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R Bar Opening
218 Bowery
Thursday September 14, 2006

Written and Photographed by
Shareshten Senior

Interior Photos Courtesy of R
BAR



Pioneers was reborn on September 14 , 2005, morphing into The R Bar. And the transaction was packed with trendy ladies and gents from back to front. 80s rock music bounced off the decadent red walls and shook the glassy chandeliers dangling overhead. There was a Webster Hall style ambience and Manhattan's after work energy.

The R Bar cocktail list is not only yummy, but inventive and original with martinis named after rock bands. I drank White Stripe Martinis all night long, an elegant creamy martini, which is garnished with a candy cane. Some of their other signature martinis include the Blondie, Jacks R Wild, Bullet Proof, the Supernova, Satisfaction, and Sweet Emotion. All their signature martinis are only \$10. Come on Manhattan, that's a steal!

The R Bar also features a good selection of \$6 draft beers including Bass, Boddingtons, Brooklyn Lager, Guinness, Hoegaarden , Kronenbourg 1664, Magic Hat #9 and Stella Artois. As if that weren't enough, they features a large selection of top shelf bourbons, tequilas and whiskey making them a worthy Manhattan bar for any kind of classy drink.





Up above in the D.J booth Seaira Hill, the wife and apprentice of legendary DJ Billy Caldwell, spun records that she says are "far superior to the over produced, formulaic crap the record industry is dishing out today." Hill is the in-house Disc Jockey on Friday and Saturday nights. She is great for one reason: She learned from the best! For those of you who may not have heard of Caldwell, he has spun with such names as Run DMC and Moby in clubs all over the world. Hill learned an important lesson, which is: "As long as you keep the girls on the floor, you keep the money in the drawer." That is exactly what she does while she spins everything from The Rapture, Scissor Sisters, Bloc Party to Michael Jackson, Pussycat Dolls, and N.E.R.D. But after 1 a.m. Hill says all hell breaks lose! At this time she busts out the Journey and Beyonce! Hill creates the life of the party and on this night, the rebirth!

I emailed Seaira and asked her about her career as a DJ. Here is her reply - Seira in her own words:

"I started at R Bar in the first days when it had just opened as it's former Pioneer Bar. My husband and I had just moved to NY from Colorado and he walked in for a pint and became fast friends with the owners. He became the first DJ they ever had, which I should say was lucky for them because my hubby, DJ Billy Caldwell is considered by many in the industry as one in the world's best DJ's. He's played all over the world with everyone from Oakenfold to Run DMC to Moby in clubs like the Hacienda in Manchester, Sublime in Scotland, and Red Rocks Ampitheater in Colorado. Currently he does the Saturday night at Aspen in Chelsea.

But the owners were then and have continued to be wonderful to us, and gave us a stable income to start our life in NYC. At that time Billy was upstairs in the booth and I was downstairs in the coatroom. After a few years Billy was ready to move on and little did I know he had been grooming me to take over. I would stand with him in the booth and he would have me pick the next track to play, teaching me about programming, matching production value, tempo, mood, genre. Playing a "party mix" style can be difficult because it's all over the place in tempo, instrumentation, historical period. It's difficult to keep a cohesive flow. House music is a dream by comparison.

Anyway, the time came when I moved from the side car to the drivers seat. He'd have me play for 30 minutes at a time, and it progressively became the whole night. The beauty was that the owners were okay with it. It was a big risk on their part because I was really lousy technically. But the thing about being a girl DJ is that you know what girls like, and my motto is "as long as you keep the girl on the floor you keep the money in the drawer". The guys will stay no matter what if the girls are there. As a girl I like to dance around while I'm in the booth. It makes the night more fun. I am there to get a party going after all.

Fast forward 2 years. Pioneers has been reborn into R Bar. Sexy, stylish, decidedly rock and roll in atmosphere. It's like a shrine to the ultralux glamour

and decadent depravity of the 70's. My technical skills have improved ten fold and I feel eternally blessed to have this ongoing friendship with the owners and staff. I'm so grateful to them for letting me develop there. The night you came I was very stiff and nervous because of the new environment and [we] were trying a fresh direction with the music. Instead of just party favs and hip hop (an easy winner in NY), [we] were going to try a rockier, edgier soundtrack. It's great music! Far superior to the souless, over produced, formulaic crap the record industry is dishing out. I love it! Bands like Bloc Party, The Rapture, Scissor Sisters just have so much more talent. And the old stuff too. David Bowie and the Rolling Stones will always be relevant to me. Music for the sake of music, not just fashion or squeezing an easy dollar out of the B&T set. My trepidation comes from years of watching crowd reaction. This stuff is great but for as clever as NYers think they are, musically many of them seem very sheltered.

Pussycat Dolls and Michael Jackson are what they know and love. And I do too, don't get me wrong, but let's expand a bit. I love the higher energy of rock. To me hip hop just hasn't got the energy to keep a room alive, or at least not a lot of the stuff people ask me for. If I want to kill the room, "Bossy" by Kelis will do nicely. I love her, but that's a song for your car radio, not a dancefloor. And that YungJoc track- what the hell is that?! Old school hip hop is great because it's fun. Lyrics Born is brilliant. I love the rocky hip hop kick drum style of N.E.R.D. It's a difficult line to walk. Trying to expand the repitioire for a bunch of drunk people who just want to turn off and party on a Saturday night can yield frustration and jubilation, and I do honestly want people to enjoy themselves. But I'll push it as far as I can. I know there are plenty of people out there are yearning for something more than a fabricated MTV band. After 1AM all hell breaks loose anyway and you can't help but bust out the Journey and Beyonce. It's just too much fun to watch the reaction.

As it stands, I'll be there every Friday and Saturday night for the foreseeable future. But if they had to rely on me for promotion, it would be me and the bartenders. I wouldn't take a job where that was expected of me. There's enough side work in DJing as it is. Research, aquisition, editing, arrangement. These things are extrememly time consuming and expensive. People don't realize how much work goes into it. Expecting us to be promoters too should be purely optional. I feel a change coming on in the musical gear of the city, and I can't wait! It can only get better from here!"

You can check out the R Bar at www.RBarNYC.com . For more information on DJ Seira Hill email: djseira@hotmail.com.