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## Grand Hotel Courts Hip With a Dance Party



Michael Appleton for The New York Times

A young woman got close to a fellow guest at the bar at the Pierre Hotel.

By [DIANE CARDWELL](#)

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The dance floor was packed with women in stilettos and men in expensive jeans, sweating and bouncing to the deep bass thump of [Lady Gaga](#), when the complaints came in. A man had joined in dancing with a few women, then followed them to their table, acting weirdly, they said.

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Michael Appleton for The New York Times  
A woman fixed her makeup before rejoining the party.

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Swiftly, a black-clad security team surrounded him, urging him to the sidewalk and waiting there, stone-faced, until he left.

It was a ritual familiar to any clubgoer, but this was no chest-to-chest standoff in one of the throbbing nightlife malls of the meatpacking district or along West 28th Street. Instead, it was the smooth ejection of a mild-mannered 64-year-old in a dress shirt and slacks. And it was at the [Pierre Hotel](#).

"I still don't know what I did to get thrown out," the man said, quietly indignant. "They didn't even refund my drink."

The ejection, though, was a mere hiccup for Rumor, the twice-monthly dance night that the Pierre began in February in its lobby bar, Two E. The party is part of the grand old hotel's effort to update its staid image, earned over decades of serving as the Fifth Avenue neo-Renaissance playground for debutantes, business

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Below, Nora Walsh, the hotel's public relations director, center, wearing a tie, took to the dance floor.

titans, Hollywood stars and Washington power brokers.

Running every other Thursday from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m., Rumor has gained a following, attracting a lively crowd of young professionals, hotel guests and longtime Upper East Side residents who miss the Pierre's old piano bar, now subsumed by the restaurant [Le Caprice](#).

"I have been coming to the Pierre for 15 years — it is my favorite place," said Roza Burns, 52, who, with her blond hair, glittering jewelry and Hungarian accent, gave off a

whiff of Zsa Zsa Gabor. "It makes me so happy to see all the people, and I can adjust to the music," she added with a smile, referring to the strains of [Jay-Z](#) reverberating through the room on Thursday about 10:30 p.m.

Her daughter, Anita Lockyer, 32, who was visiting from San Francisco, echoed that assessment, saying that she liked the diverse mix of patrons — young and old, black and white, American and international, straight and gay — as well as the music spun by the D.J., who goes by the name Al-dO and is a veteran of big downtown clubs like the Roxy and the Tunnel.

The party is the brainchild of Irfan Haque, 31, who oversees the Deco-tinged olive-and-cream lounge, which otherwise offers lunch, light meals and an elaborate afternoon tea. A successful New Year's party that Mr. Haque organized in the room fed demand for more regular dance events, he said, so he hired the D.J. and has been promoting the night largely through word-of-mouth ever since. The next one is scheduled for April 22.

Thus far, Mr. Haque has been able to thread the needle between providing an energetic good time and meeting the rarefied expectations of the Pierre's traditional clientele, as well as satisfying the co-op board that controls the building and the Taj hotel chain that operates it. Nonetheless, the party has a surprisingly open feel. It imposes no velvet rope, dress code or cover charge. And while the bar offers top-shelf libations — Veuve Clicquot, Johnnie Walkers Black and Blue, Macallan 25 — the budget-minded can easily nurse an \$8 beer or one of the \$14 specialty cocktails all night long.

Rumor has found fans even among the hotel staff members, who seemed to get a little looser once the music got going, heads bobbing to the beat, lips syncing to the lyrics. Although the men remained in their regular, buttoned-down hotel garb, the women swapped their modest day suits for more revealing club wear: a swingy, sleeveless black dress for one, a slinky lavender minidress and strappy gold heels for another.

Several partygoers said they were surprised to find such a vibrant scene at the Pierre and in the neighborhood, which is not exactly brimming with hipness.

"It has a very classy vibe, but if you want to dance, you can," said Lauren Yonda, 24.

Others praised the relaxed atmosphere and friendly attitude.

"A lot of clubs are very intense, and this place, it's just easy to meet people," said Carlo Nieva, 40, a member of the sales team at Armani Fifth Avenue, who had brought along a co-worker, Brandon Tagupa, to celebrate Mr. Tagupa's 25th birthday. "The music is good, and the crowd really makes it."

Around 12:30 a.m., the room, which held about 80 people at its most crowded and 120 in all that night, was still going strong. Robert P. Smith, 70, a financier and a philanthropist who co-wrote the book "Riches Among the Ruins: Adventures in the Dark Corners of the Global Economy" and has lived in the neighborhood for years, was on his way out, in search of something to eat.

"Congratulations!" he cried out to the hotel's public relations director, Nora Walsh, 28, as he burst into the marble lobby, happy to see a change in an establishment that he had deemed to be dead for 200 years. "You finally got some life into this place."

An hour or so later, things were beginning to wind down. Vivian Wasserman, 28, and Nir Muvdi, 37, transplanted Israelis who had put on an impressive salsa display, had already gone, as had Rebecca Niehues-Pass, 50, and her husband, Horst, 73, who divide their time between Palm Beach and Switzerland as she contemplates a new venture buying racehorses. The couple, who were staying at the hotel while they took in some opera and classical music, had watched the dance floor for hours, feeling perhaps too old for the crowd, before joining in for several songs.

But the diehards remained. A few groups of young women hopped around shouting [Rihanna](#) or Michael Jackson lyrics, arms shaking overhead, their manner decidedly less ecstatic than spastic. By 2:15, the D.J. had packed his equipment, signaling that it was time to walk — or stumble — down the Pierre's long hallway, past the white roses and white-gloved staff members and out into the darkness, the end of yet another night at a club that was not quite like any other.