

Hugo's Manly

Hugo's there? Manly wharf is the latest outpost for Sydney's purveyors of refined relaxation.

Text: Cat Strom

After a grueling 240 days, 28 contractors, 15km of timber, 600 rishettas and a whole lot of creative genius, Hugo's Manly has finally dropped anchor. The restaurant is located on Manly Wharf, directly opposite the ferry terminus, at the site previously known as The Cove restaurant.

As one would expect, this new venue from the Hugo's boys is this cool... yet it still remains a very relaxed, unimposing spot to spend an evening. The interior is quite simple, devoid of colour and pattern, helping to maintain the focus on the stunning 270-degree vistas — views that wrap around the exterior better than a hundred hi-def screens. It's a venue that quietly blends into its environs — basking in the heritage of the wharf — looking immediately at ease, like a part of the Manly furniture. Co-owner David Evans worked closely with renowned architect Vince Squillace to achieve this.

For David, it was imperative that this project utilised Australian hardwoods such as spotted gum and ironbark to reflect the natural beauty of the site. David explained how the exterior decking pays homage to the Australian wraparound veranda. Little wonder, then, that Hugo's is an instant Manly favourite to dine or enjoy a sunset drink while watching the world go by. venue met David Evans in Manly for a chat. David is portrayed in the Sydney dailies as an affable bachelor, who has made headlines for escorting supermodel Elle Macpherson around town during her recent trips home (nice work if you can get it — Ed).



Hugo's du Gogo: "It's like a big beach house with a wraparound deck, an indoor/outdoor venue, a restaurant cum cocktail bar cum large bar." David Evans.

Hugo's — Manly Bikes

venue: How did you get started in this business?

David Evans: After finishing school in Melbourne I did a hotel management course before working at The Lager Bar in Melbourne. I then travelled the world for a while before returning to Melbourne to open up The Pantry, which is still operating. In 1996 I relocated to Sydney and opened Hugo's Bondi, which we operated for 10 years.

venue: Why did you move to Sydney?

DE: It's warmer. In time for the Sydney Olympics in 2000, we opened Hugo's Lounge and that was a huge success. From there we expanded to SkyBar 1 and SkyBar 2, including the VIP Bar, and in 2004 we launched Hugo's Pizza. Now we have Hugo's Manly. It's been a long, hard journey, but we got there.

venue: How long had you been planning the Manly venture?

DE: When I first moved to Sydney in 1996, I lived in Manly for three months and really liked it. Initially I was looking to open a venue in Manly but the Bondi site came available, so I moved. But I've always kept an eye on Manly, in fact, I looked at the site where the Bavarian Bier Café is and also the site that Will & Toby's occupied. But I wasn't 100% sold on either of them. This site was offered to me last year and I was impressed by the strong structure, really nice outlook, great sun, wind protection, and the layout.

venue: How would you describe the Hugo's concept/brand and how is this venue different from the others?



DE: The concept has been constantly evolving since we developed it 12 years ago. Initially, Hugo's Bondi was fine dining, but it also did breakfast, which it won awards for. The key is versatility. We looked at what we thought Bondi needed at that time, which was fine dining with a nice little cocktail bar. People kept telling us that we should expand to a bigger bar and we found the site in Kings Cross which was only just starting to take off. We were one of the first of the "new wave" venues in Kings Cross, having got our inspiration from The International. We always seem to be one step ahead, although, with Manly there are already some good venues such as Garfish, Whitewater and the Manly Wharf Hotel. But Manly deserves more options as there's a huge population on the Northern Beaches looking for a quality venue.

venue: How would you describe Hugo's Manly?

DE: It's like a big beach house with a wraparound deck, an indoor/outdoor venue, a restaurant cum cocktail bar cum large bar.

Hands On

venue: How involved are you in the design of your venues?

