

London's Capital and Levin luxury

AUSTRALIA has been a key market for London's The Capital Hotel ever since it was founded by David Levin in 1971.

The luxury property is located in Knightsbridge, just around the corner from Harrods, and Levin told **TD** that right from the start he offered Australian wines - long before they became fashionable.

Winemakers he visited in Australia stayed at the hotel when they travelled, and that was the start of a long relationship which now sees the hotel and its sister property The Levin now target 20% of occupancy from Australian travellers.

Levin visits Australia each year and last week wrapped up a three week roadshow visiting key agents in Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, alongside his local representative Sarah Whitty of The Hotel Connection - who's been associated with the hotels for 18 years.

And to drive the message home in the current economic situation the properties are offering an exclusive rate for Australian travellers of just £185 per night.

Levin told **TD** that occupancies are down on last year, but reminds the industry that 2008

was exceptional and "we're still making money."

"There are bookings out there but you have to work at it. You have to keep knocking on doors" he said, adding that over his 40 year career he'd seen many peaks and troughs.

"You don't have a divine right to do better each year," he said.

Levin opened the 49-room The Capital during a hotel building boom in London - 27 hotels opened in the city in 1971 - but his property had a number of key points of difference.

He described it using phrases such as "A five star hotel in miniature" and also claims to have coined the term "Boutique Hotel".

The Capital was the first hotel to have an open kitchen, and it was a major innovation when the chef interacted with customers.

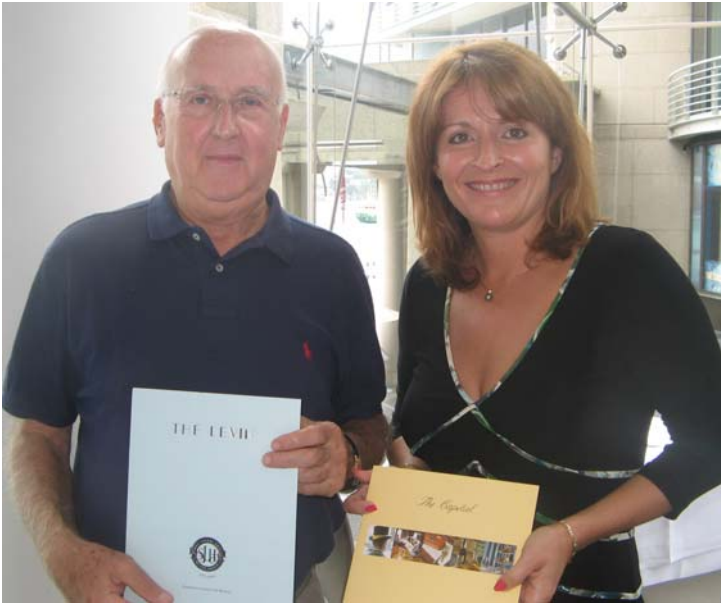
The hotel's reputation for culinary excellence has continued, with its The Capital Restaurant holding two Michelin stars.

Wine is also a focus, with more than 2000 different types in the Capital's cellars, including many Australian wines.

Levin also owns the hotel next door, which used to be known as L'Hotel but has been completely refurbished and is now The Levin.

A more contemporary property than the traditional Capital, The Levin even offers glamorous in-room champagne bars.

The hotels can be booked through Sarah Whitty on htlcon@ozemail.com.au.



ABOVE: David Levin and Sarah Whitty in Sydney last week.

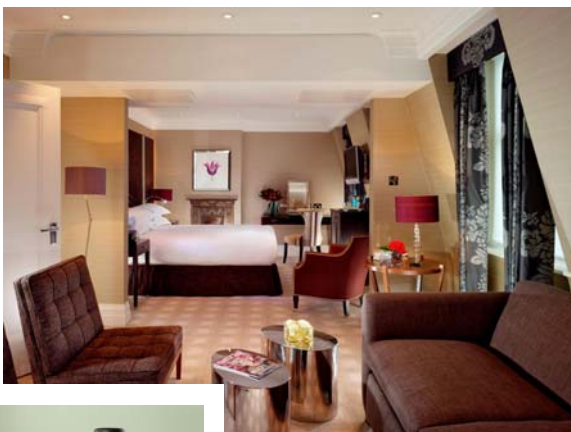


LEFT: How about this for a luxury London home away from home?

RIGHT: One of the gorgeous Junior Suites at The Capital - complete with antique furniture.



RIGHT: One of the 12 rooms at the Levin - no mini-bar here, but instead a champagne and cocktail bar so you can mix it up.



RIGHT: An example of the delightful cuisine at The Capital Restaurant, which holds two coveted Michelin stars.

BELOW: The Capital and The Levin hosted a cocktail party for 150 industry guests at the British Consul General's residence in Melbourne.

David Levin is pictured left with Judy Harris from Abercrombie and Kent, and Jonathan Smith of ETM.



LEFT: As well as 1,999 other types of wine, Levin serves his own sauvignon blanc at the hotels - grown and bottled at the Levin winery in France's Loire Valley.

In another mark of his affinity for Australia Levin had the winery designed and built in Adelaide before dismantling it and shipping it in seven huge containers to be rebuilt in France.

"The French architects wouldn't do it the way I wanted them to," he told **TD**.

