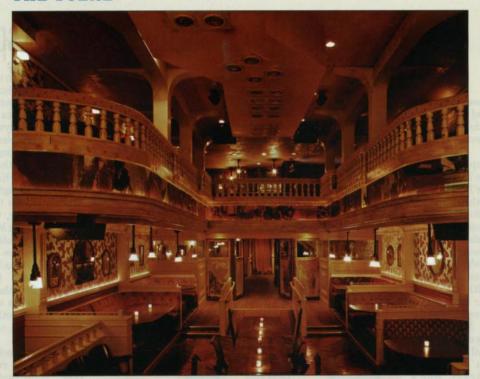


April 25, 2007

THE SCENE



Nightclubbing as theater

mon Hammerstein is wary of interviews; he doesn't want his new nightspot to get the wrong label, or put in the wrong box, as it were.

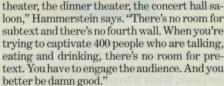
Sure, when it officially opens this spring, the Box will be in hipster territory down on Chrystie Street on the Lower East Side. And yes, there will be food, drinks and beautiful people (the preopening private parties featured Hammerstein's business partners and Hammerstein buddies like Jude Law and Josh Lucas) late into the night, but don't jump to conclu-

"It is not a club, there is no dance floor," emphasizes this Off Off Broadway director. "This is a theater."

But this 5,000-square-foot space is not a traditional theater that his grandfather, the legendary musical writer Oscar Hammerstein II, would recognize; nor is it something his greatgreat-grandfather, opera impresario and uptown theater builder Oscar Hammerstein I, would have gone for.

No, this unique theater harkens back to great-grandfather Willie Hammerstein, a king among vaudeville producers as the man who put Helen Keller onstage and supposedly invented the piein-the-face routine, he'd be right at home in the Box.

"We want to bring back the variety theater, the dinner theater, the concert hall saloon," Hammerstein says. "There's no room for subtext and there's no fourth wall. When you're trying to captivate 400 people who are talking, eating and drinking, there's no room for pretext. You have to engage the audience. And you





- Stuart Miller