

DAILY NEWS

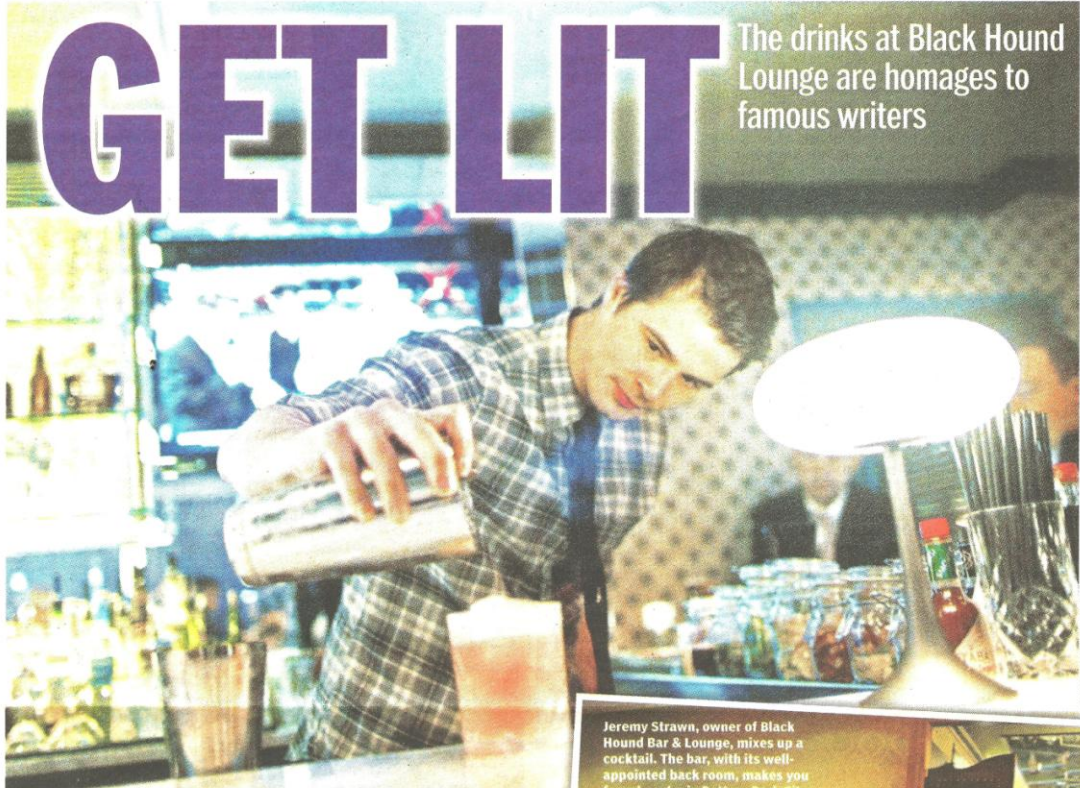
EATS

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The drinks at Black Hound Lounge are homages to famous writers



PHOTOS BY PEARL GABEL

Jeremy Strawn, owner of Black Hound Bar & Lounge, mixes up a cocktail. The bar, with its well-appointed back room, makes you forget you're in Battery Park City.

BY ALEXANDER NAZARYAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

When you think of artfully dim lounges serving inventive cocktails, you probably don't think of Battery Park City. That neighborhood — cut off from the rest of Manhattan by the West Side Highway — of anonymous high-rises and workaday commuters has never been much of a destination to eat or drink, except to maybe grab a slice on the way back to the cubicle or have an after-work beer at one of the area's generally dingy pubs.

The Black Hound Lounge, the brainchild of Texas-born, Manhattan-trained mixologist Jeremy Strawn, aims to rectify precisely the problem of that neighborhood's infamously dreary nightlife.

His new venture may be housed in a building otherwise absent of character, but once you're inside, it instantly welcomes with leather chairs, a gleaming marble bar and a posh back room that recalls a British country house. With the blinds drawn and jazz or oldies on the stereo, you just might forget you're in the land of Goldman Sachs.

In fact, if Strawn — who studied philosophy at Texas A&M before coming to New York to work as a model — has his way, customers will be transported, after a drink or two, into a midcentury literary salon.

That will take place, he hopes,

courtesy of author-themed cocktails like the Gitanilla, named after Cervantes and tasting like a very spicy margarita, or the Moveable Feast, a Hemingway drink featuring rye and amaro. Other authors who have drinks named after them include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oscar Wilde and Hunter S. Thompson.

Strawn, who learned to mix drinks at venues like the Standard Hotel and neo-speakeasy Death & Co., says his goal is to make a "bespoke cocktail" that pays tribute to his own love of literature, as well as the spirits his favorite authors imbibed, often in large amounts. The menu is thus adorned with quotes from the likes of Irish poet W.B. Yeats, who once quipped, "The problem with some people is that when they aren't drunk, they're sober."

Not too much should be made of the fact that Hemingway's name is misspelled on the menu (that second "m" does not belong there). A slightly greater concern is the weakness of the drinks — the much-recommended 100 Day Old Manhattan, not a struggling poet's bargain at \$13, lacked the promised smokiness, while a dining partner described the Ideal Husband, an intended tribute to



The Glass Armonica

Oscar Wilde, as a glorified Mike's Hard Lemonade. Both more ambitious and more delicious was the Hour Glass, adorned with egg white.

The food is of the pub variety, and does not disappoint. A burger is much easier to screw up than one might think; the one at the Black Hound is moist with just a hint of pleasant gaminess. The truffle-flavored mac and cheese, a sort of Manhattan staple these days, is another hearty success.

So while the Black Hound may not be revolutionary, it is certainly something new for a Battery Park City still struggling to recover from superstorm Sandy, not to mention the somewhat more distant shocks of 9/11 and the financial

collapse of 2008.

"Everything caters to business and power lunch crowds," says manager Steve Emmett, who also runs next door's South-WestNY (the two restaurants are owned by the same hospitality group and share a kitchen).

Strawn, who also runs the Mulberry Project in Nolita, adds that he aims for a "female-friendly crowd, which is rare for the area."

Indeed, a recent evening found the front of the house about half full, mostly with small groups keeping their voices low and avoiding, as far as we could tell, topics like bond yields and interest rates.

The music was smooth, the lights were low. What neighborhood are we in again?

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