out of place. There's even a pianist playing every night to cover up the tinkle of your coins and keep the atmosphere relaxed.

Today the bartenders are some of the best in the business and heading the team is Erik Lorincz, a former winner of the coveted Diageo World Class title, he has also been awarded the Best International Bartender trophy at the Tales of the Cocktail Spirited Awards. Safe to say, he knows his cocktail onions.

Such figureheads are crucial when it comes to attracting the global drinks professional, but the people behind the stick will always acknowledge that they are simply there to make a drink. After all, the American Bar is all about the cocktails. While the classics that Craddock and his collaborators made famous more than 80 years ago still dominate the menu, these drinks sit comfortably next to contemporary additions from the current crop of bar professionals.

Drinks include a cocktail to mark the Moon Landing, perhaps more popular in recent months than ever before, and a tribute to *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter and, as a whole, the cocktail list showcases a sophisticated diversity.

The menu is beautifully presented and easy to digest with a happy balance of snippets and succinct detail that doesn't overload you with technical gibberish. For example, the description of the Blood & Sand reads: The Blood & Sand Cocktail is named after a 1922 movie starring Rudolph Valentino. It was originally included in Harry Craddock's *Savoy Cocktail Book* and comprises a scotch whisky base, mixed with Italian vermouth, orange and Cherry Heering.

As one of London's oldest cocktail haunts it should come as no surprise that the American Bar gets it right. Even so, too many have faltered on the path of reinvention so it's comforting to find this old friend unscathed. ⁵⁰

Excellent service means even those of us with small change in our pockets won't feel out of place



05



DEATH & CO

433 EAST 6TH STREET, NEW YORK, US
DEATHANDCOMPANY.COM

WE LOVE A DIRTY DIVE BAR, fiercely filthy hangouts with cheap whiskey, chasing tins of cheap beer, and New York's plethora of grimy possibilities is commendable. But once you've tickled, kissed and massaged the underbelly, and the Big Apple has given you a crisp slap in the face, spat a pip in your eye and harangued you into a dark hotel room, it's always nice to find refuge in a den of discerning drinking. Death & Co is certainly that - a spot for sincere sipping that draws you away from Manhattan's mayhem and reminds us all we should drink less, but drink better.

The bar is for serious booze hounds, those who enjoy learning more about what they're throwing down their throat, and the staff come equipped with superpowers of the drinks knowledge kind. Liquid learning is a passion here and as a result Death & Co has seen a long list of talented 'tenders take to the stick, too many to mention here, but the fact that the current incumbent, Joaquin Simo, is American Bartender of the Year at Tales of the Cocktail 2012 is evidence enough.

The cocktail list is never over indulgent but always challenging curiosity. It's modest but epic at the same time, taking customers through a spiritual breakdown of cocktail options. As with all the best bars, anyone who hates making decisions is welcome to ask for a recommendation from the staff, and they'll always ensure the cocktail they make will float your boat.

Quality seeps into everything they do, from the spirits to the beer, wine and food, but intensity is key to the objectives here.

American whiskey, a big old beast

that shouldn't be chugged with reckless abandon, gets a laudable representation, as do the other brazen boys of the back bar, rum and tequila. The only feints and hearts welcome come off the still, anyone weak at the knees should probably look elsewhere.

Low-lit and with a touch of exposed brickwork, the venue smacks of the classic speakeasies that weigh down New York, but the drinks are very modern, with a tea-infused scotch here and a pineapple-infused tequila there. The bar is in a hip part of town and, while hip replacements abound thanks to the ongoing gentrification of New York, this area of the Lower East Side is a crucial hangout for anyone interested in food and drink. Death & Co fits right in and, as long as there are fans of decent drinks out there, it should long remain in the top 10. **50**



The venue smacks of classic speakeasies but the drinks are very modern, with a tea-infused scotch here and a pineapple-infused tequila there



07



BAXTER INN

152-156 CLARENCE STREET, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
THEBAXTERINN.COM



IT'S TAKEN UNTIL NUMBER SEVEN for the Australians to get in on the top 10 act and what's a little surprising is it's Sydney that breaks through the barrier. For many years Melbourne has held the mantle of mixed drinking Mecca in Oz as bars such as Black Pearl helped pave the way for cocktail culture Down Under. But a change in the licensing laws in Sydney is enabling a more cutting-edge crowd to get in on the independent bar act. And as these operators flex their wings they're making this one of the most exciting drinking cities in the world.

Baxter Inn is a prime example of this success. Set up by bar pioneers Jason Scott and Anton Forte, this is the second in their growing empire, following on from the success of Shady Pines Saloon – a rough and ready 'swill-house' joint that mixes a laid-back vibe with quality beverages served out of bathtubs.

Baxter follows in its less than formal footsteps but takes the concept into Sydney's more upmarket central business district. As a result the new gaff reflects the surroundings and there's a change of pace here with a few plusher fixtures and fittings and a shift in music policy from country to jazz.

Lewis Jaffrey is among the staff here, a man who cut his cocktail teeth at many an international haven of high-quality drinks. **50**

A change in the licensing laws in Sydney is enabling a more cutting-edge crowd to get in on the independent bar act

Best Bar in Asia Pacific & Highest New Entry



08SUPER
"DRY"
Asahi

69 COLEBROOKE ROW

69 COLEBROOKE ROW, LONDON, UK
69COLEBROOKEROW.COM

SINCE 69 OPENED ITS DOORS IT HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO A PLETHORA OF PLAUDITS, with both owner Tony Conigliaro and the venue collecting more gongs than you'll find at a Buddhist car boot sale.

Conigliaro deserves much of the acclaim. He's a pioneering figure, a celebrated bartender who has been showered with rewards for his unswerving commitment to quality in cocktails.

He'd be quick to credit the staff around him of course, and the likes of Camille Hobby-Limon, who owns the Charles Lamb pub nearby and opened the bar with Conigliaro, has played a role, as have the staff who make the drinks, including the talented Marcis Dzelzainis.

Together they have followed Conigliaro's lead in developing a drinks programme the envy of bartenders around the world and, with a lab near 69, he tirelessly experiments with flavours and ingredient blends. But more than simply promoting weird craziness, these efforts are about delivering an epicurean encounter that challenges drinkers to delve beyond the basics, and at the nub of the process is the belief that customer experience is key.

To this end the bar itself is a modest offering. Cosy and comfortable, the intimate space smacks of European café chic

rather than intimidating cocktail haunt and this is to its advantage. With only a handful of enthusiasts seated there it can generate a fine buzz and atmosphere that beckons more through the door.

The menu too is manageable and, while the staff are on hand to educate, the initial descriptions of drinks don't weigh the reader down with the type of techno-jargon that might turn the less intrepid imbiber's head towards the exit. Certainly they spark an interest - homemade infusions or syrups with tincture treasure to boot beg plenty of questions - but the concise breakdown of ingredients is clearly spelt out so you know what you're getting from a quick glance.

Take the Explorer, a cocktail comprising Leblon Cachaça, fig leaf tincture and lime juice, topped up with Perrier water. Simple enough on the surface but we're all itching to learn more about that fig leaf tincture.

This is the beauty of Conigliaro's offering and one of the reasons it places in the top 10. He is introducing the advanced opportunities of discerning drinking to the masses and the bar hosts presentations and masterclasses to enhance and improve the liquid lives of his customers. The man is on a mission to spread the good word of drink and this bar provides the perfect place of worship on which any pilgrimage can end. **50**

Cosy and comfortable, the intimate space smacks of European café chic rather than intimidating cocktail haunt and this is to its advantage





CALLOOH CALLAY

65 RIVINGTON STREET, LONDON, UK
CALLOOHCALLAYBAR.COM

THE RECENT AWARD OF THE WORLD'S BEST COCKTAIL MENU at Tales of the Cocktail has helped catapult this long-time east London favourite to new heights.

As the star of the show, a word about the menu then, which takes solid, old-fashioned concepts such as a Buck, Fizz, Sour or Mule and gives them a modern kick up the backside with creative concepts that can raise the eyebrows of the most cynical Shoreditch type.

The drinks are about celebrating the fun of cocktails and, while they are very much embedded in classic concepts, the twists on their presentation help open the eyes of the masses. There's nothing exclusive or stuffy about the menu, or indeed the bar and, judging by the droves of patrons visiting on an otherwise quiet week night when we were last there, it's clearly working.

The bar takes its name from Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*. Carroll was a writer firmly in touch with his subconscious, as his books often revealed, so the décor here pays tribute to the words. It's a mishmash of memorabilia with bits and bobs dotted around that catch and sometimes boggle the eye.

The most significant nod to weird literature is the massive wardrobe you walk through between adjoining bars. Alas, there's no new world or talking animals on the other side - at least not every time I've stepped beyond it - but the anticipation of escape always makes it worth a chance of the arm.

For those looking to sidestep some of the mayhem then, behind the wardrobe and to the back you'll find a members' bar called Jubjub and this applies a more austere element to proceedings.

The bar is backed up with a fine upstanding bar team, all oozing with talent, and they convert the madness of the surroundings into some precise cocktail concoctions

Additional design touches such as the cassette tapes tiling the toilet walls deserve a mention, the aim seemingly to push the boundaries of conventional bar design in every corner. It's quirky and, while we hate the word and tend to apply it to moments when we're experimenting with things other than cocktails, it perfectly sums up the experience.

You can't judge a book by its cover of course - just ask Carroll, who was often misrepresented thanks to his out-of-the-noggin ramblings in novels - and just because Callooh Callay delivers a weird visual experience doesn't ensure the drinks will crack the skull. Mercifully the bar is backed up with a fine upstanding bar team, all oozing with talent and experience, and they capably convert the madness of the surroundings into some precise cocktail concoctions that sound weird but taste good. They challenge conventions then, across the board, which is why they've earned the recent respect and this top 10 place. **50**



09



What's so impressive is the growing alumni of bartenders, truly talented individuals who have flexed their guns here and gone on to great things

BRAMBLE

16A QUEEN STREET, EDINBURGH, UK
BRAMBLEBAR.CO.UK

SUPER "DRY"
Asahi

THE ONLY QUESTION MARK OVER THIS BAR'S SUCCESS IS WHEN IT MIGHT END, because since it landed on this planet it has consistently placed itself among the world's best bars. If this continues, the answer to the question posed in the first sentence is never.

For those unfamiliar with Edinburgh, this might seem unusual. Sure, the Scots like to drink – they've made a legend out of Buckfast after all and then there's whisky of course. But it takes a trip to this city to truly appreciate their devotion to discerning drinking.

So that they have one of the world's best bars makes perfect sense and Bramble has long been flying the flag of best-practice drinking.

Set in a basement beneath Queen Street the bar isn't the most conspicuous, yet it's usually found to be busy, such is its reputation. Décor including exposed brickwork, the occasional leather armchair and dim lighting combined with the low-key location might indicate this is a speakeasy, but more appropriate would be a blind pig or tiger. By that I mean the place is a lively good-time bar, the notion that slow jazz might accompany a silent sip should be banished from expectations because the soundtrack is hip-hop and the objective is to socialise.



Blind pigs and tigers were not reputed for their quality booze of course, but then neither were speakeasies – booze was illegal, thus the stuff they served was filthy. So when it comes to the drinks in Bramble the comparisons can end, not least since they are nothing short of outstanding.

Owners Jason Scott and Mike Aikman have a fine pedigree in cocktails and put their experience to solid use on the menus. But they'd be first to admit that creative content also comes from the bartenders who work here day to day. What's so impressive about Bramble is the growing alumni of these bartenders, truly talented individuals who have flexed their guns here and gone on to great things within the industry. The list is

growing and the current team running the bar is impressive.

Classics all get a mention but so too does Malibu, just to give you a flavour of the range on offer, and they have successfully experimented with pioneering techniques such as barrel aging. While some have scoffed at the process, the team here has taken time to rigorously work with wood and find ways to add genuine character to their drinks.

The story of success continues in the nearby neighbourhood of Stockbridge, where Jas and Mike have converted former gastro pub The Saint into The Last Word and more terrific tipples can be found here. Edinburgh is certainly a city to train the palate and Bramble is worthy of recognition as its best bar. **50**

10

THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS

NIKKA WHISKY



EMPLOYEES ONLY

510 HUDSON STREET, NEW YORK, US
EMPLOYEESONLYNYC.COM

11

DUSHAN ZARIC AND HIS COLLEAGUES AT EMPLOYEES ONLY IN NEW YORK HAVE SPENT YEARS CONJURING UP QUALITY COCKTAILS and have mastered a mix of historic and contemporary ideals in their drinks.

