

LENNY ANN LOW

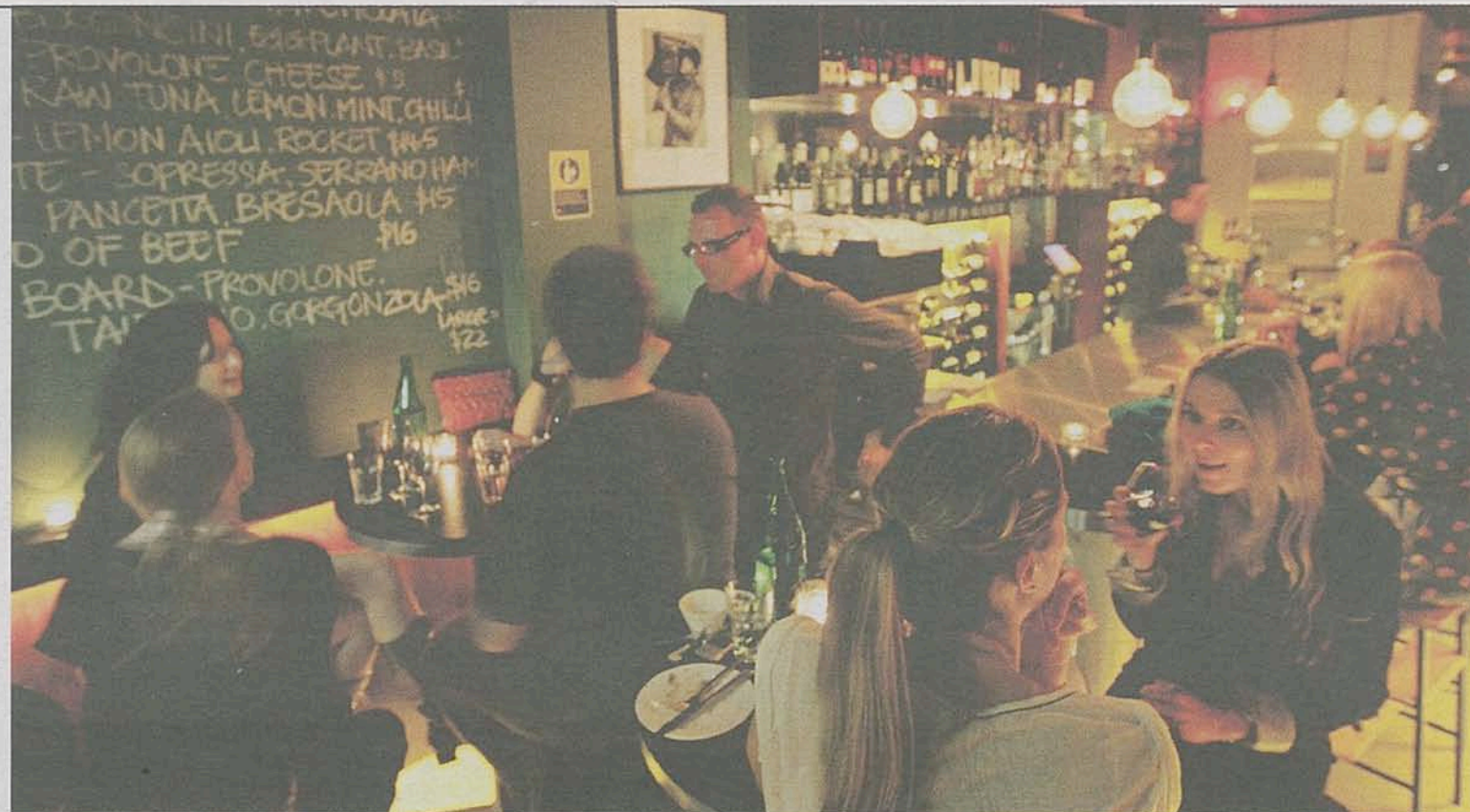
## BAR HOP

## Bootleg Bar and Italian Food

175 Victoria Street, Potts Point, 9361 3884.  
Open Tue-Wed, 5-11pm;  
Thu-Sat, 5pm-1am;  
Sun, 5-10pm

FROM the outside, Bootleg Bar is an unobtrusive slip of an establishment a few minutes' walk from Kings Cross's hoo-ha bustle. Inside, the aesthetic is solacing and eye-catching – a New York-style small bar decorated with a cunning mix of industrial fittings, chalkboard panels, discreet lighting and framed photo portraits of famous rockers, hip-hoppers, mods and folk stars. It feels lived-in too. Not because it's drab but because the room's layout – bar tables and stools, followed by booth seating and a small restaurant-like section of tables and chairs in front of the kitchen – is a well-thought-out mix of accessibility and snugness.

**HAVING SNARED A BOOTH** we slide around a curve-cornered table on padded seating upholstered in dark green leather. A large black-and-white photograph of



Blondie's Debbie Harry in her prime is on the wall. The wire mesh-covered ceiling is hung with mechanic's workshop wire-edged lights and tubular wall-sconces emit a warm-bulb glow to the ceiling and floor but not out into our eyes. Tea lights flicker here and there.

**THE SLIM, YELLOW-LIT BAR AREA** features a nifty front wall built from floral-patterned concrete breeze blocks. Bottles of beer, soft drink and wine are positioned on shelves above their price written in chalk at the back. Further on, table cutlery is contained in vintage wooden library card drawers surrounded by wall sections covered in tool pegboard.

**CHEERY STAFF DELIVER MENUS** and never forget us throughout the night. The drinks list is on one side and short restaurant menu on the other. We pick a pinot noir and a shiraz (both excellent), fusilli with wild mushroom, sage, cream and truffle oil (\$22) and, from the specials board, a squid ink linguini with seared scallops, chilli, lemon, leek and fresh herbs. Every memory I have of bar food is erased eating these terrific dishes – luscious, flavoursome and a million miles from minging portion sizes. Because it doesn't try too hard but has clearly been created after a lot of hard work, Bootleg may be my favourite bar in Sydney.



**YOU'LL LOVE IT** for plentiful food servings, brilliant service and clever decor.



**YOU'LL HATE IT** if shouting, bright lights and look-at-me vantage points appeal.



**GO FOR** a smart but restful bistro vibe reminiscent of a Manhattan bar.



**IT'LL COST YOU** wine by the glass \$7-\$11, beer \$5.50-\$8, food \$19-\$32.

Photo: Tamara Dean