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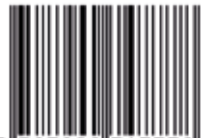
2015/05

UPWARD SPIRAL

MIAO WONG TALKS ART,
MUSIC, AND LIFE AFTER
LIFE



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Cover photo by Sui



The most important dates this month

WHAT'S HAPPENING



MAY 5

Cinco de Mayo Boozy Bingo

Home Plate's trusty Boozy Bingo will be Mexican Independence Day themed this month, with a special guest bingo wrangler hosting in Spanish (and a projector translating for those who '*no hablo*'). Awesome prizes as always.

MAY 10

Baobei Disco: Mother's Day Edition

Once again, beijingkids and JingKids co-host the ever-popular Baobei Disco, a family dance party for kids aged 0-6 and their parents. The event takes place in a safe, family-friendly environment with entertainment for kids, 80s hits, props, and costumes.



MAY 16

Shuangjing Block Party

The Shuangjing Block Party is back with more vendors than ever providing beer, wine, ice cream, cookies, and plenty of international foods make this charity event in support of Roots and Shoots suitable for literally everyone.

MAY 30

Magma

French eccentric psych rock legends from the 60s-70s take on Yugong Yishan with their highly technical and meandering progressive rock tunes. Their song tell stories of life on the mythical land of Kobaia, a planet in another solar system.



Visit thebeijinger.com for even more events and details.

For more events, see p64.

PHOTOS: BEHANCE.NET, CIAMPA.NET, THE BEIJINGER, DARK PEAK RADIO

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Normally May kicks off with a long weekend filled with music festivals. This year is the same – except that none of those events will take place within the Beijing city limits.

Although life in a city without regular large-scale musical events seems like the new status quo, at least one person is hopeful for the future of art and music in Beijing. In one of the most personal interviews we've ever presented, Art Rebels Party (ARP) Creative's Miao Wong tells us about how she lost part of her brain without losing all of her mind. A figure from Beijing electronic music's earliest days, Miao talks about balancing life and work, especially when life itself didn't seem so certain.

Electric in his own way, our Kipp Whittaker talks to Beijing-based promoters and organizers about the future of live music in our fair city. Will we look back at this period as the time the music died, or is it a mere few measures of rest in a longer score? He also makes an incredible grilled cheese sandwich.

We present a special edition of Get the Look featuring the jewelry of Starfish Project, a Beijing-based organization dedicated to providing hope and assistance to exploited women in Asia. Now in its ninth year, Starfish Project is seeking to raise USD 150,000 in order to expand the distribution network for its jewelry and other products, the proceeds from which all go to support their work. Take a look – it may be the most guilt-free shopping you ever do.


With Beijing Playhouse's production of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare opening on May 8, we sat down with the play's director, Chris Verrill, and its four cast members, who play every single Shakespeare character ever written. Well, not really, but both fans of the Bard and people who threw Hamlet across the room when they were in high school will enjoy the show, and the cast tells us why.

Elsewhere in the issue, Dining Editor Robynne Tindall shows us which snacks will be most welcome in the office when you return from a trip around China. The Hutong Yellow Weasels' Chris Hawke talks about his ongoing relationship with Beijing, and author and International School of Beijing teacher Bradford Philen explains why he thinks about sports writer Bill Simmons when he goes to the bathroom.

We hope you enjoy the May issue of the Beijinger.

Schwankert
Steven Schwankert
Executive Editor


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CITY SCENE

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600

The PM2.5 level that a room with 20 people in it can reach if only three of them smoke, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

If five people smoke, the PM 2.5 levels can reach 1,200. With all 20 people smoking, PM2.5 levels are estimated to be at 5,000 (to see this in action, go to any of the smoking areas at the Beijing Capital Airport).

WHO announced in April the launch of their #RUFREE# campaign ('Are you free'), or 你有控吗 in Chinese. The main aim of the campaign is to question your own role

in creating smoke-free environments and to create a community-wide desire for reduced smoking in public, and private, places. Their campaign supports Beijing's new smoking ban, which goes into effect on June 1.

The campaign involves celebrities such as actress Wang Yan, singer Zhang Liangying, and national badminton player Bao Chunlai. Although not exactly household names amongst expats, the celebrities are still capable of driving a local crowd a bit wild, hopefully wild enough to stub out smoking in public places.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

CHECKING OUT AIRBNB'S BEIJING OFFERINGS

The return of warm weather brings with it a certain simultaneous blessing and curse: no, not flowers and allergies, but visitors, and where to host them. Not everyone's apartment may be suitable for housing relatives or friends, but someone else's may be.

Enter Airbnb, the alternative accommodation booking site. We took a look at some of what's on offer in Beijing.

1. "GUOMAO, CBD Comfy Convenient Apt" – Entire apartment/home

Price: RMB 652 per night

Description: "Warner Beijing Sun Thirsty Apartment, located in CBD area in Beijing, is very popular with tourists around the world. And five kilometers away from it there is the most prosperous area in Beijing. Silk Market, Ozone Fitness Center, SOHO at Jianwai, Beijing Modern City all can be reached in 10 minutes by foot. Better yet, from the apartment, you can reach the Guomao Subway Station in three minutes."

User review: "I chose this apartment as it's walking distance to my Beijing office. Having stayed for close to three months, I must admit that its location is very convenient. [Owner] is excellent at helping in any way possible."

2. "Comfy 3 Bedrooms in CBD Center" – Entire apartment/home

Price: RMB 1,502 per night

Description: "The apartment is located in a 30-storey building in the Center of CBD and enjoys the amazing view of CBD Beijing. 190sqm large space provides modern and fashion decoration, new furniture and appliances."

