

ISSUE 198

Hard Rock Hotel

The former Cumberland Hotel site at Marble Arch has been transformed into the predictably spectacular Hard Rock Hotel, choosing award-winning architecture and interior design practice Scott-Brownrigg to pay homage to the iconic brand.



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Project Team

ARCHITECT & INTERIOR DESIGNER
 Scott Brownrigg

FURNITURE PROVIDER
 glh Hotels

FLOORING SUPPLIERS
 Ceaser Ceramics, Shaw Carpets

FURNITURE SUPPLIERS
 RHA & Nova

SURFACE SUPPLIERS
 Textura, Armourcoat

LIGHTING SUPPLIERS
 Nulty Bespoke, R&S Robertson

So, there we were, looking for a real standout performer for this 'festival' of hospitality design. We wanted an international, instantly recognisable, 'rocking' brand. When, as luck would have it, our friends at Scott Brownrigg alerted us to their project for the new Hard Rock Hotel in London's famous West End, we knew we had our headline act.

The exciting new scheme has seen the Cumberland Hotel transformed into the Hard Rock Hotel London, situated opposite Marble Arch, just a stone's throw from the top of Oxford Street and Park Lane. Scott Brownrigg was appointed to consider the primary entrance and ground floor guest experience – which hits you from the moment you reach this historic

venue. The classic hotel concierge uniform, for example, has been updated to include a cool oversized bowler hat and a fantastic rock'n'roll montage print on the back of the waistcoat, while the equally classic luggage trolleys here feature contemporary Union Jack prints.



We enter the brilliant, vibrant entrance, where we meet up with Scott Brownrigg's Director of Hospitality, David Mason. 'We've essentially opened up the whole of this ground floor, to create one big space,' David tells us. 'This is actually the only facility that has the café combined with the hotel – which is a new initiative for Hard Rock. There was no grading here – which was fortunate – but this is a conservation area, so we had to be careful with the signage and the frontage. This is a famous vista – looking out onto Marble Arch – so it had to be suitably impressive.'

'This is a very strong brand – and can be quite in-your-face. We spoke with Hard Rock and told them that we didn't think that would work for London – so we've stripped things right back and introduced more muted colours.'



‘Obviously, the scheme had to be music related, but we won the job because we came at it from a completely different angle, which was far more abstract. We didn’t want to go down that obvious route of ‘this is music’ and putting records on the wall. Instead, we based it around the heritage and the understructure of fashion – if you look at the front of the bar, you can see that it reflects a ruffle from the Elizabethan era. So we wanted to tie in music, fashion and the history of the building and London.

‘The central bar is actually based on the idea of a master disc dropping into a record player – the kind of record player you might have had at home in the 1970s! We wanted to keep everything open so that, no matter where you’re stood, you can still see the central bar. Then the display cases for the memorabilia are suspended from the walls to create this ‘larger than life’ guitar fret board, which runs along the entirety of the wall here. The entrance itself, with all the mirrors, is a nod to that grand arrival, with all the lights and the cameras flashing.

‘We worked closely with Nulty Bespoke to create the drumstick lights, which sit above the check-in area. They worked with us on all of the lighting design here – so the lights above the central bar can change colour during happy hour and can also rotate, so it looks like an actual disc is spinning.’

Obviously, the scheme had to be music related, but we approached the project from a completely different angle, which was far more abstract.

The memorabilia – which is of course synonymous with the Hard Rock brand – includes costumes and instruments from global music superstars past and present, ranging from Nicki Minaj and One Direction through to Ozzy Osbourne and Eric Clapton. Incidentally, the artist formally known as the Cumberland Hotel boasted guests including Jimi Hendrix, Madonna, Diana Ross, Bob Dylan and Buddy Holly ‘We have Freddy Mercury’s childhood piano on display,’ David points out, ‘while Jimi Hendricks stayed here and actually wrote one of his songs here and we have those original lyrics, which were even written on Cumberland Hotel headed paper!’

‘This is a massive brand – and the brand following is absolutely huge. The team here have an amazing energy – they absolutely live and breathe the brand.

‘This is a 1,000-bedroom hotel. For glh, who operate the hotel, there was very much a tried-and-tested way to bring people into the building, through check-in and up to their rooms. It was very operations-led from that point of view. The hotel stayed operational throughout the entire build – which is quite a feat!’

Scott Brownrigg's design comprised the check-in, the Hard Rock Café, the Rock Royalty Lounge for VIP guests, two grand bars and all the other associated facilities within the Hard Rock Café brand.

As David said, the design concept derived from the deconstruction of music and fashion, and all the layers that go into the creation of music, fashion, architecture and art – with a smart, contemporary nod to London and its heritage running throughout.

The scheme demanded an awareness of the 4* London market, to not only meet the client's high design expectations, but to also attract 'Hard Rockers' and new clientele alike, in what is an extremely competitive market.

David mentioned the Rock Royalty Lounge a little earlier and, as we head to the back of the open ground floor space, we get an opportunity to experience just a little bit of how rock royalty lives. 'If you are a Rock Royalty member you have your own check-in and your own lounge,' David shows us. 'You can come in here any time of the day and help yourself to whatever you want. There was a very particular brief for the space. It had to have a really strong identity – very much part of the Hard Rock brand – but still refined, contemporary and to that 4* standard. Everything in here is pretty much indestructible as well – in true rock'n'roll style!'

This was so much fun to work on. It was a really collaborative process and also so great to work with two established, high profile brands – Hard Rock International and gth hotels – to create this landmark destination in the heart of London.

We move back into the busy main bar space and through to the café, where David points out one quirky but clever piece of multifunctional design. 'They have live music here five nights a week,' he reveals as we walk over to the stage area. 'Then, in the morning, the edge of the stage is transformed into where they serve your buffet – it even has warmers built into it.'

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