



Bar None

The Lotus boys' new haunt boasts studied cocktails, suede ceilings and no dancing whatsoever.

Photographs by ROBERT WRIGHT

Since they quietly opened the doors of their Meatpacking District lounge the Double Seven on West 14th Street in June, one thing haunts owners David Rabin, Will Regan, Mark Baker and Jeffrey Jah night after night: stilettos. "There are a thousand pounds of pressure per square inch in one of those heels," says Jah, looking at the pristine couches, barstools and counter-tops at his new boîte, which are all covered in Italian custom-dyed crocodile leather. The banquettes at Lotus, their five-year-old, three-level supper club across the street, boast war wounds from any number of dancing debutantes, so the boys and their new partner, Monika Chiang, want to ensure that these sofas are strictly for sitting. "Our worst enemies are Manolo B. and Jimmy C.," Jah adds, without a hint of irony.

Footwear notwithstanding, the Double Seven, with its Rat Pack moniker, \$16 bespoke cocktails and \$1.1 million price tag, is a sophisticated, grown-up alternative to the rowdy megacubs that have taken over Manhattan. "I'd like to call it an evolution, but we're just getting older," says Regan, an affable, gray-haired 44-year-old who, as almost every article about him notes, once dated Iman.

Beverages at the Double Seven, after all, are taken very seriously. For six hours each afternoon, one employee presses pineapples and grapefruits, while another scores and chops ice into different shapes and sizes, because, says Petraske, "in a cocktail you want the right amount of water." (Whiskeys need a big block of ice that melts slowly, while caipirinhas can stand some small cubes.) Drinks are paired with \$100-a-pound Debauxe & Gallais chocolates or a piece of Stilton from Murray's Cheese Shop in the West Village.

"We are training the cocktail waitresses to get people to stop looking at the ingredients list and think about flavor. Are you looking for something that's citrusy? Something creamy?" says Regan. Take, for example, the No. 12 Red, a swanky alternative to the cosmopolitan that's made with gin and red currant jam and paired with a chocolate coin, or the Gold Rush, a classic mix of bourbon, honey and lemon juice that comes with a honey ganache. "Most women probably wouldn't order a bourbon drink," says Regan. "But it's such a good cocktail."

So far Kate Hudson, Clive Owen, Benicio Del Toro, Natalia Vodianova and Alex von Furstenberg have slipped through the nondescript door and

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Of all the nightlife options in New York right now, from warehouse-size Chelsea clubs like Marquee and Cain to Amy Sacco's ever popular Bungalow 8 to the members-only Soho House, the Double Seven is trying to carve out a niche for scenesters who want a night off but still want to be out on the town. "We're really trying to be the antithesis of what we are doing across the street [at Lotus]," explains Regan of the new 1,900-square-foot space. "And it might be the same customer. One night, you're in the mood to get crazy and go to a club and be smashed, but three days later you're in a different mood."

It's all in the details, too. Because the music is kept at a respectable head-bopping level, the socializing is more about civilized conversation than raucous partying. The owners had a four-hour discussion solely on how to light artwork, so choosing the chocolate suede ceiling and the corseted black uniforms for cocktail waitresses must have been torture. They hired designer Dodd Mitchell, known for L.A. hot spots Dolce and the Hollywood Roosevelt hotel, to do the decor and mixologist Sasha Petraske, the owner of the cultish Lower East Side speakeasy Milk & Honey, to create a cocktail menu.

concrete tunnel entrance. To get in, guests can make a reservation without having to buy a bottle of alcohol, the normal procedure in most other Manhattan clubs. But since the joint maxes out at about 90 people, spots will be few and far between and some Darwinian door policies will be necessary.

To avoid a stampede, publicity has been limited (an opening party was nixed in favor of word of mouth) and the front door will be closed as soon as the bar hits capacity. "We're maybe not going to maximize the amount of revenue that we could do in any given week," rationalizes Regan. "But I think the guest appreciates it because you're not cramming another body in to sell five more drinks." Rabin, who is also the president of the New York Nightlife Association, diplomatically allows that VIP's will be shuttled into Lotus while they wait for a table to clear up at the way.

That easy proximity is no accident. "I definitely think that some people who are coming to the Double Seven and haven't been to Lotus in a while are saying, 'Hey, we feel like getting a table at Lotus and dancing,'" Rabin says, laughing all the way down 14th Street.

—JAMIE ROSEN

Above: Revelers at the Double Seven in New York's Meatpacking District. Behind them, an entire wall lined with handblown glass objects.