

Metro London

12 July 2007

CALLED TO THE BAR

KEITH BARKER-MAIN DRINKS HIS WAY ROUND TOWN

London caters to all pockets. It spans from Covent Garden's jam-hot Brazilian bar Guanabara – which recently offered students lager at £1 a bottle on Mondays and Tuesdays – to Knightsbridge's Sheraton Park Tower Hotel and its £2,300 Diamond Cocktail (vintage Champagne, Rémy's Louis XIII cognac, and a 0.5 carat sparkler garnish), minted beau required.

The monied young bucks at **Beach Blanket Babylon** (pictured) attract both native Notting Hill birds and foreign predators. Ivana, Svetlana, Tatiana and every other gold-digging 'Ana from East of Ljubljana dream of rich boys to keep them in Cristal (£460) and the sort of costume jewellery twinkling in the place's gilded display cabinets. Pick from £200 trinkets to 'sorry, HOW much?' vintage Chanel numbers. Otherwise, £13 (gemstone not included) gets BBB's equivalent of the Sheraton Park Tower's Diamond Cocktail, the Paris Hilton. Pour six of these down the simpering Simple Lifer's gullet, dangle a camcorder, and you might be on for One Night in Paris – Screaming Orgasm (£11.50) optional.

The billionairehead would froth over the evergreen bar's refurb: Baroque private salons and dining rooms – fit for Madame de Pompadour and crammed to the gunnels with more finery than her meal ticket. Louis XV, could amass in his 60-year reign – have been chucked into its magpie mix of Beekingham Palace Gothic meets Frankie Howerd's Up Pompeii,



with topiary by Edward Scissorhands. Only the similarly OTT LoungeLover rivals it in terms of theatrical excess, but the East End bar will have to look to its laurels when a second BBB launches in Shoreditch this September.

I attend a mate's birthday do in Waterloo. While Anna is a class act, her choice of venue, **Marie's Café**, a greasy spoon that becomes a jolly Thai-by-night, ain't exactly Gilgamesh. It's unlicensed, so it's a case of BYO wine – or just the one bottle, if a whole case seems *de trop*. Beaujolais or Chablis work well with spicy cuisine and will set you back less than a cocktail in W11. Paris is a no-show: perhaps the old slag – sorry... old lag – finds the caff's Penitentiary Chic interior a little too evocative of her recent lodgings?

Beach Blanket Babylon, 45 Ledbury Road W11. Tel: 020 7229 2907. Tube: Notting Hill Gate

Marie's Café, 90 Lower Marsh SE1. Tel: 020 7928 1050. Tube: Waterloo