And it seems they've struck gold. The bar bursts at the seams over the weekends as hip kids hurry through the doors, and inside they find a bar that ticks many of the New York style boxes - Art Deco for the most part but with a bit of a snazzy slant on the theme thanks

to a touch of neon in the lighting and on the juke box.

Bartenders are talented and when the bar is four or five deep the precision of the bottle collection and pouring is balletic in its performance. The menu is special enough to have earned Zaric a publishing deal and all the drinks are served with care and diligence - indeed they are among the best in town.

Food, meanwhile, ticks the boxes - a lifesaver during the week - and is best enjoyed at a seat in the elevated sky-lit

You'll even find overhead luggage racks here that prove a bonus for shoppers

dining area. You'll even find overhead luggage racks here that prove a bonus for shoppers.

You're mostly here for the drinks of course, and the weekend's waify pretty people tend to go light on the grub - stuffing your face with spaghetti seems far from hip, although a little close to your actual hips. At least there's a late-night menu, served from midnight to 3.30am - much more in tune with a guilty conscience and perfect to match with the cocktails. ⁵⁰



HAPPINESS FORGETS

8-9 HOXTON SQUARE, LONDON, UK
HAPPINESSFORGETS.COM

NIKKA WHISKY



12

A NEW ADDITION TO THE LIST AND A WORTHY ONE THAT HAS THE BLESSING OF MANY LONDON-BASED BARTENDERS. Happiness Forgets inhabits an unassuming basement on Hoxton Square and hardly shouts about what it's getting up to, yet it has attracted positive press since opening less than two years ago and already found a place in the top 12 bars of the world. What's going on there then?

Well, this is proof that commitment to

quality ingredients, recipes, methods and service can be a straightforward route to success. Owner and barkeep Alastair Burgess has certainly paid his dues on the bar trail with stints at Milk & Honey, Quo Vadis and swanky hotel bar Hunter 486. So that he has a firm grasp on what keeps the punters happy hardly inspires shock.

His drinks are simple, classic and excellently made with help from dapper bartender Johan Ekelund, the man behind Sharp & Dapper 'shirt companions'. Even so, big ideas are not always easy to instill in small spaces and this bar is certainly that. Décor is no frills, exposed bricks and a distinct lack of glamour. Intimate and inviting for sure, but a bunker of a bar that relies on the bartenders' awesome drinks knowledge and that genuine feeling that this need be no more than a proper bar for proper drinkers. ⁵⁰

Intimate and inviting, it's a bunker of a bar that relies on bartenders' awesome drinks knowledge

NIKKA WHISKY

DRINK**348 CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, US**
DRINKFORTPOINT.COM

IT'S ALWAYS USEFUL TO GET A HELPING HAND on a night out and if you forget what you should be doing in this place you need only look at the sign above the door.

It's a bar name for those who might've forgotten what to do in one. The bar is the brainchild of Barbara Lynch, an award-winning Bostonian restaurateur, who collaborated with John Gersten, a bartender with an eye for bar detail.

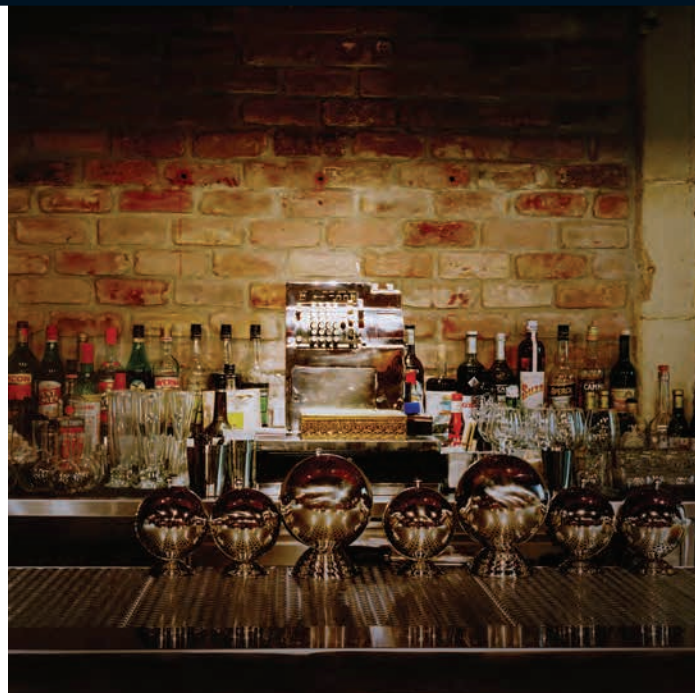
The offspring of these collaborative conversations is a bar that offers serious, quality cocktails complete with genuine neighbourhood bar vibe.

Boston has always enjoyed the enthusiastic and alcohol-inspired



revelry of its native patrons, but this bar takes the standard stout and whisky experience to elegant levels and has earned the bar untold amounts of global appreciation. ⁵⁰

The offspring of these collaborative conversations is a bar that offers serious, quality cocktails

13**14**

The bar legend that is Sasha Petraske had a role in setting up The Varnish

NIKKA WHISKY

THE VARNISH**18 EAST 6TH STREET, LOS ANGELES, US**
THEVARNISHBAR.COM

SPEAKEASY STYLE OFTEN INSPIRES THE IMAGE OF A BASEMENT BAR IN NEW YORK, but lest we forget, the insane, daft, ridiculous, unforgivable idea the Americans had to ban booze spanned the entire nation, so it stands to reason that the theme would be embraced on the west coast.

When it comes to the west coast, this is the most successful exponent of the modern-day interpretation of such discerning drinking dens and can be found tucked behind a back door in Cole's. The bar legend that is Sasha Petraske had a role in setting it up and as a result it has all the hallmarks of a quality establishment - perfectly lit, vintage fixtures

flecking an industrial space, simple but excellent drinks and fine upstanding service. It's a regular in polls such as this, award-winning and picked up Best American Bar at Tales this year, a statement that could have started and indeed ended this write up. ⁵⁰



50
THE WORLD'S BEST BARS



As reassuringly authentic as it is offbeat, Zetter has breezed into the top 15 and was named Best New Cocktail Bar at Tales



ZETTER TOWNHOUSE NIKKA WHISKY

49 SAINT JOHN'S SQUARE, LONDON
THEZETTERTOWNHOUSE.COM

ANOTHER ADDITION TO THE TONY CONIGLIARO STABLE, this is a more ambitious project than 69 Colebrooke Row, not least because it's a larger space and comes complete with hotel rooms. Much of said space has been adorned with knick-knacks from a Victorian lost property store - taxidermy curiosities that not only killed the cat, but stuffed them and put them on a shelf; portraits that might be worth something if you could place her name; and furniture that antiques enthusiasts would have damp dreams about.

It's a beautiful mish-mash of stuff and once you've got past your gaping you can ask the advice of the exceptional staff for one of the exceptional drinks.

As you might expect, Conigliaro doesn't rest on any laurels here and the cocktail invention is jaw-dropping. Indeed if he did anything with laurels he'd probably grind them down, infuse a spirit with them then use a scientific technique to create something marvelous, such is his commitment to flavour experiences. As reassuringly authentic as it is offbeat, Zetter has breezed into the top 15 and if that placing didn't convince further investigation, then perhaps the fact it was named Best New Cocktail Bar at Tales will help make up your mind. **50**

15

MOST OF US DREAM A DREAM OF DONNING A DUST MASK, heaving up a sledgehammer and pounding it through the walls of the kitchen to create an open plan space for our own bar. Usually a housemate, landlord or a wife, reminds you such an approach to living isn't particularly practical - where would you put the sofa they say? And what of the telly?

The owners of Mutis seem to have responded to such frivolous concerns with a cursory "do one", and have instead embraced and realised such a dream. At least this seems to be the case, since this bar can only be described as someone's converted apartment.

Hidden away in a residential area, the initial challenge is to find the place, and, once you have, earn yourself entry since it's all a bit exclusive. But once inside you can admire the care of cornices, verdant velvet drapes and the perky



Best Bar in Europe & Highest Climber

MUTIS NIKKA WHISKY
438 AVENIDA DIAGONAL, BARCELONA, SPAIN

pianist who tickles the ivories after midnight. Drinks also attract plenty of plaudits and flirt favourably between the classics and some modern twists. It's a speakeasy in essence, but one with a European flavour and, while it might be unfamiliar to some readers, this position in the top 20 of our list is sure to catapult it to a new queue of potential flatmates. **50**

NIKKA WHISKY

16



Hidden in a residential area, the initial challenge is to find the place

NIKKA WHISKY

BLACK PEARL

304 BRUNSWICK STREET, FITZROY, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE HAS LONG BEEN TESTING THE BAR WATERS with inspirational independents and setting sail as an early pioneer was Black Pearl. The name evokes fears of novelty pirates but rest assured, you won't find a buffoon swinging from a mainmast here - at least not anyone employed by the venue.

Rather this is an establishment where hip kids, bartenders and office suits mingle without so much as a grumble,

you'll always get a warm "G'day" from the staff and with it a bonzer beverage.

Owner Tash Conte is described by David Spanton,

editor of Australia's *Bartender Magazine*, as 'fantastic'. Few would disagree.

Her eye for a bartender such as former Australian Bartender of the Year Chris Hysted has helped sustain quality cocktail creation. The bar keeps things classic upstairs while downstairs is shored up for volume sales, which

means the venue can be all things to all discerning drinkers. An outstanding menu, copious awards to its name and an affection bestowed upon it from the global drinks community have delivered long-term success, so often the most significant challenge in running a quality independent. **50**

The bar keeps things classic upstairs while downstairs is shored up for volume sales

17

CLOVER CLUB

NIKKA WHISKY

210 SMITH STREET, NEW YORK, US
CLOVERCLUBNY.COM

BROOKLYN BREAKS INTO THE TOP 20 with this sterling establishment that comes courtesy of bar and cocktail legend Julie Reiner (Flatiron Lounge and Lani Kai).

The bar has placed Brooklyn firmly on the route any drinks enthusiasts visiting New York will take and merges luxury libations with excellent eats and a good-time vibe.

Décor has been given thorough consideration too - tip-top tiles, marvellous marble table tops, lush leather booths, and that influence of industrialism snuggling up to a vintage vogue that permeates New York's best drinkeries. The mahogany bar top also needs special mention.

The cocktail menu covers the classics in a variety of forms including Swizzles, Punches and Juleps. Beyond that, it incorporates Reiner's vast experience of the cocktail playing field, even chucking some vegetables into the mix. What Clover Club does exceptionally well is take the full list of components that can make any bar experience work and puts them all under one roof. **50**

The bar has placed Brooklyn on the route of drinks enthusiasts visiting NY and merges luxury libations with excellent eats

18



NIKKA WHISKY

DRY MARTINI

CARRER ARIBAU 162-166, BARCELONA, SPAIN
JAVIERDELASMUELAS.COM

MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE JAVIER DE LAS MUELAS LAUNCHED HIS ODE TO THE MARTINI way back in 1978.

In more recent years he has added to his repertoire with the clandestine sister restaurant Speakeasy joining the fray, along with The Academy, a workshop where he offers masterclasses and helps bar professionals develop.

But Dry Martini remains an iconic tribute to the cocktail and has evolved in its own right during those years. In its early incarnation it only offered Martinis, and with great success, serving its one millionth in 2010.

More recently, though, De Las Muelas has used his vast experience to develop

his drinks programme and has successfully delved into vacuum packing or other gastronomic techniques.

The bar is a classic - a place De Las Muelas believes can evoke the traditions of a bygone drinking era.

Ties and white blazers firmly fit the discerning bar staff and décor befits a bar of this status - smart, dark woods, warm fabrics and a touch of brass to go with the class.

