

Hiding in Plain Sight

BAR OF THE MONTH



Chic and you shall find

Tucked away in the north-eastern outskirts of the Jodenbuurt, perilously close to *Time Out Amsterdam's* West-Indisch Pakhuis office, new cocktail gem HPS lives up to its name. At first glance upon entry, the small ground-level bar and cramped seating area don't seem to offer much more than the staff's smiles. Up a flight of steps, however, a luxuriantly louche leather-couch seating area put us on eye level with chalkboards full of chemistry notations above the bar. Flashes of florid wallpaper play backdrop to bookshelves and worn curiosities like an antique radio, pinned butterflies and pocket-watch motifs. Combined with the soundtrack of jazzy Latin swing, we could have easily believed we were in a gentleman's club in 1950s Cuba if not for the large glass windows pointed at the small, charming Peperbrug and the somewhat less charming grey skies above.

Without missing a beat upon our entry, two staff members appear at the top of the stairs bearing free water, massive, fresh green Cerignola olives and mixed nuts, along with a short stack of exquisite letterpress-style menus. Although the bar looks fully stocked, aside from a short but

respectable list of wines and a €5 bottled beer from Swinckels, the menu is all about the 16 craft cocktails on offer, ranging from €8 to €16. The €16 price tag is reserved for house specialty, The Walking Dead. Based on the potent 'Zombie' cocktail, HPS's secret recipe is served in a 16-ounce glass skull and features

three different types of rums, including Bacardi 151, which is lit on fire when served. Cinnamon shaken over the flames crackles and sparks. A taste of liquid danger, racier drinkers will find the concoction goes down a little too smoothly. Bar-imposed

limit: one per night.

Luckily, the rest of the cocktails measure up to the same exacting standards, with house-concocted ingredients like strawberry-infused cachaça (in the Morango Fizz, €12) and popcorn-infused rum (the Cinema Highball, €8). The sultry atmosphere has me craving fresh and fizzy, so I opt for the HPS Mule, an Asian-influenced taste of summer that incorporates vodka, ginger beer, orange and lime juices, house-made syrup and muddled cucumber.

Good to know that, whatever the weather, a sip of summer is always at hand in this boozy hideaway. *Elysia Brenner*

HPS Rapenburg 18 (737 1890/hpsamsterdam.com). Open Mon-Sat 18.00-01.00, Fri, Sat until 03.00. No credit cards.

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