User review: "[Owner] was very helpful and easygoing; her place is spacious and well maintained, right in the middle of the Central Business District. A group of friends and I shared the three bedroom apartment. [Owner] was very accommodating given the constant changes that arise when dealing with a group of five people! She even allowed us to store our luggage after check out while our group of friends explored Beijing! Definitely recommended!"

Editor's note: descriptions and reviews edited for style. Prices may not include service charge or other fees. Inclusion does not imply endorsement. Read more of our Airbnb recommendations on thebeijinger.com/blog.



Every month we tally the hits from thebeijinger.com and bring you the most viewed blogs from our website.



1. Beijing's Expatriate Community Mourns the Loss of IQAir's Mike Murphy

The man who brought the IQAir brand to Beijing died suddenly at his home in the Lido area. A resident of Beijing for over a decade, Mike was the very definition of a self-made man. He was the first person in China to reach out to Swiss-based IQAir to ask for the rights to sell their high-end air filtration machines in China. Mike was a strong supporter of True Run Media's products and via this support, allowed us to do what we do. He is survived by his wife and two children, as well as extended family in the US and in Canada. He also leaves hundreds of friends, customers, and business associates in Beijing.



2. Supercars Smash in Beijing Street Race Gone Wrong

In a scene that we've strangely seen before, street-racing supercars smashed up on Beijing streets on April 11 around 10pm, state media reported. A green Lamborghini and red Ferrari lost control while apparently racing through a tunnel near the National Stadium (Bird's Nest). No major injuries were reported to either drivers or passengers. A large section of the tunnel's wall was also damaged.



3. Canadian Woman Accidentally Kills Elderly Chinese Lady at Mutianyu Great Wall

A Canadian tourist accidentally knocked over an older woman when rushing down a steep part of the wall. The 37-year-old Canadian tourist was running after a friend and reportedly squeezed in between the victim and her husband, causing the 73-year-old woman to fall and hit the back of her head on a corner of the stone wall.

4. China Reveals its New Superhero: Jianbing Man

Jianbing Man (*Jianbing Xia*) ladles out onto the big screen nationwide on July 17. The story unfurls as a young man from a poor family earns his living selling *jianbing* and suddenly becomes a hero, presumably because he sells the best Chinese crepes in town. A star-studded lineup is set to back the movie, including Belgian action superstar Jean-Claude Van Damme.

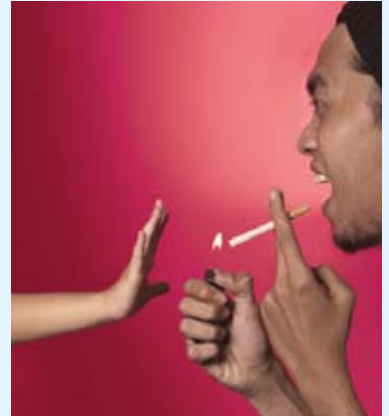


For these stories and more, check out thebeijinger.com/blog



5. China Now Claims It Invented Hamburgers

Huffington Post Food Editor and blasphemer Alison Spiegel supports local marketing efforts that the *roujiamo*, the Shaanxi provincial favorite, is actually a Chinese creation that predates the American dish by 2,000 years or more. "If you're scratching your head right now, you're not alone. But Chinese hamburgers are very real and they definitely predate the hamburgers we call our own in the U.S," she writes. Nice try Alison.



5. Just a Lot of Hot Air: It's Smoking Ban Time (Again)!

It's that time of year again; the Chinese media is chattering about the smoking ban, and there is talk of seriously implementing it, for real, and soon. It's the strictest regulation on tobacco ever: you will no longer be allowed to smoke anywhere that has a roof, in outside areas where children are prevalent, nor near historical and/or cultural relics. We remain skeptical.



7. One-Sixth of All Beijing Bottled Water Comes from the Tap

As much as one-sixth of barreled and bottled water sold in Beijing comes straight from the tap, according to the Beijing Bottled Drinking Water Sales Industry Association. The report refers primarily to water most commonly used in office water coolers. Six hundred and fifty thousand barrels of water are sold in Beijing each day.

8. Taxi Drivers from Heilongjiang Attempt Suicide in Wangfujing

A group of people attempted suicide in Wangfujing on April 4 after drinking pesticide. The group fell to the ground, some frothing at the mouth. A black vial found nearby smelled of pesticide, witnesses stated. According to the Beijing Public Security Bureau's official Weibo account, the group numbered more than 30. All were taken away by ambulance and received treatment, and no fatalities have been reported.



SCENE & HEARD



The Beijinger 2015 Restaurant Awards at Conrad Beijing on Mar 23.
Photos by Aaron Berkovich, Sui, Changsheng and Uni



Footprint Union at Lantern on Mar 21.
Photos by Ken



Peng Music Connects People at Migas on Apr 11.
Photos by Jerry



RLife Live at Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel on Mar 26.
Photos courtesy of Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel



Peng Springphony at Migas on Mar 14.
Photos by Qiao Hua

THE UPWARD SPIRAL

HEALTH SCARE AND MUSIC INDUSTRY SURVIVOR
MIAO WONG HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

by Steven Schwankert



Let Me Tell You a Secret

Sitting on the servers for *theBeijinger.com* is an article that, at press time, it appears we will never publish. The headline says it all: "INTRO 2015 Cancelled." When we first spoke with INTRO co-founder Miao Wong, the festival, now organized by Weng Weng, was back for 2015 after missing 2014, set for the area around what was the Olympic beach volleyball court in Chaoyang Park. Just about every other festival had been shut down (330 Metal Festival), postponed (Strawberry), or moved permanently away from Beijing (MIDI), but INTRO was going ahead.

Then came a phone call on a Sunday night from Miao, and it looked like that domino too might fall. Chaoyang Park wasn't getting the green light, but if that didn't happen, it would move somewhere else. She would get news from Weng Weng by Tuesday night. Tuesday came and went, and so did Wednesday. Details were added to the outline of the "cancelled" story, so that if that hour came, it could be finished and posted quickly.

