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Goings on in the world of style & culture

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COURTESY OF IAN SCHRAGER COMPANY

Going Public

With low rates, co-working spaces, a food market and a theater, Ian Schrager's latest hotel aims to be a new york destination of its own.

In the 1970s, as co-founder of the legendary club Studio 54, Ian Schrager redefined nightlife, and in the '80s, as co-creator of the boutique hotel concept (first with Morgans, then with The Royalton), he revolutionized the hospitality industry. Now, at 70, Schrager is shaking things up once again, with Public, a hotel designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Herzog & de Meuron and located on New York's Lower East Side. "Airbnb is coming for our families," Schrager says of the hotel business, "and the only way to compete is to offer something that's a unique experience, very social and communal."

To wit, Public features an open-to-all second floor, with co-working spaces, conference rooms and a bar; a basement performance space, theater and nightclub, with programming by Matt Kliegman and Carlos Quirarte, owners of downtown cafe The Smile, and hotel expert Ben Pundole; plus a first-floor restaurant (dedicated to New York cuisines) and a grab-and-go healthy food marketplace, both by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten. The look of the place is what Schrager calls "refined gritty" or "tough luxe"—plywood and concrete meet Molteni woodwork and fine marble.

In keeping with Schrager's "luxury for all" rallying cry, the 370 guest rooms start at just \$150. It's a price made possible by ditching old-school staples like a front desk, bellboys and room service in favor of electronic device-enabled check-in and food pickup, and a team of uniformed "Public advisers," whom Schrager compares to Apple's Genius Bar employees. "They'll do whatever it takes to make the guests feel comfortable, without being obsequious," he says. "They're our secret weapon." publichotels.com. —Mark Yarm

