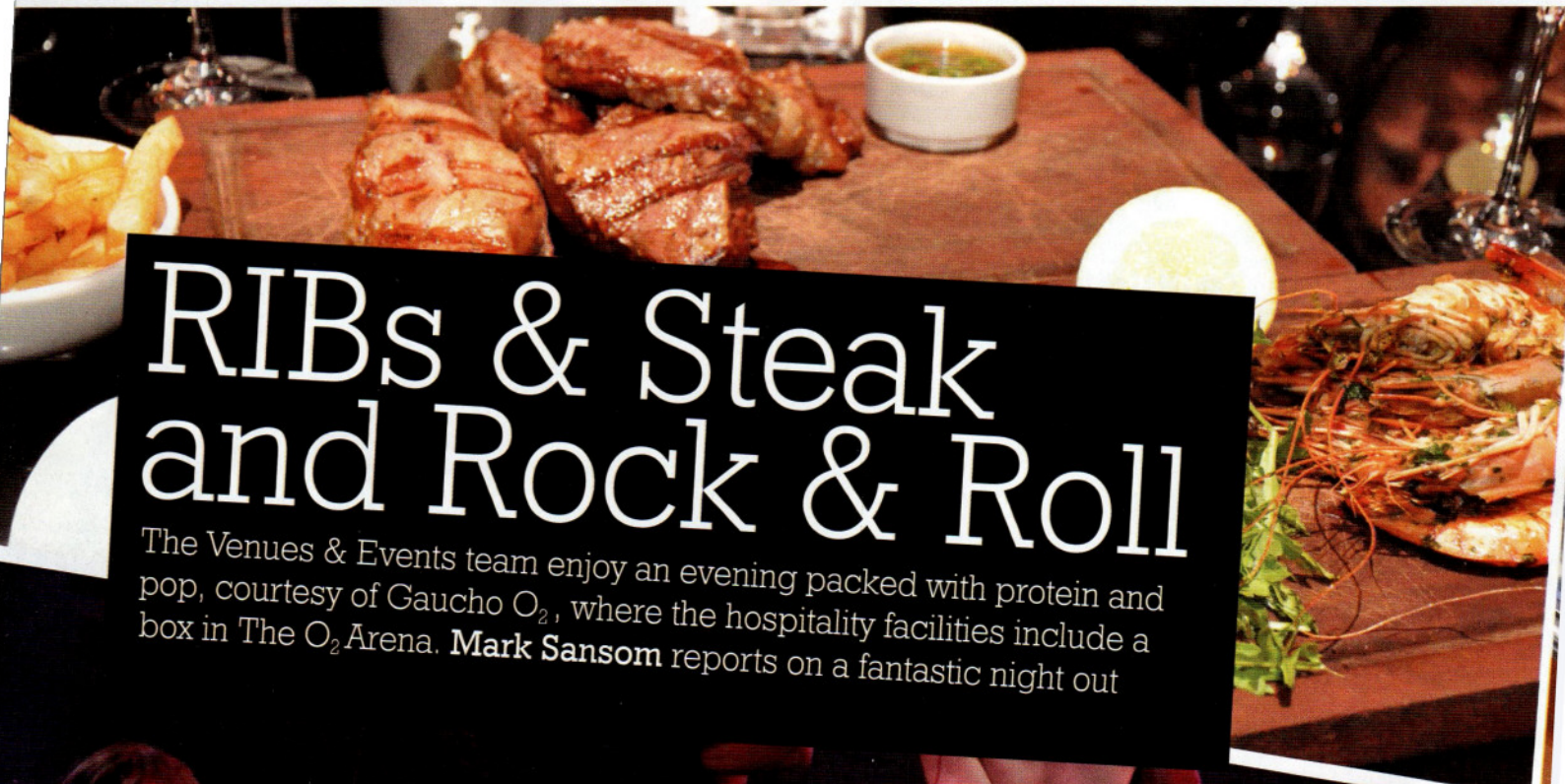


Hospitality
Focus
Britney Spears
at Gaucho O₂



RIBs & Steak and Rock & Roll

The Venues & Events team enjoy an evening packed with protein and pop, courtesy of Gaucho O₂, where the hospitality facilities include a box in The O₂ Arena. **Mark Sansom** reports on a fantastic night out

Britney Spears at Gaucha O₂ Hospitality Focus



We know the Jubilee Line is surprisingly quick nowadays, but there's nothing quite like boarding your own private boat in front of hordes of tourists in the shadow of the London Eye. And not just any old boat – this is the Thames' answer to a rock star limo. It's the A-list craft used to whizz artists from the West End to Greenwich when they're performing at The O₂ – which is exactly where we're heading.

'We could make it to The O₂ in about 15 minutes if we pushed it,' says Charlie Matheson, the MD of London RIB Voyages (tel: 020 7928 7946). 'When Kings of Leon asked us to crank up the speed when they were late for a gig, we annoyed a lot of people along the way.' Packing a hefty top speed of 35 knots, it's a ride that pins you

to your seat when the captain revs up the twin outboard engines.

However, if you're not a rock star in a rush, a more sensible (yet purposeful) pace is the only way to appreciate the journey. Taking a route which most city dwellers won't have seen before, London's landmarks unfold on both sides of the Thames. St Paul's Cathedral squares up to the Gherkin, before Canada Tower and Docklands take over from London Bridge.

The geographers, mariners and *EastEnders* fans among the party will recognise when The O₂ Arena is approaching. With a final salute to Greenwich's handsome National Maritime Museum, the boat draws up to The O₂'s private pier for a hassle-free entrance. Even V&E's most devoted fans couldn't get through to clamour for our autographs. >>