But then Friday arrived, and there it was: INTRO 2015 would go on, moving to Grand Epoch City in Xianghe (most famous for its *roubing*), about 50 kilometers from Beijing. Nine hours, three stages, and even an after-party at Lantern.

That kind of close call seems to sum up Miao's life over the past few years. Miao doesn't look like someone who has lost a part of her brain. She doesn't act like it or talk like it, either. She's a music person but not a musician. She may be best known for her work with an electronic music label, but it's neither her career nor her day job. We talked with the now-permanently 29-year-old about life, health, Beijing, and music.

Dark and Heavy

Originally from Jilin in northeast China, Miao comes from an artistic family but not a particularly musical one. While her father, a Chinese calligraphy and painting artist, plays violin and keyboard, that talent was not transmitted to his daughter. "I just sucked at everything I touched. I just don't have that kind of talent," she said.

But her lack of musical aptitude was never an impediment to her enjoyment of it. Coming of listening age in the late 1990s, Miao didn't embrace the more popular import bands of the time. "I never listened to bands like Nirvana or Oasis because I didn't want to follow my classmates," she said. Instead, she discovered artists on the UK indie label 4AD, which featured groups like Cocteau Twins, Lush and Dead Can Dance. There was also a metal phase that included Nine Inch Nails and Sepultura, she recalled.

Miao moved to Beijing at 18, towards the end of a metal

habit that she fed at Nameless Highland, a now-closed Asian Games Village venue, specifically its weekly metal night. She noticed fairly quickly there were not a lot of other women there, and even fewer with her particular tastes. "You listen to Cannibal Corpse?" Miao was questioned one night. After giving the Corpse lyrics the first read, she realized that the music and the message were two different things, and she put it to the side.

Lost and Found

"I was musically lost until I discovered the party scene," Miao said. She started going to events at now-extinct clubs like Inner Affair, Yugong Yishan (the parking lot trailer iteration, not the current venue), and Cloud 9 (in northern Sanlitun, not the Shangri-La Hotel bar), before moving on to Tango.

"It was really at Tango that it became an addiction. I could never have enough of electronic music," she said. One night while attending People's University, she couldn't hold herself, left at 2am and went to Tango, and stayed there until it closed, just to get her fix. "It's a habit of mine. Every time I like something, I want to get as close as possible."

While working part-time, Miao realized she could get closer to the music by helping the DJs she liked to get higher-paying commercial gigs, before wanting to organize more independent events. There was also the opportunity to form China's first electronic music label. So, together with the founding eight DJs, including Weng Weng, and Elvis.T, Acupuncture Records was launched in 2007.

Acupuncture started with events, then record releases, and then their own venue, Lantern, on the basement floor of 3.3 (now close to the Worker's Stadium west gate) was created, and continues today.

The label was a quick success, but perhaps its branding was too strong. "Acupuncture was getting more famous, but I'm not sure the DJs were getting more famous," Miao said. Quitting her day job in PR, Miao handled the operations and marketing side of Acupuncture. "Music isn't part of my work," she said. "I leave it to the musicians to decide what's best."

In 2009, Acupuncture launched its own music festival, Ideas Need To Reach Out, better known as INTRO, China's first open-air electronic music fest. The 2012 event won the Party of the Year award at the 2013 *Beijinger* Reader Bar and Club Awards, and former *Beijinger* Arts and Culture Editor Nick Richards posited at the time that the 2013 event, held at the Shougang steel factory, may have been the best party in Beijing ever. At that time, Acupuncture



had already ended, and Miao is not in charge of INTRO anymore.

Hell and Back

"I never thought I was sick."

It was during the run-up to INTRO 2011 that Miao first noticed that something was wrong.

"I remember it so clearly," she said, an almost funny thing to say about recalling when she couldn't think of the name of the label she helped start. "It was INTRO 2011. I was sending emails and I couldn't remember the name of Acupuncture. I couldn't understand why I couldn't remember," she said. The episode lasted about 10 seconds and caused no pain. "I didn't think anything of it," she said.

Afterwards, Miao started to have similar experiences once per month, then once per week, then a few times per day. One night, "I woke up and I felt like I was in Hell. It was like a nightmare, but I felt like that after I was awake," she said.

Whatever was plaguing Miao appeared again during preparations for INTRO 2012. "I was having dinner with a potential sponsor. I got up from the table, but I couldn't think of how to ask where the toilet was. One of the staff said, 'Maybe she's Japanese.'" At that point Miao went to see a doctor, who recommended she go for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan. Two weeks later, the results came back: she had a tumor on the left side of her brain. It required surgery.

If grief has five stages, Miao skipped right past denial and anger and went straight to bargaining. "I wanted to postpone the surgery for a month, but the doctor said no way." She informed the INTRO crew, then called her mother and asked her to come to Beijing.

To hear Miao tell it, having brain surgery wasn't such a big deal. "It was kind of like a holiday for me when I was in the hospital," she said, "it was lots and lots and lots of fun. I never would have guessed so many people would have come to visit me." She made light of having a shaved head, but with her mother close at hand, and understandably worried, Miao reminded herself, "I have to be brave. I have to be happy."

As she went in for her operation, Miao thought that she didn't want to leave her mother behind, but also, "Even if my life ends right here, right now, I had a good life."

Not many Beijingers can say they remember being awakened in the middle of a surgical procedure on the brain. "They woke me up and asked me to identify pictures – frog, dog, things like that." Four days in intensive care

followed, which Miao described as being "quite unpleasant. It was a weird kind of pain. My brain felt heavy. I had a constant ringing in my ears, and no appetite." She still has issues relating to her vision because of the tumor, now gone.

