

Collingwood Hotel

Western Sydneysiders need not make the trip to the city for a bit of upmarket refinement. Cat Strom can't believe the transformation.

The trip along Cumberland Road and the Hume Highway in Western Sydney is busy, noisy and offers a prime example of urban tackiness. Along the way, P-platers in cars that bounce and tremble with 'doof-doof' music speed past at an alarming rate. From the outside, Liverpool's Collingwood Hotel appears to be just another pub catering to the masses, albeit with a rather trendy logo.

Upon entering the establishment the image continues: a traditional pub with plenty of wood, gold, green and sporting memorabilia mounted on the walls. Pokies, vending machines, flannelette shirts and old boys in their favourite seats complete the picture. However, like walking through the wardrobe into Narnia, there is a door that leads you to another world. Two thirds of the hotel — the lounge bar, beer garden, bistro area and toilets — has been redeveloped into a cool, serene oasis of taste. This 'Extreme Makeover' is such a dramatic contrast to the rest of the hotel it really has to be seen to be believed.

Extreme Makeover

The force behind this dynamic makeover is Caroline Porter whose parents have owned the hotel since 1991. Caroline managed the refurbishment

injecting a unique vision and energy into the project.

"I wanted to give our hotel a cosmopolitan city-like feel," she said. "You have to keep two steps ahead of what the market is offering and give your customer a reason to choose your hotel over a competitor's. People need to be inspired all the time so you constantly have to reinvent yourself. Even the slightest change is important, whether it's new products behind the bar, or different lighting for each season and time of the day."

Over the years, the Hotel had deteriorated into a dark cavernous space with little atmosphere and worn out details. The timber ceiling had turned near black from nicotine smoke and a massive false beam crossed low above the bar to hold a bundle of electrical cables. The courtyard was in its current location but closed off from the main bar with no real connection to the interior. One highlight of the hotel was a fireplace but it was tucked away at the end of a narrow passage without any opportunity to enjoy it.

International Inspiration

For nearly two years Caroline looked at every hotel, bar, and club possible searching for inspiration. She travelled to New York and LA where she particularly liked the clubs with

a mix of big spaces and intimate seating and conversation areas. “I looked at everything including colours, beer gardens, bars, furniture, beer taps, dancefloors, sound systems, windows and even coverings for air conditioning vents,” she laughed. “I then spent a year working with the designer, whom I drove crazy!” Caroline’s aim was not only to refurbish the venue but also to change the music and ambience to attract a new clientele as well as keeping the old. Out went the Cold Chisel tracks, racing and Sky channel and in came music with a vibe and groups of people casually socialising. A dress code was introduced and, with it, an improvement in the behaviour of clientele. Boutique beers and chardonnay are the tipple of choice in this part of the hotel, while out front the old boys and the builders keep faith with their VB. “People in the western suburbs now have their own hip and sophisticated venue, meaning they no longer have to travel into the city.”

Sonic Youth

Interior designers SJB were contracted to transform the back bar and courtyard from a sprawling extension of the public bar into a destination in itself. The aim was to give this area its own identity and thus attract a new, more youthful clientele. “On the very first visit it was clear to SJB that the hotel required radical change,” said Jonathan Richards of SJB. “However, It was important to incorporate some of the features that gave it character such as the open truss ceiling and the tall stippled brick walls. It needed a variety of spaces that would offer patrons the opportunity to enjoy the hotel in different ways. Rather than a big open space with a bar in the middle, the planning allowed for a number of smaller areas linked together with open screens. Visitors can enjoy an intimate cocktail in the red lounge or dine in the bistro under an open louvred roof or mix it with the masses in the entertainment area.” Entry into the refurbished area does not have to be through the ‘magic door’ as the venue has its own glass-door entry. Adjacent to these doors is a glass atrium that contains massive yucca desert trees surrounded with white pebbles. Caroline was very keen to incorporate this piece of greenery into

