

FINANCIAL TIMES

H T S I

21 SEPTEMBER
2024

MEN'S
STYLE SPECIAL
AW24



FREESTYLE



MICK JAGGER LEAVING TRAMP AFTER ATTENDING PRINCE'S BIRTHDAY IN 1992

I'm not quite sure what the opposite of PTSD is called, but I experienced it the other day, flashbacks and everything, when I walked down a set of stairs into a basement building site. All of a sudden I could feel the soft carpet beneath the wafer-thin soles of the blue, black and red suede Gucci loafers I used to wear. I could hear the thumping bass line and the "la da dee, la da da" of "Gypsy Woman", and for the first time in more years than I can recall, my palate craved the crisp kiss of Krug. Treading those steps conjured a vision of a vanished world that touched all my senses.

In those two or three poignant seconds I saw the ghost of my 25-year-old self, bright with the promise and possibility that these basement rooms offered during the hours that unfolded after midnight. Then, like a fugitive wisp of cigarette smoke – of which there used to be a lot – it was gone, and I was back in the basement that will, by September, be the new Tramp.

Fifty-five years ago, in December 1969, two wood-panelled basement rooms on London's Jermyn Street became a world-renowned nightclub. Peter Sellers had his wedding reception here. It was the location for many of the nightclub scenes in *The Stud*, the 1978 film starring Joan Collins, based on the book written by her sister Jackie and inspired by, yes, the very same nightclub (thinly disguised as the Hobo). Which just happened to have been co-founded by the novelist's husband Oscar Lerman, along with Johnny Gold and Bill Ofner.

It was its own self-sufficient world. Britain in the '70s may have been all runaway inflation, punk rock, power cuts, strikes, riots and unburied corpses, but someone forgot to tell Tramp. Down here, below Jermyn Street, it was Saturday night every night. The Beatles, Mick Jagger, Michael Caine, Roger Moore, Rod Stewart, George Best and many more

piled in. Over the years, the club made its mark on the public consciousness, with appearances by *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil and Pamela Bordes. It girl Tara P-T in a fur-coat bikini and snorkel and, of course, the famously non-perspiring Duke of York.

Tramp captured a moment that lasted just over half a century. It is a moment that new owner Luca Maggiora is intent

on recapturing in a way that is meaningful to 2024 (and, as Alice Lascelles discusses in this week's drinks column on page 92, he's far from alone). Maggiora looks far too fresh for someone who, having dropped out of banking, has spent the past 15 years contributing to the night-time economy as the owner of several nightclubs – the sort popular with what we probably can no longer describe as young Eurotrash. Sleeves rucked up to reveal tattooed forearms, sporting a smile so bright that TV's Rylan Clark-Neal might want details of his dentist, he is instantly likeable.

"It was an honour and a privilege to be able to buy this place and build it back," he says. He admits that, as a 43-year-old, "what Tramp means to me is not what



Tramp revamped

The London nightclub famed for royals and rock stars is back – just don't expect a dancefloor, says *Nick Foulkes*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SINCLAIR



Above: The Society dining room, named after a restaurant that once occupied the site. Right: Ronnie Wood (far left) and Rod Stewart (centre) of Faces cut the cake at the launch of their album *Ooh La La* at Tramp, April 1973

NOCTURNAL
CIGAR
LOVERS TAKE
NOTE – THE
TERRACE IS
OPEN TO 5AM



Tramp means to a lot of people older than me. So I did my research by interviewing all the older people about what Tramp meant to them – and everybody said that it was their home away from home.” He spent hours talking to Gold’s son Nick and poring over the rich archive, which includes such gems as Caine’s 1969 membership card – for which he paid an annual £10 and 10 shillings. The more he learned, the more impressed he became. “To be honest I didn’t know the magnitude of the place until a few months ago.”

Maggiara’s enthusiasm is highly contagious. Walking past pots of paint, planks of wood and other detritus of construction, he animatedly explains his plans. The room on the right will be a dining room called The Society, named after the restaurant that occupied the site before Tramp. The celebrated zodiacal ceiling has been restored, star signs picked out in silver leaf. To the left, in lieu of the disco, there will be a lounge called Jackie’s, a tribute to the late Jackie Collins. But I’ve no time to examine the room’s famous panelling, originally from Wantage Castle, as Maggiara wriggles past some scaffolding and leads the way along a warren of corridors and up a flight of stairs to see two muralists at work on the terrace, painting a sylvan scene.