Now

During her illness, issues within Acupuncture Records caused it to come apart, with DJs leaving to do their own thing or join other labels. Although Miao does not necessarily view her brush with illness in the dramatic, life-altering terms that some have felt, it has certainly given her more perspective. "I jumped out of myself and looked and myself, and got a better view of myself."

She approaches projects more slowly now, she says, and has time to think of new business models to benefit the clients of her latest venture, ARP Creative, with the acronym standing for "Art Rebels Party." Started in 2013, Miao said she now introduces herself by saying, "I run an artists' community."

ARP seeks to bring together artists both to cooperate with each other, and also to unite them with leading brands when commercial opportunities are available. ARP has already created collaborations for brand events and online campaigns with Infiniti, Mercedes Benz, BMW, H&M, Joyce, New Balance, and Absolut, among others. ARP is also an artist scout, providing music for adidas global flagship stores and in-flight music for airlines, as well as arranging performing artists for other music and art festivals. She retains a consulting role with both INTRO and Elvis. T's Label DOT Records.

Miao continues to do yoga, which she picked up nine or 10 years ago, and cooks more of her own food, having bought her own yogurt and *doujiang* machines. Now taking a broader perspective on the opportunities available for artists, Miao remains cautiously optimistic about the prospects for both art and music in Beijing.

"The music scene in Beijing is shrinking. Openings and closings are nothing new, but artists leaving is," Miao said. "It isn't really the first time this has happened. Before the Acupuncture period, there was the Great Wall festivals and Vogue 88."

As for INTRO 2015: "I once wrote, 'Not every party will change your life, yet once it does, it's for a lifetime.' And once you experience a life change, you need to prepare for the next one."

Miao doesn't see herself leaving the city anytime soon. "The vibe in Beijing is better. I hope that what we're experiencing is not a cycle. I hope it's an upward spiral."



STAYING ALIVE

THE ARCHITECTS OF BEIJING'S MUSIC FESTIVAL
SCENE LOOK TO THE FUTURE

by Kipp Whittaker

Beijing seems to have developed a serious case of agoraphobia, especially when it comes to groups of young people and live music. As such, the climate for the May 2015 festival season so far is looking pretty bleak, with all large-scale music festivals within the city limits being forced out. Maybe it's just easier to push these events out of the city than take responsibility for any potential crowd-related issues that might occur.

At this point, just how complicated is it to plan a concert or festival in China? There's a long list of rules and regulations behind these massive cultural events that aren't always clear or sensible. At times, concert promoting appears to be one big Tom and Jerry routine, where too

often little Jerry loses his head to red tape and randomly enforced protocols.

We had a chat with four of the most important concert and live music promoters in Beijing. They discussed the history of their various musical events and some of the incredible lengths they've had to go to in order to make these fruitful experiences happen. Every year these concert crusaders take risks and lay down massive amounts of cash to make Beijing a vibrant place to experience music from around the world, while sometimes getting burned in the process. Here's an introduction to these cultural attaches along with some words of advice about throwing these massive events in China.

Nathaniel Davis (Split Works): JUE, Black Rabbit

Throughout his years in China, Nathaniel has gained a wealth of knowledge about the Asian music circuit by organizing concerts for major artists like Alicia Keys and Ghostface Killah to promoting some of the most volatile and interesting independent music in the world through their JUE Festival platform. Since the formation of Split Works in 2006, Nathaniel, and his partner Archie Hamilton have become the go to concert promoters to handle your Asian tour experience.



Shen Lihui (Modern Sky Entertainment): Modern Sky Festival, Strawberry Festival

Formed in 1997, Modern Sky Entertainment is home to the largest independent record label in China and producer of the annual Modern Sky and Strawberry Festivals. This organization is doing its utmost to spread the gospel of contemporary Chinese music to the world. This multi-headed hydra of a media company is using the festival model to incorporate China into the vernacular of the international music scene and bring the brightest performers of China to the international circuit.

Leo de Boisgisson (Kaiguan Culture): DongDong Music Festival

After years of consulting for French institutions responsible for bilateral cultural exchange with China, Leo and her partner Pierre A Blanc initiated their company Kaiguan Culture. This expertise led to the creation of DongDong Music Festival and Convention in 2013. This is a series of events established to introduce musicians and industry experts from China and abroad through showcased boutique events promoting music industry collaboration with Europe.

DJ Weng Weng (Lantern/Acupuncture): INTRO Festival

Acupuncture was conceived in 2007 with three goals in mind: To develop a platform for releasing electronic music in China, build a venue for electronic musicians to perform weekly, and to create an internationally recognized festival to celebrate these creations. While Acupuncture as a label is now defunct, the legacy lives on with Lantern and INTRO, one of the most anticipated parties of the year.





Here's your guide to festival planning from our correspondence with these music industry leaders based in Beijing.

Have a Unique Purpose and Aesthetic

Each festival is created with an aesthetic informed by those who created it and the people for whom it's marketed. We're not just talking about using all caps or incorrect spacing between words in the name of your fest. It's more about the philosophy and above all content of the events. JUE was created to generate a sense of community between different music scenes and creatives from around the city through concerts, artistic exhibition, and their market.

DongDong is a similar style showcase festival. Each performance is organized to connect like-minded musicians from Europe and China, in order to encourage touring, collaborations, and create a platform for dialogue between people in the industry.

Modern Sky uses their Strawberry and Modern Sky Festivals to not only bring in major acts from around the world but also to export Chinese music to other international epicenters of musical appreciation. This past year marked the first time Modern Sky organized a festival in New York City and brought big names like Second Hand Rose and Queen Sea Big Shark to the US. It has taken them almost 20 years to go from label to exporting a festival

with Chinese artists to another country. Despite their immense size and ambition, with 17 festivals across China last year, "Strawberry is and will always be an independent event, and this will never change," Shen maintains.