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the design although she’s not quite sure what to do when the tree outgrows its enclosed space! Beyond the greenery is the drama of the main bar: long black timber drinking tables, chocolate brown marble bar, shiny grey terrazzo floor, white ceiling and a back bar made of bevelled mirrors as though from a Belgian chocolate shop. The backdrop to all the new sparkly finishes is the old weathered brick walls of the original building — now looking somewhat refreshed. In front of the bar sits a small gathering of colourful striped upholstered lounge chairs created by Pierre and Charlotte Julien incorporating a striped canvas fabric from Ici Et La. These colourful chairs, together with a leather ottoman, are grouped in front of an open fire. The fireplace has been built into a full height, chiselled limestone wall with glass windows through to the bistro servery beyond. This is just one lounge setting of a few — back at the yucca trees are two separate lounges for those seeking respite. Beyond the fireplace the hotel is divided between the entertainment area and the bistro — both leading out to the courtyard. This external part of

» (Previous page): This external part of the hotel has had a dramatic change from its former self and even on a wet winter’s night the courtyard sparkles in an inviting manner.



the hotel has had a dramatic change from its former self. Custom-made timber furniture, lime green cushions, deck chairs and outdoor armchairs sit under rows of suspended green lights that look more like oversized teardrops. At night the courtyard sparkles — accentuated even further by one end wall of the courtyard covered in mirror with a bamboo pole screen. Retractable timber windows open out to the courtyard delivering air and space to the venue.

Lighting Design

Critical to the atmosphere of the new venue is the lighting design. The high vaulted herringbone roof of the original building is accentuated with mirrored and glass pendants that hang low over the bar. These ‘Sirah’ pendants, designed and manufactured by iGuzzini, and are available from ECC Lighting. SJB’s approach to redesigning the Collingwood Hotel has been to keep its raw features and highlight them with a layer of sparkle. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the hotel is its high exposed truss roof. Prior to the renovations it

“I then spent a year working with the designer, whom I drove crazy!”

was dark and unnoticed, now it’s stark white and supports an array of glistening light fittings. The original brick walls have been left as a feature and in front of them are backlit display cabinets made from mirror. To accentuate the warmth in the main bar and to project moving images onto the high, white ceiling, four Martin Mania DC1 fluid effect lights were installed. The special effect patterns produced by the DC1 create anything from a slow moving, colour changing ‘waterfall effect’ image that projects textured movement, to an effect that creates an interesting warm comfortable feeling and look. With variable colour, rate and focus setting these fixtures can be set specifically for various promotional concepts.

Audiovisual

The Collingwood Hotel entertainment system was designed to deliver a high quality sound, visual and lighting experience for its customers throughout all areas of the hotel. In consultation with Caroline Porter, Matt Kline of Avsound Productions made sure that the audiovisual, sound, lighting and entertainment system equipment was specified to create a great mood and atmosphere in all of the hotel’s multi concept operations. The entertainment area is true to its name with a dazzling array of oversized light globes. This sprawling centrepiece is a custom installation of large incandescent globes from OggiLuce that hang scattered across the ceiling at different heights. In the dancefloor area Avsound installed an assortment of

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Martin Mania DC1

The Martin Mania DC1 is a light fixture that projects decorative fluid effects. Ideal for shows, clubs or simply your own personal party, the Mania DC1 will wash liquid light through the crowd, the lounge, across walls and over bars.

With three selectable colours plus white, the DC1 gives you split colour options whilst a variable focus allows you to frost and blur the projected image. A variable speed of effect gives you the option of ranging moods — from a silent trickle to a surging waterfall.

Importantly, the DC1 has no duty cycle, which means there are no cool down periods and no stopping the show. Price: \$349 including 800-hour lamp.



