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BOÎTE

Get Your Fix of Gold and Dancing



Andrea Fischman for The New York Times

HAPPENING NOW A spot to hold court or sip "culinary cocktails."

By LEANNE SHEAR
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CALL it magical realism: entering the tomblike sanctum of GoldBar on Broome Street in Manhattan, you can't help but feel as if you have fallen down the rabbit hole into some sort of Wonderland. Perhaps it's the oversize teacuplike chairs at the cozy bar, or the lights twinkling off the 18-karat gold-leaf ceiling vault and gold floor tiles, or the glimpse of the golden skulls lining the walls in the back room of the lounge.


On a recent rainy evening, the owner and designer of GoldBar, Rob McKinley, wearing Converse sneakers and a trench coat, bypassed patrons and friends, walked over to the busboy and gave him the standard male half-hug and half-handshake. He then moved on to greet his manager, bartenders and waitresses.

In the world of night life, where most proprietors are imperious and consider themselves untouchable, it was a rare sight.

Meanwhile, on the small makeshift dance floor in front of the D.J.'s booth, the musician G. Love (of Special Sauce fame) was dancing wildly with his girlfriend, Sarah Frigo, a model. Still dancing, he said that he was working on a new album and in the midst of his summer tour, but that whenever he and Ms. Frigo were in town, they came to GoldBar to "start off and finish" their nights.


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“We live together,” said the willowy Ms. Frigo, waving her glass of Champagne around without spilling a drop. They high-fived triumphantly and went back to dancing, even more energetically than before. “Real Love” by [Mary J. Blige](#) was pumping throughout the room.

While killer music, whipped up by Kiss, the resident D.J., is clearly an allure at the lounge (Lenny Kravitz, a GoldBar regular, even wrote a song — “Dancin’ ’Til Dawn” — about the place), Clarence Fuller, a model, said he dug GoldBar’s décor best of all.

“It sounds kind of weird to say that, but it’s true,” he said. “The music is always good, the people are always good, blah blah blah.” He added with an impish smile, “But I want to hang with the gold skulls.”

Oh, yes, those skulls. The walls of the back section of GoldBar are covered with no less than 2,400 custom-made gold-leaf skulls, inspired by the scarier version found in the catacombs of Paris.

In addition, 14,000 feet of heavy gold chain used as curtains separate the back room (where the skulls are housed) from the bar area.

The bar, incidentally, is where the real magic happens. Like every other “cool” place in New York these days, GoldBar has jumped on the “culinary cocktail” bandwagon. With that norm in place, and no evidence of that tacky vestige of 2006 — bottle service — in sight, Remi Shobitan, the head bartender, who grins like a Cheshire cat, has real room to play.

Holding court at the bar, Barry Brandon, an [Alan Cumming](#) look-alike, daintily sipped his Cherie Amour, smacked his lips lightly and said: “Modern. Very what’s happening right now.”

His friend, Tracey Toomey, a gorgeous punky 20-something brunette, appropriately sipping a Tempesta, laughed and countered: “Delicious. The best libation I’ve ever had.”

GOLDBAR

389 Broome Street, Manhattan, (212) 274-1568.

ATTIRE It’s the Gilded Age of Groovy at GoldBar: lots of gold and silver sparkles for the ladies, as well as Theory one-piece pantsuits.

GETTING IN With only 1,800 square feet (and a proportionate number of pretty people angling for entry), it’s not exactly the easiest of propositions. Reservations, at (212) 947-8000, are highly recommended.

SIGNATURE DRINK If you’re lucky, Remi, the mixologist, will make his special rum old-fashioned upon request (it’s not on the menu). He uses muddled ginger and other fresh fruit, brown sugar and a 23-year-old Guatemalan dark rum called Ron Zacapa Centenario.