Do All the Paperwork. Then Be Prepared for the Worst

Festivals here get canceled both because the necessary paperwork hasn't been filed, but also even when it has. Every festival does what they need to do, but can't always do everything that is expected from officials. Not every "mandatory" requirement is regulated, and there are numerous cracks that would need to be filled in order for any of these festivals to be leakproof.

This gray area seems to be a tool for regulators to close down events that are deemed unfit for mass consumption or potentially dangerous. "The only way to minimize these risks is to know what they are and be prepared," Davis says. Some of the items that must be filed to receive a *piwen* or official approval are a set list, lyrics, and a corresponding 30-minute video of live performance footage. De Boisgisson said that for the Magma gig on May 31, there was a small problem because Christian Vandehaar sings in a language of his own creation. Despite this, the Ministry of Culture still wanted a translation. How did they respond? They translated the set to the best of their ability.

When asked, "What's the most difficult thing about



organizing a music festival of this size?" DJ Weng Weng replied, "site approval." Despite making all of the necessary arrangements in a timely manner, he has encountered difficulty with this for the past two years, leading to INTRO 2014 being cancelled, and the 2015 edition being moved 50 kilometers out of Chaoyang Park and into Hebei. This refusal to approve applicants is this season's most prevalent roadblock for festival planners.

Find the Money

There's more than one way to get this ball rolling, but the main way is through sponsorship from governments or from brands willing to sponsor your event. Kaiguan receives some help from the French Embassy because they have lots of connections with the cultural department, and their festival promotes a soft and creatively-oriented diplomatic strategy between the two countries. The French are probably the best at spreading their musical seeds in this still isolated yet culturally fertile country.

The other option is acting as a promoter for whatever gig comes your way, and using this money to do the stuff that matters. Split Works has brought over some of the most interesting names in the biz but also have acted as the tour organizer and concert promoter for artists like Richard Marx, Vanessa Williams, and Ludicrous. Building this sort of trustworthy reputation in China's music industry leads to more opportunities for finding brand sponsorship

then eventually total domination.

Don't Give Up

If there's one thing DJ Weng Weng can teach us, it's don't give up. He was searching until the very last moment to keep INTRO alive in 2014. While this didn't work out in the end, a similar situation presented itself this year. He was forced to move the fest from Chaoyang Park to Hebei's Grand Epoch City to avoid further complications involved with planning events of this size in Beijing. Getting site approval and changing venues less than a month away from showtime is not only a logistical nightmare but also a true sign of his dedication to celebrating and promoting electronic music in China.

With all of this working against the festival planner, it is no surprise that these events rarely break even at the beginning. It is a Sisyphean task that requires dedication, intense brand building, and constant innovation. These events are a labor of love in the truest sense. Davis told us that the first year of any never makes money and that you need to keep it going for at least three for it to develop enough momentum to get trendy and into the public consciousness.

"There are plenty of people that come in to do big events and quickly discover things work a little differently here," Davis said.

Sip, nibble, gulp, chew, guzzle, savor, feast

FOOD & DRINK

CHINESE SNACKS // TOP TEN ALFRESCO // CATERING COMPANIES // DEEP-FRIED BAIJIU



Aria's spring menu is based on their "Rooted in Nature" initiative, which aims to use local, ethical, and sustainable produce wherever possible. Experience dishes such as pan-seared Mandarin perch, featuring fish sourced from Tianjin.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHINA WORLD HOTEL

Happenings

Having recently returned from a three-month trip to Spain, **Niajo's** owner and executive chef Alex Sanchez, and his protégée chef Pan, have given the menu an overhaul, adding a number of modern Spanish dishes. We were big fans of the fried potatoes with whipped garlic aioli, as well as the high quality Spanish tuna. Their lunch menu offers great value too, with three courses for RMB 98 and the option to add a glass of wine for just RMB 22. It'd be rude not to at that price. For lunch they also have one of the cheapest by-the-bottle house wine deals we have seen at any restaurant in Beijing – a bottle of white wine is just RMB 120.

Lily's American Diner celebrates five years in the biz this May, with deals on coffee, food, and wine throughout the month. On May 30 customers will get free cake at all three Lily's locations (Sanlitun, Shuangjing, and Sihui).

Element Fresh has teamed up with tennis star Li Na for their new spring/summer menu. Dishes include a blue cheese, chicken, and apple salad; a warm spinach salad with salmon; and a dish called "Fire and Ice Tuna",

featuring grilled tuna and wasabi vinaigrette.

Beijing's healthiest restaurant (probably), **Tribe**, has updated its menu for spring/summer. The new dishes feature seasonal ingredients such as fennel and asparagus, and are largely vegan. We were big fans of their take on the traditional Chongqing noodle dish, *xiaomian*, updated with buckwheat noodles, chickpeas, grilled raddichio and ground vegan sausage.

We're hearing good things on the grapevine about new craft pie delivery service **Mama Jude's American Pie**. They bake American-style apple pies to a prize-winning family recipe. Email mamajudespie@gmail.com or catch them every now and then at the Conscious Food Market held at the Gongti branch of In & Out every Saturday.

Mexican favorite **Q Mex** has added a few crazy guacamole flavors as part of their new spring menu. Choose from seafood and wasabi, pineapple and papaya, or balsamic and bacon. We can't speak for the first two, but we tried and very much approve of the balsamic and bacon.



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SNACKS TO

AVOID DUTY FREE WITH THESE LOCAL GIFTS

by Robynne Tindall



Hong Kong: Cookies and snacks from Kee Wah Bakery (奇华饼家)

Since its founding in 1938, Hong Kong's Kee Wah Bakery has become an international phenomenon, with stores in Taiwan and the US. The original is still the best though, so don't forget to pick up a package of egg rolls or sweetheart cakes on your way through the Pearl of the Orient.



