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Living the Dream: Dream Hotels creates new hip brand



Dream Hotel Group introduced its first Unscripted Hotels in Durham, N.C. This is one of its studios. (Photo: Dream Hotel Group)

PHOENIX—Jay Stein, CEO of Dream Hotel Group, says his company was instrumental in starting the rooftop bar craze.

“We were the first to do a velvet rope, to have a line around the block,” he says, while sitting at the Arizona Biltmore during the annual Lodging Conference.

The Dream Midtown and Dream Downtown properties in New York City routinely have people queuing up for access to elevators that will take them to a trendy bar with nearly 360-degree views of Manhattan.

[Dream Hotel Group](#) has been around for 30 years as a management company. It has since created the brands Dream Hotels, Time Hotels, and The Chatwal. It recently opened the first Unscripted Hotels, its newest lifestyle brand, in Durham, N.C., and has announced it will debut a second one in Birmingham, England.

The company has more than 10 Unscripted Hotels in the pipeline.

Dream prides itself on its food and beverage options, either recruiting local promising chefs or celebrity chefs such as Geoffrey Zakarian, who runs The Lambs Club at The Chatwal New York.

Stein says Unscripted Hotels will have the same qualities as Dream Hotels: interesting design, creative food and beverage outlets, and a bright nightlife.

"It will still be hip, have a cool great vibe, interesting uniforms, interesting design and it will be for the community," he says.



The new Unscripted Hotel in Durham, N.C., has a pool. (Photo: Dream Hotel Group)

The difference is that Unscripted will fit into secondary markets, such as its first location in Durham, which opened in July. A Dream hotel is better suited for a big city such as New York, Los Angeles or Bangkok, Stein says.

The company is expanding its flagship brand with openings expected next year in Nashville, the year after in Palm Springs, and Dream Doha in Qatar in 2020.

In all, Dream Hotel Group plans to sign another 30 hotels and resorts across all its brands over the next four years.

The new Unscripted Durham was built in the former Jack Tar Lodge. It has 74 rooms and studios and five locally-inspired food and beverage outlets, including a rooftop pool deck.

Many of the large hotel players such as Hilton, Marriott International, and Hyatt have moved some of their brands into the lifestyle space. Marriott even partnered with Ian Schrager, the hotelier largely credited with creating the boutique hotel concept, to create EDITION hotels.

Sit in the lobby of the EDITION near the Flatiron Building in New York City long enough, and you will see a celebrity.

But Stein says smaller companies like Dream have an edge because they move with the times. Stein says there are too many legacy brands that have not progressed with new generations of travelers.

"Why didn't the old brands transform?" he asks. "They should be moving the brands forward of getting rid of them."

What is a lifestyle brand to Stein? "It's highly stylized, it's about design, great food and beverage," he says. "The hotel is a meeting place for the community."