Apparently, it is the only terrace in Mayfair with a 5am licence (nocturnal cigar lovers, take note). Then it’s into what will be known as the (Johnny) Gold room and, through a concealed door, to the most intimate space in the club: an L-shaped snug, partway through having its walls covered in olive and lavender silk. Happily, I do not need to use my mind’s eye to envisage what all this will look like: also doing their best to keep up with Maggiara, as he moves swiftly from room to room, are the eponyms of interior-design practice Campbell-Rey. Aged 37 and 38, their fresh faces making them look younger, Duncan Campbell and Charlotte Rey are, of course, too young to have visited Tramp at its zenith. For them, the ’70s and ’80s are distant decades, a historic era that they needed to research. They began by talking to former members. “Everyone we spoke to always talked about the spirit of Tramp, the way it felt and who they’d see there. Nobody was really focused on the way it looked, which gave a certain amount of freedom to interpret it the way we saw fit,” says Campbell, with a hint of a Scottish lilt. “There is a lot of lacquer, and a lot of ’80s things we wanted to bring in like brass and steel accents.”

“For example, we studied pictures of Jackie Collins,” explains Rey in her precise, Scandi-accented English. “At the time, women were wearing big sculptural jewellery in different metals. Mixing metals is something we do a lot. It brings a really beautiful dual materiality. A patinated brass or a cast bronze, for example, next to chrome or aluminium.” Accordingly, the street-level foyer features aluminium walls, while the historic brass-coloured handrail leads to a brass-accented bar at the bottom of the stairs. “It is something we’ve played with throughout the club,” she elaborates. “We looked at famous past members, such as Roger Moore.



We both felt very strongly that Roger Moore was the best Bond of the ’80s, so we looked at Bond interiors.” “There are definitely elements of the ’80s that we felt were important to refer to, if not necessarily recreate,” interjects Campbell. “We’ve tried to engender this spirit of naughtiness and loucheness, of discretion meets bad behaviour, wrapped up in a very glamorous way – but without slavishly trying to conjure a nostalgic recreation of the way it used to look.”

Loucheness crops up frequently when Campbell and Rey discuss Tramp. “There’s a loucheness to carpeting. So we worked with Wilton and designed several carpets that will be fitted throughout the club,” says Campbell, who is particularly pleased with the chocolate-and-raspberry-coloured carpet made for Jackie’s, a David Hicks-like grid formed out of large repeats of the letter “T”. “There was a certain loucheness with David Hicks interiors and those of François Catroux. There’s an elegance that is given, not studied,” observes Rey approvingly. “When people talk about comfort today, it’s very easy to think about a massive American sofa for watching television.”

Tramp, however, will offer the elegant comfort of a bespoke tub chair paired with a marble side table on which a waiter has just placed a perfect iteration of your favourite cocktail – Rey describes this imagined moment as a little vignette. “There is a languor that we both find very, very elegant,” she says. “And I think that is something that was done really well in the ’80s.”

“People really want to go back to the past even if they didn’t live it, because it’s very stressful in 2024,” remarks Maggiara. “People are telling me, ‘Oh, it was so much better in the ’70s.’”

So, while Maggiara’s Tramp may be a celebration of its storied past, it is also very much a product of the 2020s. Tech aside, the most obvious difference between Tramp old and new is the absence of a dancefloor. “That’s simply because of the way of having fun in 2024,” he says. “People don’t dance so much, but when they do, they dance with their friends around their table.”

Happily, the stair carpet will, if anything, be plumper and deeper than before. The stairs down from the entrance are going to be covered in chestnut moiré. “It was very important to us to have this incredibly soft carpet underfoot,” says Campbell. I am already looking at my old Gucci loafers in anticipation. ■ HTSI



Top: Jackie’s lounge, named after Jackie Collins. Above: Yesterday’s Hero, commissioned by Tramp members as a gift to Johnny Gold. Below: interior designers Duncan Campbell (left) and Charlotte Rey with Tramp’s owner, Luca Maggiara



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES/IZI