Xinjiang: Dried fruit (干果)

Xinjiang is rightly famous for its dried fruit, including figs, raisins and jujubes (red dates). While the dates are mostly used in tonics and teas, the figs make a delicious and healthy snack. Also worth picking up are almonds and walnuts, which everyone knows are the trendiest possible al desko snack these days.



Qingdao: Laoshan tea

(崂山绿茶)

Yes, Qingdao does produce something other than beer. The majestic seaside slopes of nearby Laoshan are home to stepped terraces of what some consider to be one of China's finer green teas. Pick some up from famous local brand Laoming (崂茗).



Ningxia: Eight treasures tea

(八宝茶)

The most common ingredients in eight treasures tea are green tea, dried chrysanthemum flowers, goji berries, dried Chinese red dates, dried longan, licorice root, ginseng, dried fruit, and rock sugar, making the most of Ningxia's estimable dried fruits.



Hainan: Coconut candy

(椰子糖果)

Tropical Hainan is famous for its coconut products; they even have an International Coconut Festival. The candy might be most appealing, but you can pick up coconut flakes, coconut biscuits, and even coconut porridge.

BRING BACK



Shanghai: Pear syrup candy (梨膏糖)

Originating in the bazaar surrounding Shanghai's City God Temple (城隍庙), this candy was traditionally brewed with medicinal herbs, producing something akin to cough drops. Today it is more likely to be flavored with fruit or nuts.



Chengdu: Mala rabbit heads (麻辣兔头)

Not for the faint of heart this one, but the more adventurous among your colleagues may appreciate these *mala* treats from China's spice capital. If you can't stomach the rabbit heads, hot pot spices are another popular choice.



Dali: Carved dried plums (雕梅)

These special plums are carved with a knife before they are dried, leaving a delicate pattern. The sour, slightly salty flavor is an acquired taste, but we can say from experience that these do go down well among Chinese colleagues.



Xi'an: Preserved beef or lamb (腊牛、羊肉)

With its large and active Muslim population, Xi'an is one of the best places to pick up Halal snacks. This preserved lamb has a texture akin to corned beef and while it's a little too salty, it's actually not overly egregious to the senses.



Guilin: Fermented bean curd (桂林腐乳)

Guilin's strong-flavored fermented bean curd is used as a seasoning or an accompaniment. Some brands come with the cheese-like tofu suspended in chili sauce. We have to say you'd be better off showing off your holiday snaps than buying this, though.

THE RUG CHAT ROOM

TALK OF THE TOWN



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 10am-10pm. Unit 31, Joy Yard, 6/F, Chaoyang Joy City, 101 Chaoyang Beilu, Chaoyang District (No phone)

朝阳区朝阳北路101号朝阳大悦城6F-31 (悦界区)

 50m north of Qingnianlu (Line 6)

Expanding a popular restaurant into multiple branches is a tricky business. Do you stick with what seems to work and make every branch a carbon copy of the last, or do you take a punt on a new concept? The team behind The Rug have chosen the latter and it suits them down to the ground.


Set on the sixth floor of mammoth Chaoyang Joy City, their newest branch is called the "Chat Room." The focus here is on light bites and catch ups between bouts of retail therapy, rather than a formal sit-down meal, and shows a smart understanding of the customers who frequent Joy City. As we have come to expect from The Rug, the décor is on point – pseudo-French café style blended with their signature polished-concrete-and-geometric-light-shades look. Staff bustle behind a counter stacked with home-made bakery items and breads from long-time partner Boulangerie Nanda.

The food tends to the sweet side of things, even in the savory dishes, but there are definite standouts. We loved the sesame-crusted seared tuna salad, with fennel, pomelo and toasted quinoa (RMB 38), demonstrating a deft hand with both flavour and texture. Quinoa's trendy bedfellows kale and avocado make a showing in several of the dishes and we are happy to see them there. Fans of The Rug's brunch dishes will be glad to know that their bagel eggs Benedict (RMB 108-118) has made the cut on the new menu, which just goes to show that some things are better left unchanged. *Robynne Tindall*

