



THE RIGHT MIX: NYC's Jimmy lounge (above) in SoHo has been a big hit for David Rabin (below).

Jimmy to shake up Windy City

Chi-Town cocktail scene gets dose of NYC downtown cool

By ANDY WANG

NEW York nightlife pioneer David Rabin is taking his VIP-friendly brand of hospitality to Chicago. Rabin and partners Larry Poston and Johnny Swet will open an outpost of their Jimmy cocktail lounge at the James Chicago hotel in about a week.

Unlike Manhattan's Jimmy (where Jay-Z, Rachel Weisz, Michelle Williams, Prabal Gurung, Petra Nemcova and Chace Crawford have been spotted) at the James in SoHo, this spot isn't a rooftop bar. It's located below the new Burke's Bacon Bar at 610 N. Rush St. Like Manhattan's Jimmy, it's tricked out by James Beard Award-winning designer Thomas Schlessler. Expect a retro vibe that celebrates cocktail culture, slow sipping and beautiful people.

The Swet-conceived drinks will include everything from the Cucumber Vesper (gin, vodka, Lillet, lemon and cracked white peppercorns) to the Mexican Julep (tequila, watermelon, lime, agave and cilantro with crushed ice).

Bringing this kind of Manhattan downtown cool to the Windy City seems to be part of a trend. Jason Pomeranc, known for his SoHo and Lower East Side hotels, is working on the opening of a Thompson Chicago later this year.

Meanwhile, Rabin, who made his nightclub bones opening Lotus in the Meatpacking District, is also busy in NYC working on the relaunch of Double Seven with new partner Jimmy Haber.



Amber De Vos/PatrickMcMillan



TENNESSEE TITAN: Artist Richard Jolley is master of glass in Knoxville, where life is sweet and the biscuits are good at Tupelo Honey Cafe.

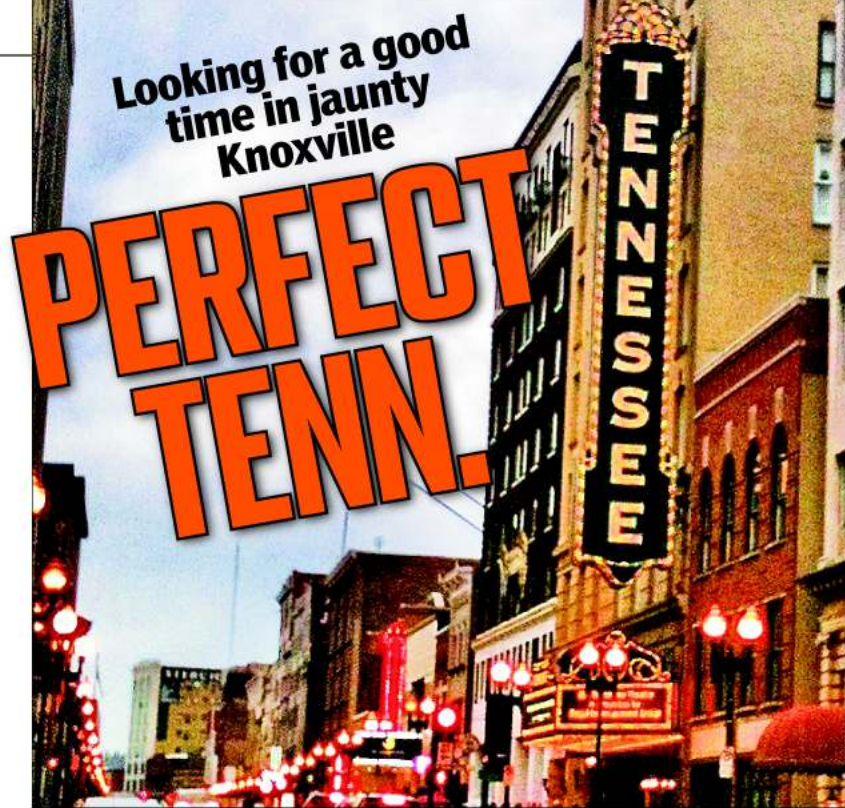
By SUSAN B. BARNES

EVERYONE I met in Knoxville, Tenn., suggested that the city is seeking its identity. And it's no wonder — with its popular big sisters, Nashville and Memphis, to the west, it can be a bit daunting to try to find a spot in the family tree. What I found during a recent visit to Knoxville, though, is a fun, vibrant city that's pulling itself up by its bootstraps and really making its mark.