A Martini recipe is emblazoned on a mirror behind the 'tenders and reminds all and sundry what this bar is about. Should you be left with any doubt simply ask for a recommendation from the staff. **50**



19

The bar is a classic – De Las Muelas believes it can evoke the traditions of a bygone drinking era



NIKKA WHISKY

LA CAPILLA

TEQUILA, MEXICO

Best Bar in Latin America & Caribbean

IN LIFE, AND LET'S ALL HOPE IN DEATH AS WELL, there are drinking destinations that every aficionado should aspire to visit. They make up the pilgrimages on which any intrepid imbibor must embark if they are to satisfy their vocation as a rounded individual.

La Capilla is such a place. For tequila aficionados this is a stone-cold must to add to a list of bars to try before you die. Not because it offers the most exhaustive range of tequilas, nor because it makes the best Margarita on the planet. The reason being, simply put, that La Capilla is a bar as any bar should be.

The place is run by the affable Don

Javier, who is enjoying the autumn of his years but can still deliver a masterclass on hosting to any young bartender.

He happily stirs up a Batanga or a Paloma with the handle of a knife, topping up as he goes from the bottles of fizzy pop lining the back bar.

The décor is dusty, but this is not a place for interior designers. The charm comes from Don Javier and his interaction with the agave farmers and tequila producers who stand around him and shoot the breeze with the abandon of men who like nothing more than sipping fine tequila. This bar provides a breath of fresh, albeit humid and dusty air, to the top 20. **50**

20

For tequila aficionados this is a must to add to a list of bars to try before you die

50
THE WORLD'S BEST BARS



21

PALMER & CO

ABERCROMBIE LANE, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
MERIVALE.COM.AU/PALMERANDCO

Aged Rums
BOTRAN®

PALMER & CO IS PART OF THE MERIVALE GROUP, which also owns Hemmesphere - made famous earlier this year when its head bartender, Tim Phillips, took the Diageo World Class 2012 title.

Palmer & Co has that speakeasy vibe, describing itself as a "legitimate importer of bracing tonics and fortifying liquids". Indeed, the staff are dolled up in 20s attire and there's a load of cocktails dedicated to Prohibition-era tipples.

Time Out gave the bar five stars, saying: "Watch as your bartender flicks the bitters on to the side of the glass so you get a little bit with every sip. As our guy finishes off making a Sidecar, he gently spoons a small measure of cognac on to the top of the drink. It's the little things."

The bar has a 05.00 licence, so if you want to party like it's 1929, this is the place to go to. **50**



The staff are dolled up in 20s attire and there's a load of cocktails dedicated to Prohibition-era tipples

IT'S GREAT TO SEE HIGH FIVE MOVE UP THE RANKS THIS YEAR. The bar is the brainchild of one of the most influential Japanese bartenders in the world - Hidetsugu Ueno.

The former Star Bar big gun opened the bar in 2008. Ueno is an ambassador for the methodical, precise Japanese style of bartending. He is famous for carving diamonds out of ice and if you find yourself anywhere near Tokyo, you must visit. Plain and simple. You may also have heard the name Ueno a few times over the past couple of years because he is one of Diageo's gurus for bartending super-comp World Class.

When not making breathtaking drinks or carving ice diamonds in Tokyo, Ueno travels the world talking about all things drink - including Japanese whisky. **50**



22

HIGH FIVE

4TH FLOOR, 26 POLESTAR BUILDING
7-2-14 GINZA, TOKYO, JAPAN
BARHIGHFIVE.COM

Aged Rums
BOTRAN®

Hidetsugu Ueno is an ambassador for the methodical, precise Japanese style of bartending





LE LION

RATHAUSSTRASSE 3, HAMBURG, GERMANY
LELION.NET

Aged Rum
BOTRAN®

LE LION IS OWNED BY TOP BARTENDER JÖRG MEYER, who also writes a lot on the subject of bars and drinks. If you want to find out what he's got to say, you can read all about it on his personal website, jrgmyr.com. He also collects, buys and sells books about alcohol and you can check this out by following him on Twitter @boozebooks.

Meyer and his team at Le Lion are regarded by many as craftsmen and praise for their attention to detail and skill level is often heaped upon them.

German precision engineering is not reserved for cars, it seems.

While the libations here are not cheap, the experience, the bartenders and the atmosphere make this place worthy of a spot in the top 50.

This is a classic bar in every sense of the word. **50**

Meyer and his team are regarded as craftsmen and gamers praise for attention to detail and their skill level

23

SMUGGLER'S COVE

650 GOUGH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, US
SMUGGLERSCOVESF.COM

Aged Rum
BOTRAN®

IT'S GREAT TO SEE SMUGGLER'S COVE BACK on the list for 2012. It's a nod to the rise of the tiki bar and the popularity of rum.

The bar really is a celebration of everything rum and its website reads: "Traditional drinks of the Caribbean islands. Classic libations of Prohibition-era Havana. Exotic cocktails from legendary tiki bars."

When asked "why rum?", owner Martin Cate says: "There just isn't a more fascinating spirit in the world... revolution, triumph, piracy, war, sailors, celebration, and unspeakable human tragedy are in every glass. No other

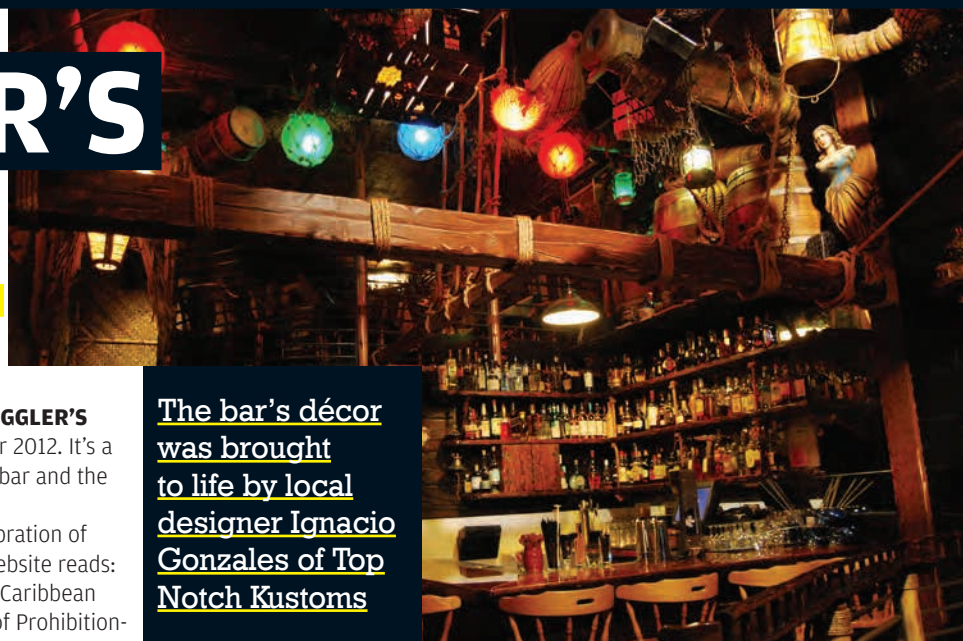
The bar's décor was brought to life by local designer Ignacio Gonzales of Top Notch Kustoms

spirit has the history or the versatility."

The bar carries some 200 rums and hosts a Rumbustion Society, which includes three levels of knowledge - disciple of the cove, guardian of the cove and master of the cove. A master gets to join Cate and other masters on a distillery

trip. If the club is not your thing, there's a cocktail list with some 70 libations, so that should keep you busy.

The bar's décor - inspired, of course, by all things tiki - was brought to life by local designer Ignacio Gonzales of Top Notch Kustoms. **50**



24

25*Aged Drinks*
BOTRAN®**EAU DE VIE****229 DARLINGHURST ROAD, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**
EAUDEVIE.COM.AU

EAU DE VIE IS NO STRANGER to the list and we're well within speakeasy territory here. For a start, it's tucked away at the back of the Kirketon hotel. Secondly, it describes itself thus: "An intimate, dimly-lit, jazz-infused speakeasy created for the discerning bon vivant. Let our amicable host and expert team of bartenders transport you back to a much forgotten era where great service, cocktails, Tommy Guns and good times were king."

Though we think it's probably best if

one leaves one's Tommy Gun at home these days, the bar was *Time Out Sydney's* Bar of the Year in 2011. The menu starts with four 'favourites' and drinkers who want to get to the liquid quick can go straight in with a \$19 Mesha - Ketel One Citroen Vodka, raspberry, falernum and pineapple. Sweet.

You can 'meet' the staff on the menu and owner Sven Almenning has a penchant for strong drinks

You can 'meet' the staff on the menu and bar owner Sven Almenning has a penchant for strong drinks. The concoction beneath his menu profile is a Smoky Rob Roy - Talisker and Lagavulin single malts, Zacapa rum, Antica Formula sweet Vermouth and Fee Bros orange bitters. We'll just have the one. ⁵⁰

**EXPERIMENTAL COCKTAIL CLUB****191 CHRYSTIE STREET, NEW YORK, US**
EXPERIMENTALCOCKTAILCLUBNY.COM*Aged Drinks*
BOTRAN®

THIS BAR ONLY OPENED ITS DOORS IN APRIL 2012. For it to be on the 2012 list suggests two things: 1. Voters like to try new venues, especially if they come from good pedigree. 2. It's a damn good bar.

The group behind it is responsible for the Experimental Cocktail Club in Paris, which opened more than five years ago. One of the founders, Romée de Goriainoff, told the *New York Times*: "We saw so much diversity in drinking in New York, it was fascinating. There was no cocktail culture in France, and what people were drinking was bad quality. None of us had real professional experience before we started the ECC.

We did our first professional experience by creating our own jobs, and in that respect we are very American-spirited."

De Goriainoff and partners Olivier Bon and Pierre-Charles Cros also opened a venue of the same name in London's Soho in 2010, with the help of Xavier Padovani. ⁵⁰

For it to already be on the 2012 list suggests voters like to try new venues, especially if they come from good pedigree

26

THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS



PORTOBELLO STAR

Aged Rooms
BOTRAN®

171 PORTOBELLO ROAD, LONDON, UK
PORTOBELLOSTARBAR.CO.UK

27



You could spend ages reading the menu. Then there's the museum, the still... you should just spend the day there

THIS BAR WAS TIPPED BY 50 BEST BARS LAST YEAR TO BE IN THIS YEAR'S LIST. The Portobello Star is great on its own merit but the opening of the Ginstitute surely spurred on voters in 2012.

The Portobello Star opened its doors in 2008 and it is the work of Jake Burger - the man behind Jake's Bar in northern UK city Leeds.

The Ginstitute opened in 2011 and has earned Burger his place in London gin history.

If you want to learn about gin, drink gin or even blend your own gin, you can do it here. Burger describes the Ginstitute as a small recreation of a Victorian gin palace. He also claims it is London's

second smallest museum and artefacts include antique bottles and gin advertisements as well as the godfather of cocktails Jerry Thomas's business card.

The cocktail selection in the Portobello Star itself is also worthy of note and the menu includes witty little descriptions of the drinks. Take the Flying Dorellian, "named for the inimitable Peter Dorelli, ex of The Savoy in London. It has a very dry, citrusy character".

There are nods to Dick Bradsell, Audrey Saunders and Admiral Vernon - you could spend ages just reading the menu. Then there's the museum, the still... you should probably just go and spend the day there. ⁵⁰

Aged Rooms
BOTRAN®

SCHUMANN'S

ODEONSPLATZ 6+7, MUNICH, GERMANY
SCHUMANN.S.DE



28

GERMANY HAS MADE A BIG SPLASH IN THIS YEAR'S WORLD'S 50 BEST BARS with no fewer than five establishments on the list.

This bar reached number 20 in 2010 but was notable by its absence last year. Nevertheless, the bar community obviously felt it was worthy of a place and many visits must've been made to ensure its return in 2012.

Behind the stick is the legendary Charles Schumann, who set up the first incarnation of the bar in 1982. Schumann studied at the University of Journalism & Politics, which is handy as both journalists and politicians like a drink. He has penned many books

and invented many cocktails. The menu comprises some 31 pages - not including wine - and if you're looking for a tasty libation, try a Journalist: gin, Noilly Prat, vermouth rosso, triple sec, lemon juice and Angostura bitters. Or, if you fancy one of Schumann's own creations, try the Flying Kangaroo, created in 1979. Sounds like fun: pineapple juice, orange juice, cream, coconut cream, Galliano, vodka and white rum. ⁵⁰

Behind the stick is the legendary Charles Schumann, who set up the first incarnation of the bar in 1982





29

TIPPLING CLUB

8D DEMPSEY ROAD, SINGAPORE
TIPPLINGCLUB.COM

Aged Rooms
BOTRAN®

TIPPLING CLUB WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2008 by Der Raum's Matthew Bax and chef Ryan Clift - along with Spa Esprit Group's Cynthia Chua. Bax is no longer part of the equation and UK-born Clift is the captain of the ship.