MATCHA LATTE



HOTPOT

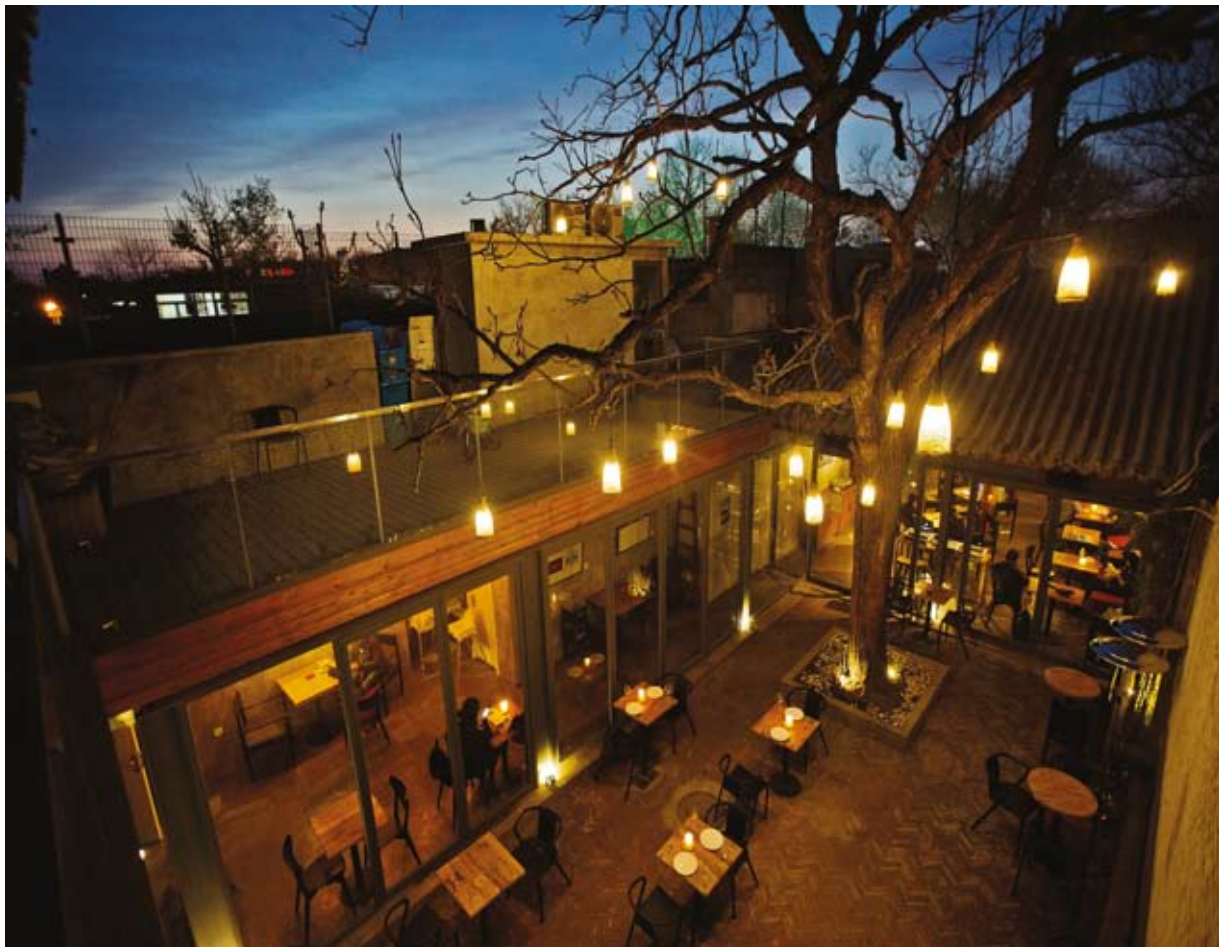
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RONGTIE STORE
TEL: 010-84167836
Rongtie Plaza, 141 Nan Rd, Shunyi
北京市顺义区顺林路141号顺泰广场21号楼103号

RONGXIANG STORE
TEL: 010-80461214
Pinnacle Plaza, No.89 YuXiang Rd, Shunyi (opposite to Domino's Pizza)
北京市顺义区安泰街89号



ZARAH

COURTING THE COURTYARD

Sun-Thu 9am-midnight, Fri-Sat 9am-1am. 46 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District (8403 9807)

东城区鼓楼东大街46号

 900m west of Beixinqiao (Line 5)

It has been around in Beijing for longer than this writer, but a recent low-key rebrand has given Zarah a new lease of life. That's right, Café Zarah has dropped the "café" in a bid to move beyond its afternoon-coffee-and-Macbook-warriors image and become a more mature, all-day venue.

However, this column is about outdoor dining, not branding, and for us, it is in this regard that Zarah really comes into its own. Sheltered by a venerable, lantern-decked tree, Zarah's central courtyard – added during a long overdue renovation in May 2014 – is one of Gulou's most pleasant spaces to while away an afternoon or evening, set far enough back from the busy street to

feel tranquil, but without losing that essential hutong atmosphere.

We find we like the courtyard even more with the addition of a more substantial wine menu. With five reds and five whites available by the glass, the selection of varieties from Europe and Australia is solid if not particularly groundbreaking and, crucially, competitively priced. They're also gradually expanding their cocktail options, with an espresso martini catching our fancy at their recent grand opening party.

Whether stopping by for a morning coffee or settling in for a sunset session, grab your drink and head outside at Zarah – you'll be glad you did. *Robynne Tindall*

PHOTO: KEN

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

SHI YI FLAME COOKING

INTO THE FIRE

Daily 10am-10pm. 1/F, Tunsanli Mall, Yongli International, Chaoyang District (5801 0189)

食爰：朝阳区永利国际屯三里购物中心1层

 1.5km east of Dongsi Shitiao (Line 2)

As far as restaurant concepts go, choosing to set everything on fire doesn't seem like the most sustainable business plan. We jest of course, but this really is the inspiration behind the menu of hip, design-oriented restaurant Shi Yi Flame Cooking located within Gongti's Tunsanli Mall.

As the name of the restaurant suggests, the quirky menu leads with a series of steaks and flambéed dishes. The signature Sizzling Steak (RMB 98) is flambéed in Cognac at the table, the thin-cut steak still surprisingly tender and with a pleasantly astringent edge from the alcohol. The meat is locally sourced and this commitment to positive sourcing extends to the rest of the dishes – a new selection of summer salads are made with vegetables from an organic farm in Hebei owned by the restaurant group that owns Shi Yi.

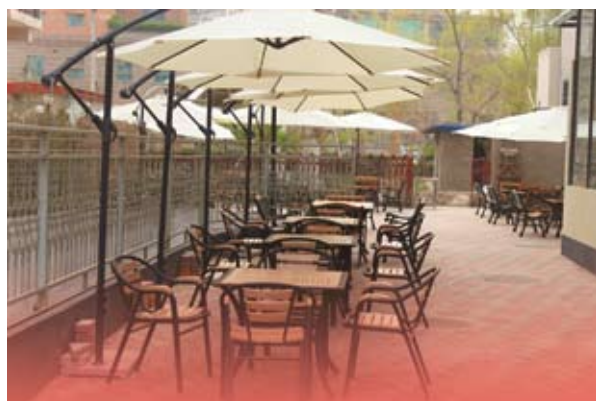
Cool the flames of your steak with one of their vast selection of chilled juices, smoothies, and teas, including a crazy mango-carrot-milk option that comes topped with a cloud of cotton candy. Have your camera phones at the ready.

