

# If the shoe fits...

As the crow flies across London, it's only a mile from Hoxton Square to the Bank of England, but there's a world of difference between liberal-cool Shoreditch and the married-but-straight-located City of London.

Paul Daly is a man known for embodying the Hoxton vibe with his jagged haircut and shades - a less 'silly' person would be hard to imagine. Paul's studio is in Hoxton Square next door to Zigzag, his own bar.

Traditionally, members of the Hoxton crowd would rather have a short back and sides than head into the City of London, but as documented here this year, the boundaries are blurring, and the range of venues in the 'Square Mile' and their opening times, are widening.

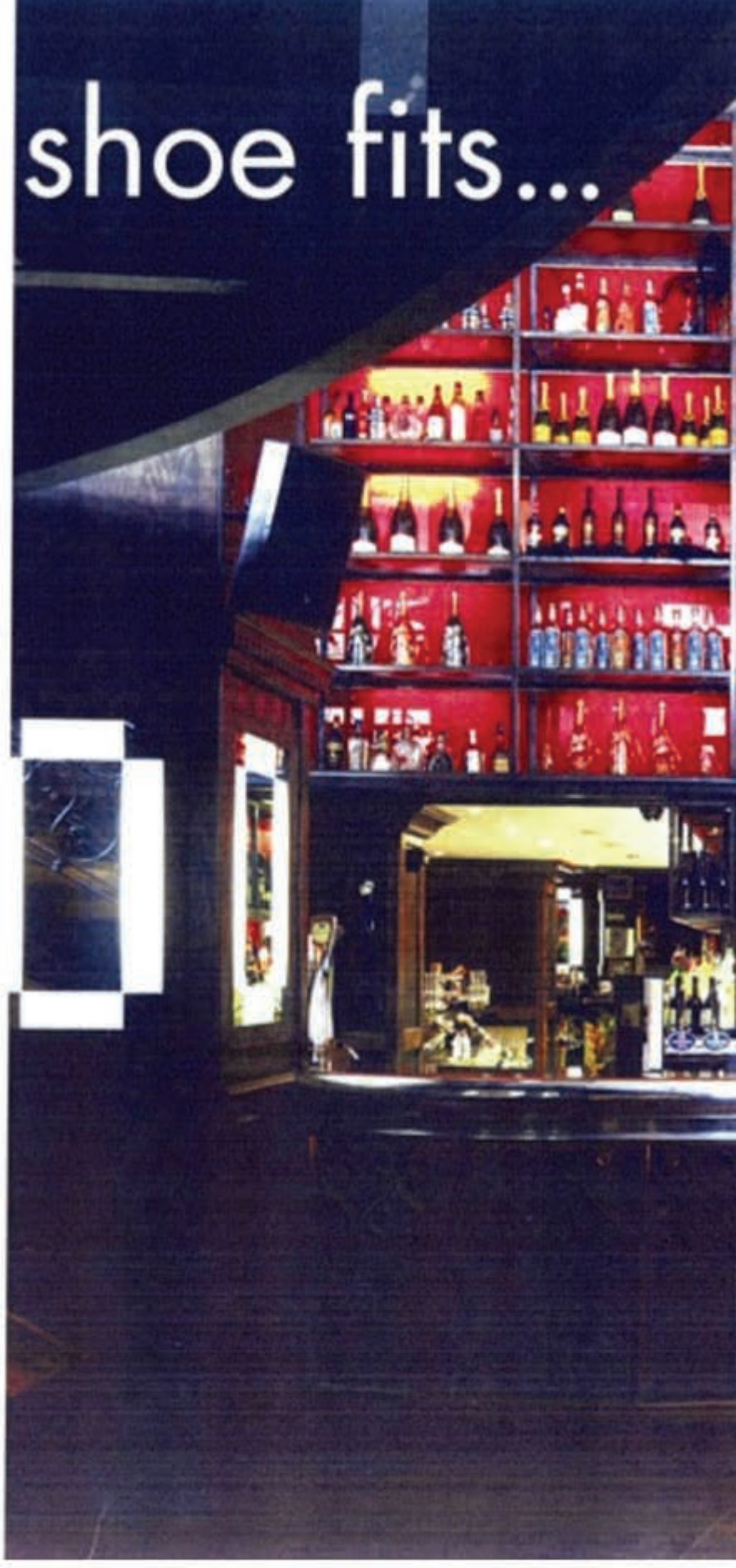
For the next stage of the City's evolution, enter designer Paul Daly in partnership with expanding operator Murr Group, to set up a venue in Minories, which was formerly part of London brewer Fuller's Fine Line concept.

But the idea wasn't to create some form of Shoreditch tribute venue in the heart of what was previously enemy territory, but rather to provide a venue that had a bit more glamour than your average City watering hole.