» **Show Technology:** (02) 9748 1122 or www.showtech.com.au

Bubble Club

The chunky yet lightweight forms of Philippe Starck's Bubble Club Sofa and Armchair recall classic Chesterfield styling in colourful, weatherproof, UV resistant, roto-moulded polypropylene. Durable enough for use in public spaces, the fade-resistant set can be used indoors and out for upbeat lounge applications. Inset grooves alongside the seat provide water drainage. Available in five colours: zinc white, pale grey, pale yellow, pale green and sienna red the range also has a side table to match. Made in Italy by Kartell. Price: Sofa \$1,305, Armchair \$900.



» **Space Furniture:** (02) 9667 8200 or www.spacefurniture.com



LightJockey software that controls the preset lighting effects provided by the Martin intelligent light fixtures. Each preset creates a unique effect and light pattern to create a party atmosphere on the dancefloor.

Bathroom Visit

And let's be honest, it isn't a visit to the hotel without a visit to the bathroom. The new bathrooms, signposted by funky footwear images, feature striped mosaic tiled walls in bright colours with black ceilings and black terrazzo floors.

SJB set out to build on the character that the Collingwood Hotel already had. By working with the strong architectural features of the original building and paring back the rest, and then injecting the place with some style, humour and even a bit of glamour, the hotel has indeed been transformed. While the renovations cater for a whole new demographic keen for a venue more typical in the city, the old crowd who enjoy the way it was still gather next door in the public bar.

A key part of the design has been to create a variety of experiences for the patrons. Rather than having a big open bar with a beer garden out the back, there is a selection of spaces each with its own character. Patrons can enjoy small intimate lounges with a fireplace or a big open entertainment area with an oversized ceiling chandelier or perhaps the bistro that has leather bench seats and an open louvred ceiling. «

» **Collingwood Hotel:** (02) 9602 8005

» **SJB Interiors:** (03) 9699 6688 or www.sjb.com.au

» **ECC Lighting:** (02) 9460 6600 or www.ecc.com.au

» **Avsound Productions:** 1300 663166 or www.avsound.com.au

» **Nightlife:** 1800 679748 or info@nightlife.com.au



» Retractable timber windows open out to the courtyard delivering air and space to the venue.

intelligent moving lights to create excitement and movement: four Martin MAC250 Kryptons and two Martin Mac 300s.

"For the lighting design we considered all operational aspects of the room which includes live music, DJs and a variety of performances that occur from time to time," said Matt Kline. "By having a combination of spot and wash fixtures we were able to fill the room with boundless colours, shapes and specific gobos for promotional use.

"The lighting effects and patterns produced in the lighting design create a multitude of shapes, colours and movement to match the energy of the environment at a level experience equal to lighting designs incorporated in New York nightclubs."

The main task with the sound system was to implement effective functionality and install

entertainment system control panels in all locations to make changes of the music, visual channel selection and volume control fast and efficient for the operator.

Matt and his Installation Projects Manager David Coleman escorted Caroline to many venues around Sydney so she could experience a variety of sound systems and eventually she opted for 24 Martin Audio speakers comprising Blackline F8 and F12 compact two-way passive boxes, C115 surface mount speakers, and Blackline S15 compact vented sub bass boxes. The courtyard is serviced by four JBL Control 28 speakers, the bottle shop by three Control 26 speakers and the toilets by four Quickfit 6 speakers. All speakers are driven by QSC RMX amplifiers.

"The sound system was configured to offer

functionality," said Matt. "There is a choice of audio options to select from. The operator can select either of two PC music channels, DJ input, or visual TV audio."

Each zone in the venue has an audio channel and volume control panel to select audio options available for that area.

A Nightlife Music Video System is installed to provide different styles and choices of contemporary music during the day whilst creating visual excitement from the latest video clips. It offers other custom music channels to create the right energy mood and music style to complement each area of the hotel.

The DJ booth houses two turntables, DJ mixer and a dual CD player used by DJs during the evening and late night entertainment sessions. The DJ operates the Martin

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