Clift's culinary career started at a Michelin-starred restaurant in the UK when he was just 14. With more than 20 years in the kitchen and experience with some of the world's greatest chefs,

Clift's Tippling Club concept pays special attention to pairing cocktails with food.

The bar also plays host to Tippling Society, which is described as a 'gourmand fraternity'. But the emphasis is not just on food - Society members get to participate in all kinds of cocktail and spirits masterclasses and many of the spirits come from Clift's 'reserve list'.

It costs S\$50 to join, though numbers are limited. Recent masterclasses include one from Milk & Honey New York's Sam Ross.

Tippling Club has also been experimenting with barrel-ageing and for S\$29 you can try a Martinez or a Cuban Manhattan - both of which have been aged in 5-litre barrels for 18 months. **50**

Clift's Tippling Club concept pays special attention to pairing cocktails with food



LEBENSSTERN

KURFÜRSTENSTRASSE 58, BERLIN, GERMANY
CAFEINSTEIN.COM/LEBENSSTERN-COCKTAILBAR-IM-EINSTEIN

Aged Rooms
BOTRAN®

The thing to look out for here is the absolutely mind-boggling selection of spirits

30

THIS BAR IS UPSTAIRS AT CAFE EINSTEIN - a Viennese-style cafe and restaurant with cake cabinets, wood panelling and groups gathered to drink coffee and read the papers.

The building is actually a mansion-like house and the first-floor bar was an illegal casino in the 1920s. The venue comprises a number of rooms that make up the Lebensstern bar. The thing to look out for here is the absolutely mind-boggling selection of spirits. So mind-boggling in fact that in 2010 the bar was awarded World's Best Drinks Selection in the Tales of the Cocktail Spirited Awards for its bounty of spirits and liqueurs. This is a high-quality establishment with a high-quality drinks selection and if you happen upon Cafe



Einstein in the day for coffee and cake - or even for a decent supper - make sure you return and climb the creaking stairs to Lebensstern at cocktail hour. Many of those who are dining below will have no idea what's going on above them. **50**



THE WORLD'S 50 BEST BARS



GOLDENE BAR

PRINZREGENTENSTR 1, MUNICH, GERMANY
GOLDENEBAR.DE

THE GOLDENE BAR HAS A CAFE, terrace and, of course, a bar - and you can hire these spaces and get your own bespoke menu for the occasion. This is a relatively large, versatile space - especially compared to some speakeasies you've been reading about. The drinks menu is 20 pages, kicking off with a page of Pure Joy. Now if that isn't the best name for a bunch of cocktails, what is? And if you do want to read the WHOLE list, order a Goldene Bar'tini to drink while you're doing it: Tanqueray 10 gin, Lillet Blanc, Goldene Bar bitters, orange zest - €9.50. The list carries on to champagne cocktails, tiki and rum



cocktails and an enormous selection of gins, plus whiskies from all over the world, including America, Japan, Scotland and Ireland. The cafe arm of Goldene Bar boasts its own coffee blend and homemade cakes. The venue also makes its own bitters, soda and syrup. And plays host to DJs. Eclectic. **50**

The cafe arm of Goldene Bar boasts its own coffee blend and homemade cakes. The venue makes its own soda and syrup

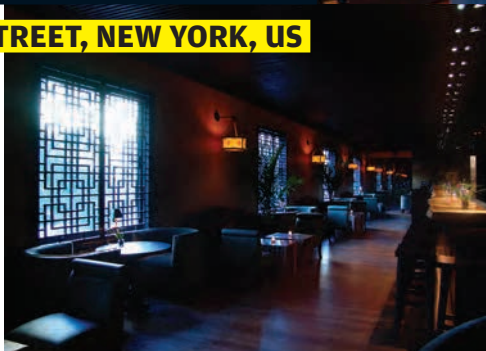


31



PEGU CLUB

77 WEST HOUSTON STREET, NEW YORK, US
PEGUCLUB.COM



PEGU CLUB IS NO STRANGER TO THE WORLD'S 50 BEST BARS LIST and its presence in the line-up is thanks to cocktail queen Audrey Saunders. Her approach to cocktails has been aped and admired by bartenders across the world.

The bar has been around since 2005 and sits firmly in the list as a place that has inspired many other bar openings. Its philosophy is to do "lots of little things well". The bar prides itself on doing things properly - that means squeezing juices fresh every day, crafting tinctures and infusions and even selling bitters, because "everyone whines about their lack of availability".

Pegu Club is also known for getting ice right and this has led many a 'tender to take note of what Saunders and her team are doing.

There is also a modest, Asian-inspired snack menu to save drinkers from becoming "unintentionally pie-eyed due to a lack of food options". But, as Saunders herself says: "You'll just have to pay us a visit and see for yourself what we're doing." OK then. **50**



The Pegu Club has been around since 2005 has inspired many other bar openings



32

WORSHIP STREET WHISTLING SHOP

63 WORSHIP STREET, LONDON, UK
WHISTLINGSHOP.COM



AS WE PREDICTED LAST YEAR, THIS VENUE HAS CLIMBED A FEW PLACES in the 2012 poll. This is Fluid Movement's second venue, following the opening of Purl in London's Marylebone.

When it opened, Worship Street shot straight into the limelight with *Time Out* Eating & Drinking Awards' best new bar accolade last year. So what's it like? Well, think Victorian gin palace but with nicer toilets and you've got it. It's downstairs and has a 'just stepped back in time' feel.

As well as cocktails, the place has a good wine list and a decent selection of craft beers under the Grape & Grain sections. There are barrel-aged libations

in six forms and we like the sound of WS Genever: Tanqueray gin, Caol Ila scotch, green malt and spices matured in sherry oak. If barrel-ageing isn't your thing, try a Mother's Ruin: Tanqueray gin, grapefruit, clary sage hydrosol, sugar, soda nutmeg. Don't know what a hydrosol is? Don't worry, there's a glossary on the menu. You can also buy the Whistling Shop house blend tea and coffees as well as the bar's own bitters. **50**

Think Victorian gin palace but with nicer toilets and you've got it. It's downstairs and has a 'just stepped back in time' feel



33

ANGEL'S SHARE

8 STUYVESANT STREET, NEW YORK, US



It's a no-standing and no-large-groups type of place – and be cool, not loud, or you won't get in

34



THE HEAD BARTENDER HERE IS SHINGO GOKAN, who you may've read about recently as he won the Bacardi Global Legacy Cocktail Competition with a cocktail based on his grandmother's Japanese tea ceremony.

He began bartending in Japan at the age of 18, came to New York in 2006 and eventually became the head bartender at Angel's Share in 2007 – five years is a long stint these days.

The bar is on the second floor, tucked inside a Japanese restaurant, and the view of Stuyvesant Square is said to be fantastic.

Eastern influence plays a part and, although cocktails are king, there's a nod to sakes and whiskies. It's a no-standing and no-large-groups type of place – and be cool, not loud, or you won't get in. Snacks come from the restaurant in all kinds of tasty forms. Once you find your way in, you probably won't want to find your way out again. **50**



DUTCH KILLS

27-24 JACKSON AVENUE, LONG ISLAND CITY, NEW YORK, US
DUTCHKILLSBAR.COM

WE'RE GROWN UP ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT NOT ALL COOL DRINKING HANGOUTS IN NEW YORK ARE ON MANHATTAN ISLAND. Dutch Kills is actually the name of an area in Long Island City that was once populated by settlers from the Netherlands.

The bar opened in 2009 and, unlike a few of its fellow bars in Manhattan, the drinks at Dutch Kills are relatively cheap. A Vodka Gimlet or a Daiquiri will set you back just \$8 and beers are a little as \$4 during happy hour. But if you're after something a little more fancy, then Dutch Kills can deliver.

Why not try a Chancellor: 1½oz scotch, 1oz tawny port, ½oz sweet



vermouth. This recipe was adapted from the *Savoy Cocktail Book* by Harry Craddock, 1930, and the original was made with dry vermouth.

If you find yourself in that part of town on a winter's eve, we recommend a Hot Buttered Rum: anejo rum, honey syrup, house spiced butter, hot water and grated nutmeg. That'll warm the cockles. Or if you have no idea what to order, simply go up to the bartender and say: "Roll your own." ⁵⁰

If you're in that part of town on a winter's eve, we recommend a Hot Buttered Rum. That'll warm the cockles

35



FRANK'S

ARÉVALO 1445, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA
FRANKS-BAR.COM



WE'RE BACK IN SPEAKEASY TERRITORY WITH FRANK'S and, although the website gives hardly anything away and asks visitors to please don't tell, it links directly to the bar's bustling Facebook page with almost 30,000 fans, and also to its Twitter feed.

The Facebook page is alive with cocktail recipes and links to music videos - the bar seems to have a penchant for Motown at the moment.

The request to please don't tell isn't the only similarity to a certain bar of the same name in New York. You guessed it - you need a secret password to get in... through the phone booth.

Whatever, this place sounds great and if you're looking for a party with a

sophisticated libation to get your lips around, go to Frank's.

When quizzed about the name, part-owner Juan Manuel Porada is quoted as saying: "Who didn't know a guy named Frank in the 1920s?" He's got a point. ⁵⁰



The request to please don't tell isn't the only similarity to a bar of the same name. You need a password to get in... through the phone booth

36



BEAUFORT BAR

THE SAVOY, THE STRAND, LONDON, UK
FAIRMONT.COM/SAVOY-LONDON



THOUGH IT'S NOT AS FAMOUS AS ITS SAVOY BROTHER, THE AMERICAN BAR, the Beaufort has its very own charm. The bar's Art Deco elegance is a nod to a bygone era of glamour and this is the perfect place to sit and lose yourself in the hotel's very grand history.

It's a new addition to the Savoy and is built on the hotel's former cabaret stage. To add a little magic to the scene, that stage was graced by the likes of Carroll Gibbons, the Savoy Orpheans dance band and George Gershwin himself. Performances were broadcast live by a new broadcaster called the BBC in the 1920s.

The cabaret tradition lives on in the bar and performances take place throughout the week. For the ultimate Beaufort experience, book yourself in



for the Art Decadent Tea: chilled champagne, Tippy Tea cocktails, delicate tea sandwiches, warm scones with cream and jam and an array of pastries. It's £62.50 per person but indulgence has to come at a price.

Head bartender Christopher Moore deserves a mention for his seasonal approach to cocktails - washed down with "the sophistication of champagne". What are you waiting for? **50**



To add a little magic to the scene, that stage was graced by the likes of Carroll Gibbons, the Savoy Orpheans dance band and George Gershwin himself

37

HEMINGWAY BAR

KAROLINY SVETLE 26, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC
HEMINGWAYBAR.CZ

WE'VE HAD A DISTINCT LACK OF NODS TO EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE LITERARY IMBIBER IN THIS YEAR'S LIST. Thank goodness Hemingway rears his head in earnest at this bar in Prague. It pays homage to the great drinker with particular attention to absinthe, champagne and, of course, rum. In fact, rum has its own list at the bar because there are more than 200 kinds of it on offer - from all over the Caribbean and beyond.

Top of the cocktail list has to be the Hemingway Daiquiri: Havana Club 3 Años rum, Maraschino, fresh lime, pink grapefruit juice, dash of sugar syrup. Even in the grip of Prague's coldest winter, you can be transported to the distressed beauty of Havana, Cuba.

Hemingway Bar is also part of the Rum Club CZ, a club for rum lovers all over the Czech Republic. Those enrolled on the members' list can enjoy free talks on everything to do with rum. **50**



Rum has its own list at the bar as there are more than 200 kinds of it on offer - from all over the Caribbean and beyond



38



THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS



MEAT

1076 EAST WASHINGTON STREET, LOUISVILLE, US
MEATINLOUISVILLE.COM

FOR STARTERS, THE NAME OF THIS PLACE IS AWESOME - unless you're a vegetarian. But let's pretend no one is and just salivate a bit. As with any self-respecting Kentucky drinking den, bourbon makes a healthy contribution to the Prohibition-style venue.