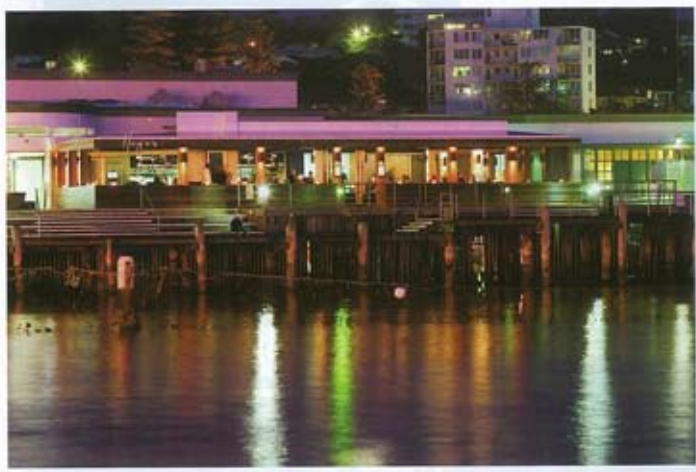
DE: I'm heavily involved in all areas of the design. I basically do all the layouts — bar and kitchen, table plan, position of doors etc — to ensure functionality. Architects can't do that for you unless they're hospitality trained. So I hand my drafts over to the architects and between us we arrive at design concepts. For this project I used Vince Squillace, an architect who lives locally and is in touch with the council and the neighbourhood needs.

venue: And I imagine you draw on your previous Hugo's experiences in fine-tuning the design?

DE: Sure. For example, all of our bars have a certain design theme running through them: all the facades are different — from tiles to backlit onyx — but the back bar is always the same, with a wine rack showcasing bottles, glasses and wine. It looks really smart and the way the bars light up at night injects a nice ambience. And, this time around, the interior uses materials and furnishings that I have used previously, such as the Verona leather from Contempo Leather, which I used in SkyBar; the ottomans are similar to the ones in Hugo's Pizza but adapted to suit this venue; and the coffee tables are similar to the ones used at Hugo's Lounge but instead of mirror tops we've got marble tops. You take the things that work well to your next venue, and that includes a good team of people.

venue: The interior is quite subdued, which seems to focus attention on the view. Was that intentional?





Shared Secrets: the same Verona leather from Contempo Leather were used in SkyBar; the ottomans are similar to the ones in Hugo's Pizzeria but adapted to suit this venue; and the coffee tables are similar to the ones used at Hugo's Lounge.

DE: Yes, especially as we only have one wall and the rest of the venue is glazed with a wraparound verandah outside. There was no room for anything like art.

The venue blends into the existing wharf. In fact, details of the wharf's original timber cladding have been incorporated into the design of the venue. We've taken several elements from the wharf, such as the dark timber, into the premises' interior and exterior, so it looks like it's been here forever.

venue: What didn't you want the venue to be?

DE: Cold and clinical. I wanted it to be 'lived in' and comfortable, with vintage leather and duck-down-filled cushions. Basically, things you'd put in your own house. It's relaxed with really nice lines.

venue: What's next for the empire — Hugo's Mascot?

DE: No, I like staying coastal! I like to be by the beach — it has a soothing effect. I'm happy here with what we've got, so probably for the next couple of years I'll be busy looking after that. We're looking to do a Hugo's Hideaway, which will be a boutique accommodation offering or, further down the track, I'd like to expand Hugo's Bar Pizzeria, but it's a matter of finding the ideal site. <<

- **Hugo's Manly:** Manly Wharf, East Esplanade, Manly
(02) 8116 8555 or www.hugosmanly.com.au
- **Squillace Nicholas Architects:** (02) 8354 1300 or www.squillacenicholas.com.au

Hugo's Sounds

When Hugo's approached Emstream to provide music services, the discussion quickly focused on the selection and scheduling of the music — David Evans had a very personal and precise vision for the ambience he wanted to create. Emstream's senior music programmer Marc Scully (aka Ormegaman) worked hand-in-glove with him to achieve the balance of styles and to put in place a finely honed music schedule, hour by hour, day by day — the result is an effortlessly classy soundtrack.

On the management side, Emstream worked with DJW Projects' Dave Coxson to integrate the music control interface into the AMX control system. Combined with Emstream's online connectivity, the resulting system can now be monitored, adjusted, maintained, updated and generally 'driven' either remotely via the web or through any of the AMX control interfaces in the venue. As a result, Emstream's AMX integration coding is now available to any venue.

- **Emstream:** (02) 9280 2135 or www.emstream.com.au



Architect's Point of View

Vince Squillace: "It's a seamless addition to the historical Manly Wharf environment. Its use of layered timber materials, robust finishes and adaptable detailing is reminiscent of traditional wharfs and boatsheds. This authentic atmosphere is continued internally with decking board-lined banquettes and loose furniture, and ship-lapped wall linings. The brushness of the timber flout is offset by the softness of the leather upholstery, cane chairs, vibrant cushions and mood lighting. The effect is of a party boat on land, perched at the waterfront for the enjoyment of locals and commuters."