

## Pop Palace

Awaken your senses at Manhattan's eclectic, electric Dream Downtown hotel

By Steven Tingle

**PERHAPS IT'S THE SCANTILY CLAD BODIES VISIBLE THROUGH THE LOBBY ceiling, which doubles as the glass bottom of the second-floor pool. Or maybe it's the enormous pop art American flag made entirely of Mexican beer cans. Or it could be the head-bobbing DJ in the corner, spinning a repetitive yet infectious blend of house and trance. Whatever it is, as soon as you walk into the Dream Downtown you quickly realize you are in a very different type of Manhattan hotel.**

Located in Chelsea, and just across the street from Google's East Coast headquarters, the Dream Downtown is a boutique hotel with a decidedly party-centric attitude. Founded by Vikram Chatwal, a former model turned actor turned financier turned hotelier, the Dream hotel family, which includes locations in Miami, Bangkok, Los Angeles, Phuket, and Midtown Manhattan, seems to have been

designed to keep in step with Chatwal's reputation as a hard-partying playboy.

The hotel's presidential suite, modestly called the GuestHouse, is a two-story, 2,500-square-foot party palace with a glass-bottom Jacuzzi and garden terrace. The \$5,000-a-night suite comes with all the expected bells and whistles but keeping in step with the Dream's polished attitude, a sneaker stylist, personal barista, and security guard are on call for an additional fee.

On the hotel's second floor, the five-thousand-square-foot pool complex features a fifty-foot heated pool, private cabanas, a DJ booth (naturally), and a beach with sand imported from Montauk. That it's from the Home Depot in Montauk is immaterial and actually part of the tongue-in-cheek attitude the Dream does so well. Guests may book spa and massage treatments in the cabanas, and the full-service bar keeps the party going with cocktails and small bites from a seasonally evolving menu.

The funky vibe continues deep into Bodega Negra, the Dream Downtown's onsite restaurant. Vintage guitars, mariachi uniforms, a penny-covered disco ball, and a wall of tequila barrels set the stage



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for Michael Armstrong's "upscale Mexican" cuisine—yellowtail *ceviche*, roasted chile rellenos, crispy pork belly, and soft-shell crab tacos. The cocktail menu is, naturally, tequila heavy with both the "El Diablo" Milagro Silver, ginger syrup, fresh lime juice, and Creme De Cassisa and the "Blood & Fire" Patron Silver, spiced hibiscus syrup, and fresh lime juice

Photos provided by Dream Downtown

proving particularly refreshing and dangerous. A private room in the back seats up to twenty-four and, as expected, a DJ spins a blend of hip-hip and *narcocorrido* from a tiny, hidden booth in the back of the main dining area.

At night, the Dream Downtown's rooftop lounge, Ph-D, welcomes beautiful young patrons, who sip on exquisite, strong cocktails

while, you guessed it, guest DJs perform from a raised DJ booth among Italian Portoro marble, Macassar ebony, nickel-finish walls, and amber Venini glass chandeliers. The landscaped terrace offers spectacular, uninterrupted views of the Hudson River, the Empire State Building, Midtown, and beyond. For a more rock 'n' roll vibe, exit the hotel

### Dream Downtown

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and venture down a loading ramp just off 16<sup>th</sup> Street to the hidden entrance of the Electric Room, the Dream's "Britannia cool"-inspired nightclub where the soundtrack ranges from The White Stripes to all the way back to the early 1960s. Craft cocktails and a comfort food menu including spicy meatballs, mini cheeseburgers, and BLTs fuel the party 'til the wee hours. **1**



1. The two-story Presidential Living Room features a glass-bottom Jacuzzi.

2. The Electric Room is a tucked-away spot for craft cocktails and music.