The bar is located above an establishment with another great name: The Blind Pig, a gastropub.

The eatery also prides itself on its wine and beer selection and it's lucky for Kentucky that one of the Blind Pig's operators, Jeremy Johnson, has a stake in Meat. Sorry.

Anyway, why all of this carnivore



39

The bar is located above an establishment with another great name: The Blind Pig, itself a gastropub

carry on? Well Meat is situated in Butcherstown, near downtown Louisville.

Another fact? OK then: according to insiderlouisville.com, one of Meat's owners, Peyton Ray, spent time as a Disney Imagineer. Could there be any better reason to visit? **50**



MILK & HONEY

61 POLAND STREET, LONDON, UK
MLKHNY.COM

MILK & HONEY IS ONE OF THE BASTIONS OF THE BAR WORLD.

Although it's not as high up in the list as it was, it is still in the list. That's no mean feat considering how many new places have opened their doors of late.

Remember, voters have to have visited the bars for which they vote within the past two years.

Milk & Honey opened in Soho, London, in April 2002 and, 10 years later, it remains one of the greatest bars in the world with an emphasis on training and a refusal to compromise.

Not only has the bar turned out some spectacular "tenders, it has also done a great deal to fuel the growth of the speakeasy.

Its owner, Jonathan Downey, started life as a corporate lawyer.

He was known for hating the city wine bar scene and he has definitely altered London's barscape.

The cocktail menu at Milk & Honey is concise and ingredients are listed without flamboyant descriptions. **50**



40 The bar has done a great deal to fuel the growth of the speakeasy



41

NOTTINGHAM FOREST

VIALE PIAVE, 1 MILAN, ITALY
NOTTINGHAM-FOREST.COM

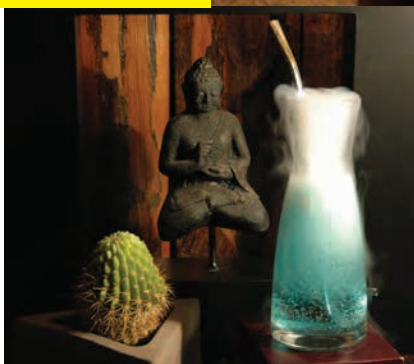


FIRST OFF, THIS PLACE IS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ENGLISH FOOTBALL CLUB of the same name. Good, that's out of the way, on to business.

Bartender Dario Comino is referred to as a pioneer of barchef mixology and there's no question that Nottingham Forest provides molecular mixology fans a lot more entertainment than any science fair we've been to. And just because science is involved, it doesn't mean drinking can't still be fun and jovial. The team at Nottingham Forest has had a tremendous time constructing the cocktail list and libations include drinks paired with famous fragrances – very

Italian – including Gaultier and Dolce & Gabbana. Then there's The Thing – a drink with two flavours in the same glass, and a range of cocktails inspired by TV series. They include a serial killer of a drink called Dexter, the biting concoction True Blood and a series of libations based on the CSI series. This line-up comes with test tubes, syringes and capsules that slowly release flavour your lips haven't tasted. It would be easy to get bogged down in the science behind these drinks – and they are seriously clever – but the emphasis is on having fun with taste sensations.

A word on the décor: paraphernalia. **50**



Libations include drinks paired with famous fragrances – very Italian – including Gaultier and Dolce & Gabbana

28 HONGKONG STREET

28 HONGKONG STREET, SINGAPORE
28HKS.COM



THE WEBSITE FOR THIS PLACE DOESN'T GIVE ANYTHING AWAY. And if the address wasn't in the name, we bet it wouldn't give that away either. Luckily, we spoke to the man behind the mystery, Michael Callahan. Plucked from the San Francisco bar scene for his knowledge and ability, Callahan is now a partner in the business.

From the outside, the bar looks like a 60s shop facade but inside, through a veil of thick theatre curtains, it seats 60 people. And it's not one of those seating-room only joints. The bar encourages a few standees to 'keep things lively'. You might feel you're in the know

just to have found the bar. But if you're really in the know, you'll be sitting in The Office – a space for eight to 12 drinkers with its own sound system and access cubby to the bar staff.

The drinks focus is on spirits and American-style cocktails, which you might not expect in south east Asia. The main room drinks menu usually features eight classics, eight progressives created by Callahan and his team, and two punches served in Shannon crystal bowls for larger groups. The bar also features a limited line-up of "interesting craft beers and wines from the US" and champagnes from smaller houses. **50**



42

The focus is on American-style cocktails, which you might not expect in south east Asia



43

BOUTIQ'BAR

PAULAY EDE UTCA 5, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
BOUTIQBAR.HU

THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE IS ONE OF THE MOST FABULOUSLY daunting and difficult to fathom. It has no basis in familiar Latin lingo and letters do not always sound as they appear. This mysterious tongue adds to the charm and intrigue of the country and to its capital city, Budapest.

Fortunately, the language of cocktails is fairly universal and, although the menu is in Hungarian, the likes of Hanky Panky, Vesper Martini and Flying Dutchman leap off the page.

The classics are credited to those who created them and, indeed, James Bond creator Ian Fleming gets a nod for the Vesper in his book *Casino Royale* circa 1950s.

The bar was started by the great Zoltán Nagy - ex LAB, London - and temporarily called Minibar until its proper name was settled upon.

If you visit the bar - or Hungary in general - watch out for the local hard stuff. It's called Pálinka and it's a sort of fruit brandy. It'll knock your socks off. **50**



Although the menu is in Hungarian, the likes of Hanky Panky and Vesper leap off the page

CHAINAYA. TEA & COCKTAILS

1ST TVERSKAYA-YAMSKAYA D.29 STR.1, MOSCOW, RUSSIA
FACEBOOK.COM/CHAINAYABAR



GOOD BARS ARE HARD TO FIND. This one seems especially difficult to locate. Its full name is Chainaya. Tea & Cocktails and the local *Time Out* describes it as a place of "endless infusions... even Grandma[']s jams... and accurate balance of taste, and generous portions of alcohol, and dishes". The reviewer adds it's like having a bartender in your home. Chainaya is the brainchild of bar



44

supremo Roman Milostivy and it opened its very secretive doors in September 2011 - a good month to launch a bar since the world's drinks professionals descend on the city for the Moscow Bar Show. That it has made the list so quickly is testament to the expertise of Milostivy and his team.

It's in Moscow's Chinatown and, in keeping with the 'local' cuisine, the bar offers 'real' Chinese food. **50**

That it has made the list so quickly is testament to the expertise of the team



THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS



CANDELARIA

52 RUE DE SAINTONGE, PARIS, FRANCE
CANDELARIAPARIS.COM

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A MEXICAN IN PARIS, this is the place to head to. The tacos have been praised by critics for being the best "this side of Juarez [Mexico]".

At the back of the taco shop, you'll find there's some serious drinking to be done at the bar. The concept is the brainchild of Americans Josh Fontaine and Adam Tsou and Tsou's wife Carina Soto Velasquez. Velasquez

is Colombian and the bar is named after a part of Colombia's capital Bogotá - the Candelaria. The cocktail menu is extensive and includes Make Your Own Martini, where you can chose the gin, vermouth and bitters.

There is also a Cocktail Brunch menu, served between 12.30 and 16.00 on Saturdays and Sundays. The Bloody Maria sounds intriguing but the recipe is a "secreta de la casa". If you're splashing out in the capital of romance, treat yourself to a lunchtime Royal Sherry Cobbler - Amontillado sherry, orange juice and champagne - all for €10. The Taqueria opens at 12.30, too, so you can use it to wash down Mexican brunch. **50**

The cocktail menu is extensive and includes Make Your Own Martini



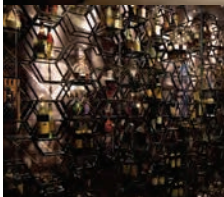
45



SALVATORE AT PLAYBOY



14 OLD PARK LANE, MAYFAIR, LONDON, UK
PLAYBOYCLUBLONDON.COM



His aim is to create the most luxurious cocktail bar experience in the world

WHEN THE MAESTRO CLOSED THE DOORS ON FIFTY IN 2009, the industry felt for the great man. But there was always a feeling he would rise from the ashes with an even more exciting project. And what could be more exciting than bunny girls?

When the bar opened in 2011, Michael Silberling, London Clubs International managing director said: "When it comes to cocktails, Calabrese is truly deserving of his Maestro title and his success at Fifty St James's is the reason LCI is so keen to work with him again. Quite simply he is the best in the business worldwide and his bar will help to

make the Playboy Club an unmissable destination."

Calabrese worked with Jestico & Whiles on a bespoke bar design and said his aim is to create the most luxurious cocktail bar experience in the world.

The bar made headlines in 2012 when a customer smashed a 1788 £50,000 bottle of cognac - or liquid history, as Calabrese calls it. The bottle was intended for a World Record attempt at the most expensive and oldest cocktail in the world.

But, just like the return of the Maestro with Salvatore at Playboy, we're sure he'll be back with another record-breaking idea. **50**

46



50 THE WORLD'S BEST BARS



The Ruby Cocktail Chronicles is a sort of blog about the bar, the cocktails and there's a lot about the weather and the seasons

RUBY

**NYBROGADE 10, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK
RBY.DK**

RUBY HAS HELD A STEADY POSITION IN THE LIST THIS YEAR. With the barrage of new openings it's a testament to hard work to hold on to a place in the top 50.

Behind the stick you'll find Kasper Reiwe Henriksen. Now here's a young bartender who's going places. Earlier

this year, he was lucky - and talented - enough to make it to the final 16 of Dia-geo's bartender super-comp World Class in Rio, Brazil. The last 16 is pretty epic considering thousands try their hand for a place among the reserve ranks.

If you've got a spare minute, Ruby's website is an entertaining read. The Ruby Cocktail Chronicles is a sort of blog about the bar, the cocktails and there's a lot about the weather and the seasons. That's because the bar focuses its menu on seasonality. Or, as it puts it: "Every season we combine some of our favourite spirits with the fruits and flavours of the moment to produce a handful of seasonal cocktails." The Chronicles also feature 86 Rules of Boozing. Number 37 is: Try one new drink each week. Sound advice. **50**



47



THE TILL. YOU HAVE TO GO HERE TO SEE THE OLD-FASHIONED, ORNATE CASH TILL. The bar is described as a 19th century saloon bar. It sports deep red wallpaper, heavy furniture and an old piano.

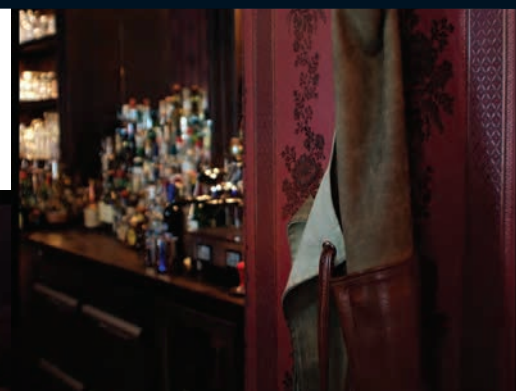
The main thrust of the drinks list centres around American whiskey - rye and bourbon especially. Tequila also features - no self-respecting cowboy would leave a saloon without a tequila after all.

And the name? Well, the bar is named after a Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds song called, er, *Stagger Lee*. The lyrics go a little like this: "It was back in '32 when times were hard, He had a Colt .45 and a deck of cards, Stagger Lee, He wore rat-drawn shoes and an old stetson hat. Had a '28 Ford, had payments on that, Stagger Lee..." It goes on, with a lot of swear words, and tells of how Stagger Lee shoots a bartender. Luckily for the team at Stagger Lee, we hear the drinks are so great that customers are more likely to want to declare undying love than anything else. **50**

STAGGER LEE

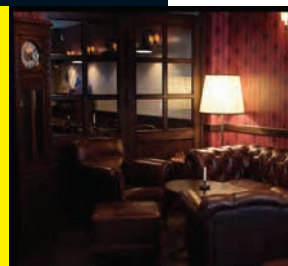


**NOLLENDORFSTRASSE 27
BERLIN, GERMANY
STAGGERLEE.DE**



The thrust of the list centres around American whiskey. Tequila also features - no self-respecting cowboy would leave a saloon without a tequila after all

48





LE BAR DU PLAZA ATHÉNÉE

25 AVENUE MONTAIGNE, PARIS, FRANCE
PLAZA-ATHENEE-PARIS.COM/THE-BAR

NOW THIS IS A FANCY BAR WHERE DESIGN PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART

in the overall experience. During the early evening, drinkers are bathed in a blue tint and bar designer Patrick Jouin mixes tall tables and chairs at a sculpted glass bar with low tables and leather armchairs in the lounge area. Post-23.00, the bar changes from blue to red and the relaxed ambience is replaced by a DJ. There is also a section on the menu called Red Hour Cocktails.