The name of the venue sums up the proposition. 'Mary janes' being a type of ladies' shoe with a 'T-bar' strap that are most famously manufactured by Manolo Blahnik and feature heavily in *Sex & The City*. The idea is that women will find the name appealing, while City Boys will find the prospect of girls in heels equally enticing.

The shoes inspired the bar's name - hence the lack of apostrophe - but there are also sleazy overtones for those who wish to seek them through the use of Mary Jane as slang for marijuana or

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even as a euphemism for vagina. The latter, more obscure, usage, may or may not have anything to do with Mary Jane Kelly, the Welsh prostitute who was the final victim of Jack the Ripper in nearby Aldgate in 1888.

There's no lawyer out of pairs to point out at this stage that references to dope, female genitalia and serial killers do not mean Murr Group is condoning the use of illegal drugs nor indeed murder on its premises. But there's a fine line between sleaze and glamour - just ask Kate Moss - and if Mary Jane draws on a little notoriety in appealing to customers, then it isn't the first venue to do so.

As Murr ops director Larry Seymour says, the concept was designed to maximise the trading potential of the City, with a busy lunchtime trade, lively after-

work business and then remaining busy through until late.

Larry points out the 'kicks appeal' of the venue, with big windows enticing passers-by and providing an airy ground-floor space that is most popular among the lunchtime clientele. The venue moves downstairs, but the staircase, featuring handmade iron balustrades, is open and natural light can flow down, making the space feel less like a basement.

The venue becomes somewhat raucous, especially after dark, with a raunchy colour palette of black leather furniture, red lighting and carpets, and a sweeping silver bar. There are a range of booths and areas which can be hired, including one with a feature fish tank along one wall and recessed ice buckets in the tables.

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At the rear of the venue, Mary Jane's opens up again with the full two-storey ceiling space allowing room for an alchemist's wall of bottles stretching skywards, a decadent ornate mirror collage and an extravagant chandelier. Another set of steps goes up to a small bar area at ground-floor level, which will open up to some outdoor seating planned to be in place by the Spring, as well as providing an exit strategy for smokers.

#### DESIGN COLLABORATION

"It was a real design collaboration between Paul and ourselves," says Larry. "We had an idea of how we wanted the venue to look but also gave Paul free rein to interpret this in his own way - it was a good working relationship."

WFC Interior Consultants and Contractor was appointed as main contractor for the fit out. WFC's team was on site for eight weeks and managed a large team of specialist subcontractors. The mezzanine floor was constructed using steel girders manufactured in WFC's in-house workshop and lined on site with 40mm clear glass.

Other features include ornate columns clad with stained teakwood mouldings and inset with sandblasted and mirrored backlit glass, the eye-catching balustrading and the feature back-lit bar

#### VENUE DETAILS

Mary Jane's  
124-127 Minories  
London, EC3  
020 7491 8192  
[www.maryjanesbar.com](http://www.maryjanesbar.com)

three sides of the bar created from mirrored power glass with red tinted backlit glass.

No venue using *Sex & The City* as an excuse would be complete without a suitable cocktail menu - these include Chocolate Martini, and the 'B' tout Mary Jane, which combines a watermelon with rose petal vodka - champagne. There's lots of choice on champagne front, as you'd expect on City venue, from Mercier NV of £22 to other more bonus busting varieties.

Mary Jane's also boasts plenty aspirational premium spirits, including one brand that is exclusively available to the venue - Frida Fahlia super mium tequila, named after the Mexican artist famous for her monobrow - fondness for liquor as well as her wit of art. If cocktails or the somewhat 'faded' beer range aren't enough, custom can choose from a decent wine list from a range of 'Sweet Shop Shoo' that cost £3.50 a time.

The food offer goes two ways, with daytime menu featuring simple but v-made dishes like burgers and pork while in the evenings it's more a sharing thing with platters, fish, potato skins, aromatic duck spring and scampi tails.

The Murr Group has now expanded seven venues, including the now-liver music venue Koko in Cane Inferno nightclub in Clapham and 1 in Fulham, Terenureham and Bro Ancher former Fine Line, in Clapham High Street, was recently opened as Bison & Bird, an upmarket bar/waterside also designed by Paul Daly.

Larry Seymour, who formerly worked for First Seymour and the Murr Group, has been on board since before Murr's second venue opened in 2003, and confirms that the group looking to expand.

"We are looking to open a further 10 bars across London and the South for the next 12 months," he said. "I'd love to do another Koko, but the world have to be right - this might be outside of London or even abroad."

The next venue should be signed prior to Christmas if all goes to plan, meanwhile here's the prospect of a booming seasonal trade in the City that works on many levels. Just like Mary Jane. ■

