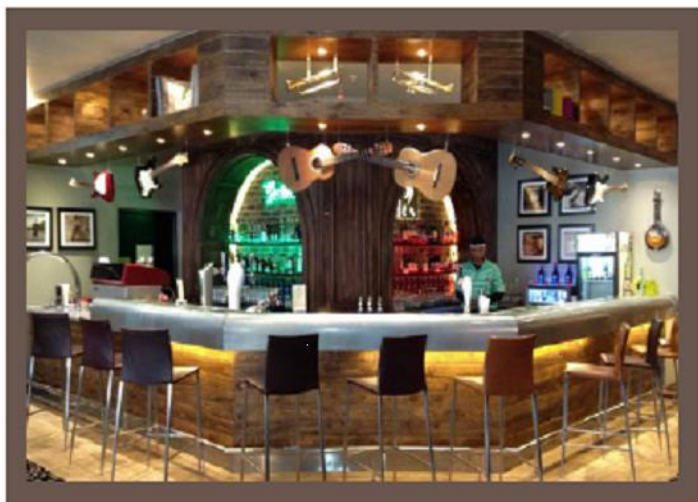


RIFFS

BAR AND GRILL

Positioned in the heart of Sandton and previously known as Café Maude, Riffs Bar and Grill is an ideally situated restaurant attached to one of the busiest hotels, Garden Court Sandton City. The challenge is always to capture the segment of the hotel clientele that are easily tempted to search for some variety in the plethora of restaurants available within the Sandton area.

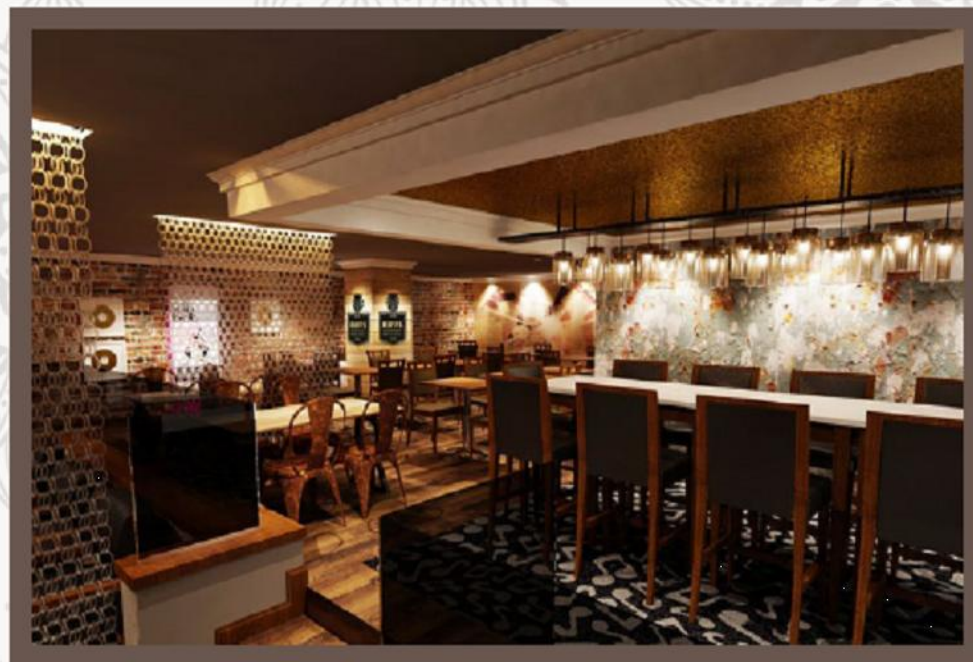
Written by Ryan Illgner



Although Café Maude was turning a profit, the potential of the restaurant seemed so much greater, and thus we were tasked with looking at what could be done to entice both hotel patrons and outsiders by repositioning the product.

It was felt that the restaurant lacked intimacy and character and that's where our efforts were focused - on creating warmth within a space that is tactile with the hard edges taken off.

So you may ask exactly how we achieved this. Firstly, we looked at replacing the hard floors that ran throughout the spaces with carpet in places to both soften the spaces underfoot and acoustically achieve a softer feel. The ceilings were also targeted as being too flat and we introduced bulkhead elements to demarcate spaces whilst also lowering them to a better human scale.





In my experience, people gravitate towards spaces in restaurants where they don't feel too exposed. We created screened areas by utilising semi-translucent chain curtains which further defined spaces and it's amazing to see how these are the first seats that people sit at.

Another device that we employed, that makes an interior both interesting and tactile, is introducing textures which are raw and honest. This makes you want to touch them and feel their texture. Examples of this is the sandblasted timber on the columns - left untreated it creates a wonderfully textured element. Likewise raw bricks are exposed on walls, which were otherwise a cold hard plastered surface. The wallpaper introduced also gives the impression of peeling paint and an old historic character. These elements just take the edge off a hard feel and often create a nostalgic talking point.

The theme of the new restaurant was also an important element to thread through the design. Riffs, as the name suggests, was decided upon as the name to rebrand the eatery as a musically inspired space.



In line with this, a bespoke music note carpet was designed and this theme was carried through within the objets d'art by utilising old vinyl albums and instruments. The patron is also treated to a digital jukebox which is facilitated by iPads and LCD screens. Thus, the environment created is interactive, informal, intimate, and has great character. In line with the

informality of feel and honesty of material, the menu has an informal, unpretentious offering, with wonderful fresh ingredients cooked beautifully and presented cleverly.

The return on investment is where the success of the repositioning is most evident, with soaring profits, packed lunches and dinners, and rave reviews.

Blacksmith Interior Inspiration is a dynamic company which has distinguished itself in the retail, hospitality and leisure markets for the last 17 years, both locally and abroad. The practice is involved in creating dynamic design solutions from the project inception through conceptualisation, documentation, implementation & procurement.