The hotel is part of the Dorchester Collection and Le Bar du Plaza Athénée's cocktail menu pays homage to the drinks of its hotel brothers and sisters.

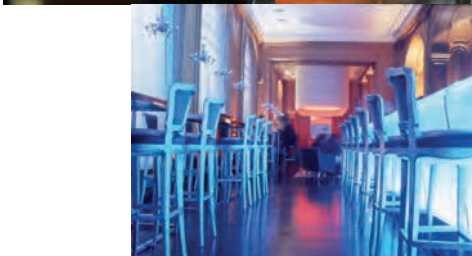
The Dorchester Collection drinks are

a luxury-priced €26 and they include the Martinez for London's Dorchester hotel as well as a Chilli and Passion for Hôtel Principe di Savoia - Milan: vodka, passion, piment, citron.

Head barman and bar manager Thierry Hernandez also gets a mention on the menu and for €26 you can leave your drinks choice entirely up to the boss and drink a Thierry's Mind. ⁵⁰

Post-23.00, the bar changes from blue to red and the relaxed ambience is replaced by a DJ

49



ASOKA



68 KLOOF STREET, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
ASOKABAR.CO.ZA

THERE'S A TREE IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS BAR AND IT'S NOT DEAD.

The guys at Asoka describe the venue as a Victorian townhouse with a dose of Feng Shui design. The olive Dharma Tree, grows in the middle of the bar and the decor looks to be a mix of Asian chic and old school townhouse.

The cocktail menu here is expansive. It starts with Bubbles and moves on to the Classic Education Selection. Manhattans, Mint Juleps and Raffles Singapore Slings are on offer, as well as two Margaritas - the Golden and a nod to San Francisco and Tommy's Margarita: 100% agave tequila, agave nectar and fresh lime juice.

Then we move on to the Straight Up section and no fewer than eight types

The cocktail menu is expansive. It starts with Bubbles and moves on to the Classic Education Selection

of Martini. From the Classic to the Porn Star, the menu also features more exotic Martinis such as the Madagascar with vanilla and a cucumber variant.

The shot menu is exciting with little 5cl drinks such as Vanilla Sky (vanilla vodka, lemon, pineapple and sugar) and B52 (Kahlua, Amarula and Grand Marnier) providing a pick-me-up between big drinks. ⁵⁰

Best Bar in Africa & Middle East

50



Lucy Britner looks at some of the bars that pulled in the votes but didn't quite make this year's list

ONES TO WATCH

PRIME MEATS

465 COURT STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, US
frankspm.com

This joint (geddit?) prides itself on being a "farm to table" restaurant, featuring local, fresh ingredients that are simply prepared. Food includes oysters, corn soup, a significant nod to German sausages, lobster and, of course, beef in many glorious forms. On the imbibing side, cocktails take influence from the pre-Prohibition era and, yep, ingredients are fresh and include house-made bitters. The place also offers its own Prime Meats Pilsner - a brew crafted by Brooklyn-based Sixpoint Craft Ales. There's an interesting wine list too, with a huge selection of Austrian wines on offer.

SHADY PINES SALOON

SHOP 4, 256 CROWN STREET, DARLINGHURST, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
shadypinessaloon.com

In her *Time Out* review of this venue, food and drink editor Myffy Rigby gave Shady Pines five out of five stars. The bar is the brainchild of Anton Forte and Jason Scott – the duo responsible for the Baxter Inn, which was best bar in Asia Pacific and Highest New Entry in this year's poll. It seems the pair know what they're doing when it comes to opening cool venues. In her review, Rigby recommends starting with a Set-Up – a whisky with a beer back. There's a great selection of beers and whiskies, depending on your taste and the size of your wallet.

ORPHANAGE

227 BREE STREET, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
theorphanage.co.za

This bar is on the corner of Bree Street and Orphan Street, which got its name following a flu epidemic in the 1900s that left many children without families. They would gather at a church on Bree Street and a reverend set up an orphanage nearby. OK, on to the drinks – or artisan cocktails, elixirs and intoxications as they like to call them. If you've a conscience, go for a More Tea Vicar: vanilla-infused Finlandia, rooibos syrup, cranberry and lemon. It's R60 of which R15 goes to the children's home. Or if you're feeling like an orphan, there's an Oliver Twist: chamomile-infused blanco vermouth, Ciroc, apricot liqueur, orange and a twist.



Blue Frog

**MATHURADAS MILLS COMPOUND,
SENAPATI BAPAT MARG, LOWER PAREL,
MUMBAI, INDIA**
bluefrog.co.in

This place is about as far away from a speakeasy or hotel bar as you can get. It describes itself as an “integrated music project” and, aside from a bar and restaurant, Blue Frog comprises a live music venue, four recording studios, a production house and a record label. It takes its food and drink offer seriously too, and boasts a massive selection of vodkas, as well as single malts, signature cocktails and a decent wine offer, including Sula Brut sparkling wine – India’s answer to champagne. Although the venue offers gigs six nights a week, you can enjoy a glass of Sula with brunch. There’s even a kids’ menu and it seems like Blue Frog is all things to all people – especially if those people are musically-minded.

ROCK BAR

AYANA RESORT, BALI
ayanaresort.com/rockbarbali

If your jaw doesn’t hit the floor when you see this place, you must be seriously hard to please. The open-air bar juts out over the sea, sitting atop natural rocks while the Indian ocean lashes the cliffs 14m below. The bar is part of a 77ha property that features 78 private luxury villas and a 290-room hotel. The cocktail list features a few classics, including the Martini and the Old Fashioned, but the bulk of the drinks are fruit-driven, with papaya, passion fruit, pineapple, lychee, strawberries and blueberries all making an appearance. Heat is provided not only by the glorious weather but also by ingredients ▶



Canon

928 12TH AVENUE, SEATTLE, US
CANONSEATTLE.COM

Canon opened its doors in 2011 and we bet it will be on the World’s 50 Best Bars list in 2013. The back bar is positively heaving with bottles – in fact, the bottle collection stretches way beyond just the back of the bar. The cocktail list is modest in comparison to the list of spirits on offer. The bar boasts almost 30 absinthes before you even get going on the rest. But if you’re after a taste of liquid history, this is the place for you. The Hardcore Porn section of the menu features dozens of spirits from just about every decade in the 20th century – some even older.



Salon 39

VODROFFSVEJ 39, FREDERIKSBERG, DENMARK
salon39.dk

This place has been around for a few years, quietly gathering fans around the globe for its drinks, service and all-round ambience. Salon 39 bottles some cocktails and they are available to buy and take away, along with several bitters, liqueurs and cordials from the Poison Shop. The cocktail menu is broken down into Brandy & Agave, Rum & Cane, Rye, Corn & Malt (whiskies) and Vodka & Gin cocktails. You can also order fruit cups in their various guises, including an Imperial Cup, made with champagne. But what you should really punt for here is the barrel-aged Negroni. The gin, Campari and vermouth concoction is aged in French oak and costs 120 kroner, or about £13.

► such as wasabi, fresh ginger and coriander leaves. If you can't decide what to drink you can leave it to the Bartender's Rock Shots. This features six shots of the day. The savoury bites sound every bit as mouth-watering as the cocktails and Rock lobster spring rolls with an Indonesian tamarind glaze would sit nicely next to anyone's drink.

THE VIOLET HOUR

1520 N DAMEN, CHICAGO, US
theviolethour.com

Historian and author Bernard DeVoto published a cocktail manifesto in 1948 called *The Hour*. This bar takes inspiration from one passage in particular: "This is the violet hour, the hour of hush and wonder, when the affections glow again and valor is reborn, when the shadows deepen magically along the edge of the forest and we believe that, if we watch carefully, at any moment we may see the unicorn." The cocktail menu kicks off with gin and Summer is Easy might be worth the trip to Chicago alone: Lady Grey infused Bombay, grapefruit, Campari, rosé wine, Peychaud's bitters. Even the bar snacks sound irresistible. If you like nuts, how about spiced nuts with coriander, fennel, cayenne and maple syrup? The house rules are pretty funny, although we sense a serious undertone, so don't mess: "No O-Bombs, No Jager-Bombs. No bombs of any kind. No Budweiser. No light beer. No Grey Goose. No Cosmopolitans."

TRADER VIC'S

NEW OTANI HOTEL, 4-1 KIOI-CHO, TOKYO, JAPAN
newotani.co.jp

We're sure you're all familiar with the Trader Vic brand of South Pacific tiki. The concept started in San Francisco and now there are 26 branches across the world. The list at the Tokyo branch is 100-libations strong and, rather than being categorised under spirit headings as we've seen many times throughout this magazine, the drinks come as Large, Small, Strong, Hot, Weak and After Dinner. Of course, rum is the focus and the Large drinks give a tiki god nod to the sharing cocktails that help give rum its jovial spirit. Or, as the people at Trader Vic's put it: "The ancient Polynesians' ceremonial Luau drinks were served in festive communal bowls." Their homage to this tradition includes a Rum Cup, a Rum Giggle and a Tiki Bowl. **50**

Camper English and Lucy Britner profile a handful of the industry experts who make up the Academy. The full list of voters can be found on page 65



1

THE ACADEMY

GAZ REGAN
NEW YORK, US

Regan started working as a bartender when he was 14 years old in his native Britain. After moving to New York in 1973 he continued bartending at a variety of venues for two decades in Manhattan. His first book, *The Bartender's Bible*, was published in 1991. Since then he's authored or co-authored many books and writes *The Cocktailian*, a bi-weekly column for *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

JACOB BRIARS
NEW YORK, US

Native New Zealander Briars learnt about whisky in an English theme pub before he became the bar manager at Matterhorn, New Zealand. He then found his calling as the 42Below Vodka Professor and coached more than 10,000 bartenders. Now he is global director of trade advocacy at Bacardi.

DALE DEGROFF
NEW YORK, US

Also known as King Cocktail, Dale DeGroff is often credited with kick-starting the cocktail renaissance with his work creating gourmet and classic cocktails with fresh ingredients at New York's Rainbow Room in the late 1980s. DeGroff's a partner in the Beverage Alcohol Resource (BAR) and founding president of the Museum of the American Cocktail, an exhibit of 200 years of the American cocktail.

EDWARD HAMILTON
CHICAGO, US

In the early 1990s Hamilton began sailing the eastern Caribbean, visiting every distillery in the area to learn about rum, inspiring a career catered to the spirit. His books include *Rums of the Eastern Caribbean* and *The Complete Guide to Rum*. He created *MinistryOfRum.com* and founded the Ministry of Rum festivals and tasting competitions.



2



3

ALEXANDRE GABRIEL
COGNAC AND PARIS, FRANCE

Gabriel is the resident and owner of Cognac Ferrand. He also produces Citadelle Gin, the Plantation Rum range of island rums finished in cognac casks, and Mathilde Liqueurs. Recently Gabriel launched the 1840 blend of Ferrand with help from historian David Wondrich.

HIDETSUGU UENO
TOKYO, JAPAN

From Ginza in Tokyo, Japan, 'Ueno-san' is one of the leaders of Japanese bartending. He began bartending in 1992, working his way up to become head bartender and manager of the famous Star Bar Ginza in 2000. It was here he pioneered his now famous diamond ice carving. His own venue, Bar High Five, opened in 2008 in Ginza.



4

KURT SCHLECHTER
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Schlechter is a mixologist, drinks consultant, author and public speaker. He worked for the Flair Bartenders Association for 10 years and has developed and launched numerous alcoholic beverages in South Africa. Schlechter's new cocktail book is the 5th edition of *The South African Cocktail & Shooter Guide*.



