

Movers shakers stirrers

Hotel bars are where it's at in Manhattan. **Stephen Whitlock** joins the cocktail circuit and toasts 10 of the hippest hang-outs and the best classic watering holes

82

After years of soaring hotel rates, it is finally becoming easier to get a bedroom in New York City. Getting a bar stool is a different matter. In the UK, hotel bars have not enjoyed the most enticing reputation: flock wallpaper, racks of tourist leaflets and lonely salesmen having a beer before bed spring to mind. But all that is a far cry from the New York scene, where hotel bars are the hottest bars in town.

Queues form outside the most popular bars, lured by potent cocktails, impeccable decor, flattering lighting and fashionable patrons. Manhattanites who squeeze in after work for a Cosmopolitan or an Apple Martini (a drink currently, inexplicably, in vogue), outnumber hotel guests. Some bars are owned by the hotels, but increasingly they are separate businesses. The hotel provides the space and the bar generates the hype.

Creating the most audible buzz in town is Rande Gerber. After collaborating with Ian Schrager on hugely hip bars including the Skybar at the Mondrian, Los Angeles and the Whiskey Bar at New York's Paramount, Gerber has established a close relationship with the W hotel chain. His bars currently enliven New York's four W hotels (with W Times Square coming this month), and he has plans for others at new W hotels in Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles and New Orleans. It does not hurt business that star-spotters can fantasise about catching a glimpse of Gerber's wife, Cindy Crawford, in any of his bars.

These, then, are among the best hotel bars in the city. Remember to tip a dollar for each drink – two, if the barman is an expert.

