



# Comfort zones

UHS Group at Aqua in Lewes, East Sussex

## MARK LUDMON REPORTS ON THE LATEST TRENDS AND DESIGNS FOR BAR FURNITURE

**A**t new bar and restaurant KuPP in Southampton, flexibility was crucial when it came to furniture. “We find an increasing trend for operators to look for flexibility in the furniture we specify as part of our designs,” says Abi Perry-Jones, creative director of Jones Architecture + Design. “At KuPP, we designed bespoke leather upholstered bench seating with a mild steel frame and skid base. This delivers a really inviting and appealing upholstered look but the flexible nature of our design means that the size of the seating unit can be changed in line with operational needs. Staff can move the pieces around really easily to create various configurations, and the benches can be an effective way to define zones within the bar and restaurant space.”

After two other sites in London and Exeter, KuPP taps into the popularity of Scandinavian design. However, the interior in Southampton is a world away from the stark, minimalist and austere image that is often associated with Nordic design, with inspiration coming from the on-trend concept of “hygge”, or cosiness. “We featured lots of fabrics and warm, natural



### ODDSOCKS MANCHESTER

A second site has been unveiled for Oddsocks, the “strangely familiar” bar and restaurant concept at Jurys Inn hotels, developed with brand design agency Mystery. After the first opened in Brighton, the new Oddsocks has been created at Jurys Inn in Manchester city centre, adapted to focus on the area’s industrial and railway heritage, featuring railway signs and sleepers, raw brickwork, steelwork and industrial lighting. This extends through to the upholstery which features patterns reminiscent of train seating. According to Mystery, the banquettes convey “the feeling of waiting on a train, ready to head off on your travels”. The additional free-standing furniture aims to provide an authentic and rustic feel, evoking days gone by and the steam railway era. Alongside Edgewater as main contractor, the main furniture supplier was Inside Out Contracts.



Osteria at London's Barbican Centre by Catering Design Group

### QUBANA TAPAS & GRILL

After nine years, Qubana Tapas & Grill in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, moved to a bigger site this year after operator Matthew Burton invested £1 million in a characterful former Barclays Bank branch in Wood Street. Interior design by Paul Schofield of PA Schofield has transformed the interior, retaining stunning architectural features of the original building, including a panelled ceiling, enormous fluted columns and ornate plasterwork.

They sourced all the furniture from Yorkshire-based contract furniture supplier Andy Thornton. Centrepiece in the former banking hall is a large American walnut bar, for which Andy Thornton supplied the sumptuous leather upholstered button-back bar stools. Facing the bar the popular Draughtsman bar stools (pictured) have been used extensively and are paired with Continental cast-iron poseur tables in the bar’s “Gin & Cocina” area.

Andy Thornton supplied all the loose furniture for the main dining area, including leather upholstered dining chairs, lounge chairs and table bases, as well as furniture for the private dining room, The Vault. It also supplied furniture for the covered La Terraza rooftop space.

patina on copper, zinc, brass teamed with sumptuous velvets, plenty of greenery and pops of bold colour.”

Well-designed furniture is also contributing to the sought-after Instagram factor, with stunning interiors leading to free publicity via social media.

This is an interior design trend highlighted by Michael Sinclair, design director at Catering Design Group, which specialises in hospitality design. “The rise and popularity of social media will only continue. Increasingly, this is affecting the design of the space, with consideration given to creating backdrops and features to create a great picture.”

Furniture plays a key part in the overall impact of an interior, he adds. “It’s really easy for a design team to create

materials including screens from silver birch tree trunks and mixed-in copper highlights to soften the look,” Abi adds. The banquette seating incorporates the silver birch screens, helping to divide the spaces, while multi-functionality can also be seen in the high bar tables that feature inset wine coolers.

Comfort away from home has become a key trend in bar interiors, points out Dan Gillmore, global marketing director for hospitality furniture specialist UHS Group. “We all like to get that feeling of warmth, comfort and have the feelgood factor when away from our home. Therefore, the products we are seeing on trend in hospitality and break-out spaces are comfortable with a bit of ‘squish’, using warm colours, warm materials and designed products. With the busy lives we lead

and all that is going on in the world with its distractions and digital interruption, that element of escapism is required and can be achieved through a well-designed space, and the most successful hospitality brands are seeking out this look and feel.”

At the same time, Dan says that UHS has been keeping on trend with other furniture designs and styles. “We are seeing a move from the overused shiny, bright metals, perhaps moving a bit more to the refined industrial



DE481 Bolero stool from Nisbets





unique pieces of furniture to complement an operator's brand and interior design, with the addition of stitching, piping or button detailing, or by incorporating your bar's name and logo within the upholstery."