- 1** Hidetsugu Ueno **2** Edward Hamilton
- 3** Gaz Regan **4** Jacob Briars
- 5** Myffy Rigby
- 6** Max La Rocca **7** Erik Lorincz
- 8** Salvatore Calabrese **9** Simon Ford
- 10** Helmut Adam **11** Jim Meehan



5



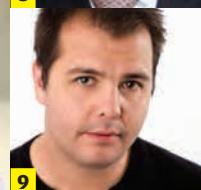
6



7



8



9



10



11

JOHN GAKURU
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Following a successful career at venues including Southampton's Orange Rooms and aboard Princess Cruises, Gakuru was appointed general manager at the renowned London Academy of Bartenders (LAB) in 2001. He founded drinks consultancy Bartotal and became brand ambassador for Sagatiba cachaça from 2005-2011. After that, he accepted the role of trade marketing manager for Think Spirits in Sydney.

ERIK LORINCZ
LONDON, UK

Still in his early 30s, Lorincz holds one of the most enviable positions in the industry – head bartender at the American Bar at the Savoy Hotel, heir to the legacy of Ada Coleman, Harry Craddock and Peter Dorelli. The Slovakian native signed on for a month-long bartending programme one year out of high school, and hasn't looked back.

HELMUT ADAM
BERLIN, GERMANY

Former bartender Adam founded *Mixology* magazine in 2003. He also helps run Bar Convent Berlin and is a contributor to the encyclopedia *Cocktailian*.

MYFFY RIGBY
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Rigby is the food and drink editor of *Time Out Sydney* and chief critic on the *Time Out Sydney Bar Guide*.

JIM MEEHAN
NEW YORK, US

Meehan is founder of last year's number one bar, PDT. He recently launched *The PDT Cocktail Book*.

SALVATORE CALABRESE
LONDON, UK

Known simply as the Maestro, Calabrese is bartending royalty. From making Martinis for the Queen and James Bond, Calabrese has done it all. His latest venture is Salvatore at Playboy.

MAX LA ROCCA
BARCELONA, SPAIN

La Rocca has worked as a bartender and bar manager in some of the world's finest establishments, including Claridge's in London, the Stravinskij Bar at the Hotel De Russie in Rome, the Sheen Falls Lodge Relais & Châteaux in Ireland, and the Mandarin Oriental in Barcelona. He is currently bar supervisor at Ohla Hotel's Boutique Bar in Barcelona.

CHARLOTTE VOISEY
SAN FRANCISCO, US

Voisey is Hendrick's gin brand champion and William Grant & Sons' company mixologist. She was recognised by the James Beard foundation in 2009 for her contribution to mixology.

GEORGE NEMEC
SHANGHAI, CHINA

Nemec has worked all over the world and has spent many years in Shanghai where he helped launch Gosney & Kallman's Chinatown. He is originally from the Czech Republic and is currently brand ambassador for Czech spirit Becherovka.

SIMON FORD
NEW YORK, US

Ford is Pernod Ricard USA's top cocktail man, with the job title of global spirits and cocktail brand expert. ▶

50 THE WORLD'S BEST BARS



12

- 12 The Cocktail Lovers
- 13 Alex Kratena
- 14 Jeff 'Beachbum' Berry
- 15 Thomas Kuuttanen
- 16 Tony Abou-Ganim



13

MAX WARNER LONDON, UK/GLOBETROTTER

Warner has the enviable job title of international brand ambassador for Chivas whisky and Plymouth gin. We'd like to count the stamps in his passport.

DAVID WONDRICH NEW YORK, US

Wondrich is the world's leading expert on the history of the American cocktail, *Esquire* magazine's drinks correspondent and a founding member of the Museum of the American Cocktail.

IAN BURRELL LONDON, UK/GLOBETROTTER

Burrell is THE global rum ambassador. He travels the world teaching bartenders and consumers about the category, organises UK RumFest and makes regular TV appearances.

JEFF 'BEACHBUM' BERRY NORTH CAROLINA, US

Berry is the author of five books on vintage tiki drinks and cuisine. He's a tiki expert and has won many plaudits for his work.



CREDIT: OLIVIER KONIG

14

THOMAS KUUTTANEN SWEDEN

Kuuttanen is the founder and master distiller of Purity vodka. The Swedish native is one of Scandinavia's most prominent spirits educators.

DANIEL ESTREMADOYRO CORDOBA, ARGENTINA

Estremadoyro is a brand ambassador for Diageo's Reserve portfolio as well as bar manager at The Real McCoy bar in Cordoba, Argentina.

JAMAAL PATRON BOWEN BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

Patron Bowen is one of the Caribbean's leading bartenders. He has been resident mixologist at the Sandy Lane hotel in Bridgetown for 10 years. He is also regional brand ambassador for Angostura Bitters and trains bartenders and judges cocktail competitions in the Caribbean.

THE COCKTAIL LOVERS LONDON, UK

Also known as Gary Sharpen and Sandrae Lawrence, the pair publish an online magazine about cocktail lifestyle and make regular appearances as judges in cocktail competitions, including Diageo's World Class.

JARED BROWN & ANISTATIA MILLER LONDON, UK

Brown and Miller are the founders of Mixellany - a drinks and spirits consultancy. The pair have written more than 30 books and make regular appearances at bar shows and events around the world. Brown is also master distiller at London craft distillery Sipsmith.

ANDY IVES LONDON, UK

Ives is editor of award-winning website, online bar community and jobs resource BarLifeUK.

TOMAS ESTES US/MEXICO

Estes is one of the world's leading experts on tequila. He acts as an ambassador for the category and also has his own brand of tequila - Ocho.

ALEX KRATENA LONDON, UK

Kratena is head bartender at the Artesian in the Langham hotel, London. Kratena's passion for the job has paid off in the bar becoming number one this year.

DANIEL CREBESSE LONDON, UK

Crebesse is president of the UK Bartenders' Guild and bar manager at luxury hotel 51 Buckingham Gate in London.

MARK LUDMON LONDON, UK

Ludmon is editor of UK on-premise magazine *Bar*. He attends numerous bar openings and knows where to seek out good drinks.

LUCA CORDIGLIERI LONDON, UK

Cordiglieri is vice-president of the UK Bartenders' Guild and bar manager at China Tang in luxury hotel the Dorchester, London.

JUNIOR MERINO MEXICO/US

Merino started the Liquid Chef in 2006 to showcase the artistry and mixability of ingredients and liquors from all over the world.

MATTHEW BAX MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Bax is both an artist and bar guru. He started critically acclaimed bars Der Raum in Melbourne and Tippling Club in Singapore. His latest venue is Bar Americano, also in Melbourne.

TONY ABOU-GANIM LAS VEGAS, US

Abou-Ganim made his name at top San Francisco venues in the 90s and helped open Harry Denton's Starlight Room. He is author of *The Modern Mixologist: Contemporary Classic Cocktails*.



15

CREDIT: TIM TURNER STUDIO



16

STEPHAN BERG
MUNICH, GERMANY

Berg founded one of Germany's first cocktails blogs in 2006 – Bitters Blog. He went on to launch a bitters company called Bitter Truth with business partner Alex Hauck. The company has expanded to include liqueurs, gins and whisk(e)ys.

BOB NOLET
SCHIEDAM, HOLLAND

Nolet is a director at Nolet Distillery – the place that produces Ketel One vodka. He travels the world educating the trade about his family's spirits, which also include genever and gin.

THEO WATT
SHANGHAI, CHINA

Watt, a native Brit, founded Thirsty Work Productions, publisher of *Drink* magazine – a comprehensive drinks trade magazine for China.

MICHAEL MENEGOS
GREECE/CUBA

Native Greek Menegos is international brand ambassador for Havana Club rum, travelling the world spreading a bit of Cuban spirit.

MANABU OHTAKE
JAPAN

Ohtake was crowned Diageo World Class bartender 2011. He is chief bartender at Cerulean Tower Tokyo hotel, Tokyo. **50**

The list

HERE IS THE 2012 ACADEMY IN ITS ENTIRETY. THIS YEAR, WE WELCOMED ALMOST 150 VOTES FROM 38 COUNTRIES

- > Naren Young, **US**
- > Marc Bonneton, **France**
- > Erik Lorincz, **UK**
- > Phil Duff, **Netherlands**
- > Linden Pride, **Australia/US**
- > Phillip Bayly, **Australia**
- > Myffawny Rigby, **Australia**
- > Stanislav Vadrna, **Bratislava/France**
- > George Nemeec, **China**
- > Antonio Lai, **China**
- > Jimmy Barrat, **Dubai**
- > Alexandre Gabriel, **France**
- > Helmut Adam, **Germany**
- > Stephan Berg, **Germany**
- > Hidetsugu Ueno, **Japan**
- > Kurt Schlechter, **South Africa**
- > Max La Rocca, **Spain**
- > Mathin Lundgren, **Sweden**
- > Thomas Kuuttanen, **Sweden**
- > John Gakuru, **Australia**
- > Angus Winchester, **UK/US**
- > Gaz Regan, **US**
- > Jacques Bezuidenhout, **US**
- > Dale DeGroff, **US**
- > Doug Frost, **US**
- > Ed Hamilton, **US**
- > Eric Seed, **US**
- > Francesco LaFranconi, **US**
- > Martin Cate, **US**
- > Jenny Adams, **US**
- > Jim Meehan, **US**
- > Steven Olson, **US**
- > Jacob Briars, **US/New Zealand**
- > Charlotte Voisey, **US**
- > Michael Silvers, **Australia**
- > Junior Merino, **Mexico**
- > Daniel Estremadoyro, **Argentina**
- > Matthew Bax, **Australia**
- > Simon Ford, **US**
- > Jeff "Beachbum" Berry, **US**
- > Kathy Casey, **US**
- > Tony Abou-Ganim, **US**
- > Camper English, **US**
- > Barrie Wilson, **UK**
- > Rob Rademaker, **Netherlands**
- > Gaston Regnier, **Argentina**
- > Jamaal Patron-Bowen, **Barbados**
- > Gianluigi Bosco, **Italy**
- > Thomas Aske, **UK**
- > Luca Cordiglieri, **UK**
- > George Grant, **UK**
- > Andy Pearson, **UK**
- > Salvatore Calabrese, **UK**
- > Illy Jaffar, **UK**
- > Alex Kratena, **UK**
- > Max Warner, **UK**
- > Ian Burrell, **UK**
- > Jamie Stephenson, **UK**
- > Juan Carlos Baucher, **Argentina**
- > Alex Kammerling, **UK**
- > David Wondrich, **US**
- > Colin Asare-Appiah, **US**
- > Tomas Estes, **US/Mexico**
- > Andy Ives, **UK**
- > Riki Carter, **New Zealand**
- > Alex Turner, **UK**
- > Mariano Ramirez, **Argentina**
- > Andy Griffiths, **Australia/New Zealand**
- > Daniel Crebese, **UK**
- > Jared Brown, **UK**
- > Javier de las Muelas, **Spain**
- > Rohan Carvalho, **India**
- > Yangdup Lama, **India**
- > Amit Sood, **UK**
- > Henry Besant, **UK**
- > Dave Broom, **UK**
- > Wayne Collins, **UK**
- > Agostino Perrone, **UK**
- > Fred Noe, **US**
- > Zoran Percec, **UK**
- > Alison Forrestal, **UK**
- > Erik Hakkinen, **US**
- > Manabu Ohtake, **Japan**
- > Bob Nolet, **Netherlands**
- > Rusty Cerven, **UK**
- > Theo Watt, **China**
- > Fredrik Olsson, **Sweden**
- > Etienne Schlechter, **South Africa**
- > Travis Kuhn, **South Africa**
- > Sebastian Hamilton-Mudge, **UK**
- > Pavol Kažimir, **Dominican Republic**
- > Ryan Chetiyawardana, **UK**
- > Lucy Britner, **UK**
- > Paul Mathew, **China**
- > The Cocktail Lovers, **UK**
- > Dan Priseman, **UK**
- > Hayden Scott Lambert, **Northern Ireland**
- > Michael Menegos, **Cuba/Greece**
- > Tash Conte, **Australia**
- > Simone Caporale, **UK**
- > JJ Goodman, **UK**
- > Mal Evans, **UK**
- > Andy Bishop, **Russia**
- > Anistatia Miller, **UK**
- > Monica Berg, **Norway**
- > Adam Elmegirab, **UK**
- > Dmitry Levitskiy, **Russia**
- > Tomek Roehr, **Poland**
- > Bastian Heuser, **Germany**
- > Tom Sandham, **UK**
- > Marten Peck, **Australia**
- > Des Mulcahy, **Australia**
- > Dan Wooley, **Australia**
- > Marten Ballesty, **Australia**
- > Matthew Braithwaite-Young, **Australia**
- > Jude Watson, **Australia**
- > Elizabeth Dorrough, **Australia**
- > Jean Francois Dehe, **Australia**
- > John McKenzie, **Australia**
- > Mark Ludmon, **UK**
- > Antonio d'Andrea, **Singapore**
- > Dre Masso, **UK**
- > Timo Siitonen, **Finland**
- > David Wolowidnyk, **Canada**