Just 2 miles outside of downtown, Knoxville's Urban Wilderness (outdoor-knoxville.com/urban-wilderness) boasts 35 miles of natural-surface trails and, at any given time on any given day, outdoor enthusiasts can be found enjoying every square inch. I joined Randy from the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (ambc-sorba.org) for a trek on the trails. "No, but I go spinning at the gym," was my reply when Randy asked if I had any mountain biking experience as I donned my ever-so-attractive helmet. "I know it's not the same," I added, "but it's something." I think I was more convincing myself than him.

For the next hour, we rode and climbed and pushed and rested. We also hiked down into the forest, and chatted about how the trails evolved, and the corps of hundreds of volunteers who still donate their time and talents to build and maintain the trails — free for everyone to use to hike, bike or run.

As we descended the mountain, we (nearly literally) ran into a friend of Randy's who was out for an after-work ride. After an invite to a small get-together that evening and waving our goodbyes, Randy mentioned that his friend is a federal prosecutor in environmental law. How amazing that he has the Urban Wilderness to escape to — to let the stresses



Susan Barnes/21

of the day float away and reconnect with the environment, his passion that he turned into a career.

In addition to mountain biking, Knoxville-ites enjoy a variety of outdoor activities right in their own backyard — hiking, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding and more. And that's not taking into account all the adventure found in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (nps.gov/grsm/index.htm), just a 40-minute drive away.

All this physical activity whets the appetite, so it's a good thing Knoxville has such a fantastic (and always improving) dining scene. Of course, there's plenty of Southern fare to go around. One word: biscuits. Some of the best in town are at the Plaid Apron (facebook.com/theplaidapron) and Tupelo Honey Café (tupelohoneycafe.com/knoxville). Buttered, soaked in honey, or simply plain, they melt in your mouth. Wash 'em down with a glass of sweet tea and you're go to go — or maybe just ready for a nap. It's OK, you've earned it.

A college town — the University of Tennessee is just outside downtown — Knoxville has a vibrant art and music scene. In fact, the Knoxville Museum of Art (knoxart.org) is undergoing extensive renovations in anticipation of an installation that's scheduled to open in May 2014. "Cycle of Life, Within the Power of

Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity," by internationally acclaimed artist and Knoxville resident Richard Jolley, is expected to be the largest figural glass assemblage in the world, at 185 running feet and 7 tons. Now that's heavy. What makes the museum a bit more spectacular is that admission is free — always.

The beat of Knoxville definitely comes from the live music performed throughout town. Every day at noon, WDVX's Blue Plate Special (wdvx.com) features local and touring artists playing a lunchtime concert at the Knoxville Visitors' Center, and again, it's free of charge. You never know who may be on stage!

What's more, rather than tearing down defunct buildings, artists have made claim and converted them into performance venues. A prime example is the Laurel Theatre (jubileearts.org/laurel.htm), constructed in 1898 and for many years a Presbyterian church. The acoustics are incredible — and music to the performers' and audiences' ears.

Identity crisis? Hardly. From this visitor's point of view, I'd say Knoxville has clearly found itself: a vivacious city that shows its residents and guests a good time — true Southern hospitality.

KNOX YOUR SOCKS OFF

Knoxville is quite a celebratory city, hosting festivals of all types nearly every month. The entire community comes out to celebrate, mingle and be a part of the scene. Upcoming festivals include:

★ **Shakespeare on the Square** (Aug. 8-11) has been putting on the Bard's plays outdoors since 1991. tennesseestage-company.com

★ **Boomsday** (Sept. 1) is the largest Labor Day fireworks show in the country. boomsday.org

★ **Tennessee Valley Fair** (Sept. 6-15) is a showcase of east Tennessee's heritage, agriculture and arts for more than 140,000 guests. Headliners include Lov-erboy, The Charlie Daniels Band and Tone Loc and Young MC. trvalleyfair.org

★ **International Biscuit Festival** (May 2014). Self-explanatory! biscuitfest.com