One of the growing trends for Catering Design Group is tapping into consumers' interest in sustainability, from recycling and upcycling of materials through to the look and feel. "Sustainable designs featuring natural, earthy tones and raw materials such as leather, brickwork, untreated wood and concrete give an 'inspired by nature' concept and a sense of wellbeing," Michael explains. "These materials, including natural, organic finishes and indeed plants

and foliage, are being incorporated more and more into the décor."

But, whatever the style and design, the key for bar interiors is resilience, he adds. "Today's operators have a far greater choice in terms of upholstery and finishes, which are designed specifically to be resistant to drink and food spillages. Opt for furniture that will look like new for longer, so steer clear of lighter colours, which are much harder to keep clean. When deciding upon the design of your furniture for a pub or bar environment, longevity and durability are key factors. It must be hardwearing enough to stand up to the demands of high-footfall environments. Sturdier, thicker-framed furniture tends to be harder wearing and have a longer lifespan."

As design trends change, it helps if you choose pieces that are versatile enough to work with many different aesthetics, suggests Heather Beattie, brand manager for the Bolero furniture range at leading supplier Nisbets. "For example, you might opt to change from a pared-down, dark industrial-style feel with prominent Edison lighting and neon signage to a much lighter, California-inspired palette of beachy pastels, or even opt for the 'greenhouse chic' trend by combining prominent botanical wallpaper with geometric ceramic flooring and large-scale potted plants."

## DIRTY HARRY'S

Dirty Harry's burst onto the scene in London's Soho earlier this year, offering cocktails and craft beer alongside live music, with Coyote Ugly-inspired dancing on the bar tops every night by "Harry's Honeys". Packing in the crowds late into the night, the bar needed good-quality contract bar furniture that was not only attractive but fit for purpose, according to head of operations Hamish Glenn.

They selected all the loose furniture from leading hospitality furniture supplier Andy Thornton. Along the bar counter, one of the largest in London, Hamish picked the popular Soho school-style bar stool with leather upholstery. Around the main drinking area, he specified the cast-iron Continental poseur table, combining it with the Pelham bar stool in leather (pictured) and more Continental tables facing the red leather banquette seating.

In the rear cocktail bar, Healey bar stools surround the bar counter, while in the dining area, where street food such as 45-day-aged beef burgers and jerk chicken are served, Andy Thornton supplied Patina Teak tables and Soho side chairs.



GO IN





KuPP in Southampton

Wood and metal designs work well with many different interiors, Heather continues – a trend that Nisbets is meeting with the stylish new Bolero Stools that work well in bar areas where space is at a premium. Hard-wearing and weather-resistant, they come in a range of low and high designs, available with an attractive wooden seat pad and sleek black frame or a distressed galvanised steel frame.

The “brewhouse” style is back in fashion, thanks in part to the popularity of craft beer, says Jan Dammis, head of international sales at hospitality furniture supplier GO IN. “Designs include new

interpretations of the classic rustic style, making it possible to create a cosy ambience that isn’t stuffy or conventional. By using dark wooden furniture, solid tables – generally with light tabletops – and a few specially selected accessories, such as old ceramic bottles, discreet flower arrangements and cutlery on the tables in rustic jars, the 2017 brewery style brings a modern twist to interior design while evoking friendly memories of yesterday’s hostelryes.”

He adds that the industrial style continues to be on trend in 2017. “Industrial-style furniture is both contemporary and

practical but it also tells a story through its appearance while taking customers back to old workshops, factories or studios, feeling raw and cool, yet cosy. Swivel or three-legged stools, chairs in a factory style and tables with solid wooden tops and metal frames are all part of this look.”

But, whichever style you go for, Jan emphasises that it is vital to go for furniture that is the best quality you can afford. “The furniture needs to look just as good in two or three years as it does on the day it’s delivered. Otherwise, your next refurbishment will come sooner than expected.”

## THE GRIFFIN

Stylish high-end furniture was sourced for a contemporary refurbishment of The Griffin in Dale, near Haverfordwest on the Pembrokeshire coast. Owners Simon Vickers and Sian Mathias turned to Design & Contracts, a specialist in contract furniture for hospitality, which supplied the Hippy chairs by Italian design firm Billiani. Made with the new Aquaclean fabric in a palette of purple and beige, these have a modern style and are finished with subtle stitch work for an elegant form. They have cleverly concealed sprung and self-levelling footpads to prevent wobbling.

Simon and Sian then invested in solid ash table tops with chamfered edges and cast-iron bases, free-standing banquette seating and the sleek walnut finish of the round chair legs. “We initially chose Design & Contracts for their Billiani Hippy chairs, purchasing 34, but ended up buying tables and other seating as well,” Simon says. “The furniture has completely changed the layout of our restaurant area, which has given us eight extra covers but more importantly has made it feel more spacious.”