DIAGEO WORLD CLASS FINAL 16:

- > Tim Phillips (winner), **Australia**
- > Andy Mil, **UK**
- > Jimmy Barrat, **UEA**
- > Fjalar Goud, **Netherlands**
- > Kae Yin, **Taiwan**
- > Ricky Gomez, **US**
- > Olivier Jacobs, **Belgium**
- > Akihiro Eguchi, **Singapore**
- > Tree Mao, **China**
- > Dennis Zoppi, **Italy**
- > Shigeki Yoshida, **Japan**
- > Stephon Scott, **Trinidad**
- > Giuseppe Santamaria, **Spain**
- > Supawit Muttarattana, **Thailand**
- > Kasper Riewe Henriksen, **Denmark**
- > Varia Dellaliam, **Lebanon**



Diageo World Class final 16 in Rio earlier this year

A clean-shaven Alex Kratena sits in his bar, sipping water and filling the air with the scent of his aftershave. He's very much at home here and still reeling with emotion after recently being named International Bartender of the Year at Tales of the Cocktail's Spirited Awards in New Orleans. The Artesian was also named World's Best Hotel Bar.

In fact, he nearly didn't make it to collect the gongs. There was a problem with the plane and he ended up stranded in Chicago.

"I went to Aviary cocktail bar and did the whole tasting menu. It was great. I was actually planning another trip to Chicago to do that," he says, smiling.

He did end up in New Orleans and he did collect the award but this approach to unscheduled changes and the mindset to make the most of an opportunity – whether planned or not – are definitive traits of Kratena's character.

He left his home in Brno, Czech Republic, when he was 16. Though he wanted to study, he admits he was "a bit of a troublemaker", so study plans faded and when he was 18, Kratena left the Czech Republic for Maryland, US.

"I didn't speak a word of English," he says. "I was a dishwasher and my colleague Arnold taught me while we were pot washing. I'm very grateful to him."

From Maryland, Kratena travelled to New York where he turned his hand to many things to make money.

"I did anything from cleaning toilets, driving vans, washing up. To me, it was good money – you have to remember that this was a time when people were travelling from the Czech Republic to the US to work for two years so they could return to buy a house and a car."

Starting from the bottom also gave Kratena the motivation to rise

to the top. "You learn everything along the line. I might not've been a bartender straight away but I knew how important it was to clean a bar," he says.

There was no great moment of epiphany for Kratena the bartender and he almost seems to regret not having a lavish story for a question he must've been asked a hundred times.

"I can't remember the exact time I decided I wanted to be a bartender. I wanted to travel and bartending was a way of doing that. The career and passion came later."

Kratena came to the UK in 2006 and took a job as a bartender in Orrery restaurant, London.

From there, he went on to what has become his home – the Artesian at the Langham hotel.

"I've been here since the start – we opened the bar during Christmas 2006.

"I came here for the first time with my sister and I was amazed. It was love at first sight, if you can have that with a bar."

Kratena has seen hotel directors come and go and, compared to many of his peers, a six-year stint in the same bar is a long stretch.

"Many people comment on how long I've stayed here," he says. "It's a great company to work for and I love the bar."

The phone has been ringing a lot, especially since Kratena received the Spirited Award, but he says he's not about to jump ship.

It must be difficult to jump from a ship you have crafted and at the Artesian Kratena is famous for injecting a tiki feel into a 5-star luxury environment.

When he took on the project, he was left to make the stock decisions, "just the same as the chef in the kitchen", he says.

"I thought, what can I add? How can I make it special? Apart from Trader Vic's no one was doing tiki in a glamorous setting.

"And who says you can't have a ►

**Alex Kratena,
head bartender
at the Artesian,
Langham hotel,
tells Lucy Britner
how he went from
cleaning toilets
to becoming host
at the World's
Best Bar**

FULL



POTENTIAL

THE WORLD'S **50** BEST BARS

► Slush machine in a 5-star hotel? It's just perception. Technically speaking it's the best way to make a frozen drink."

He points out the Slush machine behind the beautifully ornate bar and I notice a toy parrot sitting atop a luxurious pagoda-style bottle display. It's as though Kratena's playful personality is peeping from behind the lavish decor.

PERSONALITY

And if it's possible to measure likeable bar personalities by the number of their Facebook friends, Kratena has almost 4,000.

It's likely a few of those number are reading this and if you follow Kratena's Facebook you'll know he's always jetting off somewhere. He does a bit of work for Virgin Atlantic, also for Bols Genever and there's rarely a cocktail competition he's not involved with – either as a competitor or a trainer. Kratena has flown all kinds of kit and ingredients to all kinds of places.

En route to Korea, he was pulled aside at customs and asked: "Do you have any explosives in your suitcase?" Three hours of

start to grate. But not for Kratena. "The brand ambassador thing is not for me."

While Kratena is keen to praise the work of his brand ambassador peers, he adds: "I wouldn't want to be tied to one brand and I don't think I, personally, would enjoy talking about the same brand five days in a row."

Then that Kratena smile flashes across his face as he looks towards the bar where his right-hand man, Simone Caporale, is busy preparing cocktails for the aperitif crowd.

"I love the bar. After 6pm when the lights go down and the music is turned up... the smell of perfume... it gets me excited."

Kratena admits he doesn't have much of a private life and pretty much everything he does is connected to work somehow. "Even visits to bars," he laughs.

He runs in the morning, then spends time working on emails and dealing with industry requests and business before turning up early for work for a meeting or, for today, an interview. Then it's behind the bar until it closes at 2am.

"If I thought about how many



Trends have come from the high street too, and now hotel bartenders are starting to push their own style – like chefs in hotel restaurants

explanation, internet examples of his work and a letter from his employer finally appeased the officials and Kratena and his coffee siphon and burner were allowed out of the airport.

"Many people ask if I'm part-time at Artesian," he laughs.

"But I am full-time and a full week can be 50 or 60 hours. All of my travel and competitions are on days off and lieu days. I can swap days off and management is very flexible because I am an ambassador for the bar really."

For some bartenders, the life of a brand ambassador beckons when the late nights and long bar shifts

hours I worked, I would go crazy," he says.

Spending so much time around alcohol, Kratena has learned to discipline himself.

"I don't drink at home, at work or when I fly," he says firmly. He's very much one of the career-bartending crowd and practising his trade in a luxury hotel environment means customer service is also very important to him.

"There has never been a better era to be a bartender," he says.

"In hotels, things are booming. Trends have come from the high street, too, and now [hotel bartenders] are starting to push

their own style – like chefs in hotel restaurants."

Kratena works with the Langham chef Chris King, protégé of Michel Roux Jr, and borrows kit from the kitchen. Sometimes King teaches him quicker ways of doing things and Kratena always takes the opportunity to learn.

And as he prepares for his evening shift, he tells me about an HSBC advert he sees a lot on his travels. It sums up his philosophical side and his can-do personality: "The world belongs to those who see its full potential."

Kratena, it appears, sees nothing but potential. **50**

Kratena: "If I thought about how many hours I worked. I would go crazy"

THE TOP FIFTY

AND THEIR POSITIONAL CHANGES FROM LAST YEAR

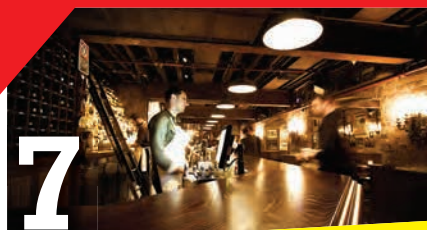
- 1** **ARTESIAN, LANGHAM HOTEL**
LONDON ⤴ Up 2
- 2** **PDT**
NEW YORK ⤵ Down 1
- 3** **NIGHTJAR**
LONDON ⤴ Up 15
- 4** **CONNAUGHT BAR**
LONDON ⤵ Down 2
- 5** **AMERICAN BAR AT THE SAVOY HOTEL**
LONDON ⤴ Up 1
- 6** **DEATH & CO**
NEW YORK ⤵ Down 2
- 7** **BAXTER INN**
SYDNEY » New Entry
- 8** **69 COLEBROOKE ROW**
LONDON ⤵ Down 1
- 9** **CALLOOH CALLAY**
LONDON ⤴ Up 18
- 10** **BRAMBLE**
EDINBURGH ⤴ Up 4
- 11** **EMPLOYEES ONLY**
NEW YORK ⤴ Up 4
- 12** **HAPPINESS FORGETS**
LONDON » New Entry
- 13** **DRINK**
BOSTON ⤵ Down 5
- 14** **THE VARNISH**
LA ⤴ Up 8
- 15** **ZETTER TOWNHOUSE**
LONDON » New Entry
- 16** **MUTIS**
BARCELONA ⤴ Up 29
- 17** **BLACK PEARL**
MELBOURNE ⤵ Down 7
- 18** **CLOVER CLUB**
NEW YORK ⤴ Up 10
- 19** **DRY MARTINI**
BARCELONA ⤵ Down 7
- 20** **LA CAPILLA**
MEXICO ⤵ Down 4



1
World's Best Bar and Best Bar in UK



2
Best Bar in North America



7
Best Bar in Asia Pacific and Highest New Entry



16
Best Bar in Europe and Highest Climber



20
Best Bar in Latin America & Caribbean



50
Best Bar in Africa & Middle East

- 21** **PALMER & CO**
SYDNEY » New Entry
- 22** **HIGH FIVE**
TOKYO ⤴ Up 12
- 23** **LE LION**
HAMBURG ⤴ Up 12
- 24** **SMUGGLER'S COVE**
SAN FRANCISCO ⤵ Down 5
- 25** **EAU DE VIE**
SYDNEY ⤵ Down 12
- 26** **EXPERIMENTAL COCKTAIL CLUB**
NEW YORK » New Entry
- 27** **PORTOBELLO STAR**
LONDON » Re-entry
- 28** **SCHUMANN'S**
MUNICH » Re-entry
- 29** **TIPPLING CLUB**
SINGAPORE ⤵ Down 6
- 30** **LEBENSSTERN**
BERLIN » New Entry
- 31** **GOLDENE BAR**
MUNICH » New Entry
- 32** **PEGU CLUB**
NEW YORK ⤵ Down 21
- 33** **WORSHIP STREET WHISTLING SHOP**
LONDON ⤴ Up 6
- 34** **ANGEL'S SHARE**
NEW YORK » New Entry
- 35** **DUTCH KILLS**
NEW YORK ⤴ Up 3
- 36** **FRANK'S**
BUENOS AIRES » New Entry
- 37** **BEAUFORT BAR, SAVOY HOTEL**
LONDON » New Entry
- 38** **HEMINGWAY BAR PRAGUE**
PRAGUE » New Entry
- 39** **MEAT**
KENTUCKY » New Entry
- 40** **MILK & HONEY LONDON**
LONDON ⤵ Down 35
- 41** **NOTTINGHAM FOREST**
MILAN » Re-entry
- 42** **28 HONGKONG STREET**
SINGAPORE » New Entry
- 43** **BOUTIQ'BAR**
BUDAPEST » New Entry
- 44** **CHAINAYA. TEA & COCKTAILS**
MOSCOW » New Entry
- 45** **CANDELARIA**
PARIS » New Entry
- 46** **SALVATORE AT PLAYBOY**
LONDON » New Entry
- 47** **RUBY**
COPENHAGEN ⤵ Down 1
- 48** **STAGGER LEE**
BERLIN » New Entry
- 49** **LE BAR DU PLAZA ATHÉNÉE**
PARIS » New Entry
- 50** **ASOKA**
CAPE TOWN » Re-entry