Shi Yi may not be to everyone's taste, but for a quick, fun and good value meal in the Gongti area, it is a welcome choice. *Robynne Tindall*

SIGNATURE SIZZLING STEAK



PHOTO: JOEY GUO



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CHICKEN AND SWEETCORN DUMPLINGS

MR. SHI'S DUMPLINGS SANLITUN

THAT'S MR. SHI TO YOU

Daily 10am-11:30pm. 32 Sanlitun Xijie (west of Sanlitun Police Station), Chaoyang District (131 6100 3826)

朝阳区三里屯南32号 (三里屯派出所往西)

 1 km northwest of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Mr. Shi demands respect. He's "Mr. Shi." And after establishing his brand on Baochao Hutong, Mr. Shi and his dumplings have arrived in Sanlitun.

Now occupying the space formerly home to Two Guys and a Pie on Sanlitun Houjie, also known as between the Sanlitun Police Station and International Wonderland Street, Mr. Shi's slightly foreignized menu features beef and cheese dumplings, and other varieties including chicken and corn.

We had both pan-fried, although they are also available boiled. For a side we opted for *dabancai*, chopped cabbage salad with bits of tofu. Warning: this is a properly spicy dish. People who don't like or aren't accustomed to eating spicy food will find this dish too spicy, so be sure to order accordingly. That said, it was extremely tasty, with obviously fresh ingredients and seemingly just a dash of vinegar on top.

The beef and cheese, or "cheeseburger," dumpling was delicious – I wonder how this would taste boiled, probably works better fried – the chicken and corn were better, interesting as chicken is not generally a popular jiaozi filling. Two plates of 12 dumplings each, the cabbage salad, a pot of tea and a small Tsingtao would normally run RMB 130. That's pretty pricey for a meal that could be as little as half elsewhere in the city.


The decor is Beijing basic. I'd say down-and-dirty but only in a nominal sense, since the place is certainly clean. The white walls are slowly being graffitied or otherwise artistically defaced by visitors. Clientele were a good mix of Sanlitun foreigners and laobaixing Chinese, including a family of five.

Expect this spot to get massive traffic once people realize that the popular dumpling pusher is now operating in Sanlitun. Mr. Shi expects to remain open later on weekends. *Steven Schwankert*

GELATO PIQUE CAFÉ

SANLITUN'S NEW CREPERIE

Daily 10am-10pm. S5-15B Taikoo Li, 19 Sanlitun Beilu, Chaoyang District (No phone)
朝阳区三里屯北路19号太古里S5-15B

 700m northwest of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Gelato Pique Café is an adorable, pastel-themed café, bringing to mind a European cottage. All of this rings true, except that this concept originated in Tokyo, Japan. Next door, and attached, is Mila Owen, the fashion brand associated with the café. Their clothes follow the same trend: pretty and pastel.

Gelato Pique Café's menu boasts savory and sweet crepes, hamburgers, and a range of other desserts. We tried both a savory and a sweet crepe, as we were told these were the most popular dishes. The mustard chicken salée (RMB 68) was basically a crepe topped off with crunchy salad, tender fried chicken cubes intermingled with mushrooms, a perfectly soft poached egg, shaved parmesan cheese, cherry tomatoes, and dressed with honey mustard dressing and balsamic vinegar. It tasted good, although it was a relatively small serving, especially for RMB 68.

Our sweet choice was the cacao-flavored dessert crepe (RMB 62), topped with vanilla sugar, almonds, pistachios, and chocolate ice cream. This was simply heavenly and we polished it off in about two minutes including any and all traces of ice cream.

The staff is extremely attentive, refilling our water over and over. The free ice water was delicious because it basically had an entire fruit salad in it. Every time she came to refill our water, which was a lot, we marveled at the blueberries, strawberries and oranges floating around in there. By the end of our lunch we probably had our five suggested pieces of fruit a day.

We reckon skip the savory, and go for the sweet. Just do it, you know you want to. Unless you can't handle the sweetness, then the savory is also a pretty solid option. Or alternatively just hang out in there and pretend to order so you can sip their fruity ice water. *Margaux Schreurs*



CACAO-FLAVORED DESSERT CREPE



TOP TEN ALFRESCO

LET'S GO OUTSIDE

By Robynne Tindall

With the mercury finally rising, it's time to start thinking about the important things in life, primary among them being: where can I make the most of the weather before it gets too warm to be outside? Well, roll up your sleeves and grab that sunscreen because we have put together a list of our favorite outdoor dining (and drinking) locations.

CAPITAL M (BEST OUTDOOR DINING, *THE BEIJINGER* READER RESTAURANT AWARDS 2015)

Little remains to be said about Capital M that hasn't been said before, but that is perhaps what keeps it topping more than just the alfresco dining category in our restaurant awards year after year. The terrace, the view of Qianmen, the service ... all add up to Beijing's finest al fresco experience. Go for brunch and stay until it's an appropriate hour for cocktails (we won't judge).

ELEMENT FRESH (OUTSTANDING OUTDOOR DINING, *THE BEIJINGER* READER RESTAURANT AWARDS 2015)

We don't know about you, but hot food doesn't quite cut it during the summer months in Beijing, which is why we often find ourselves arriving early to nab a table on the terrace at Element Fresh's Sanlitun location, before ordering up one of their signature salads.

DALI COURTYARD (OUTSTANDING OUTDOOR DINING, *THE BEIJINGER* READER RESTAURANT AWARDS 2015)

For many, Dali Courtyard offers the quintessential hutong dining experience without any of the fuss. While hardly a hidden gem nowadays, their Yunnan dishes remain consistent, and there is nothing quite like kicking back with a mason jar of their rice wine-based, Mojito-style cocktail on a warm evening.

BRASSERIE FLO

Brasserie FLO's location at the far end of Xiaoyun Lu may seem odd at first glance, but when you see the size of their outdoor space, you'll understand why they picked the boonies. With ample shade from the surrounding trees, FLO is a great location for alfresco dining, day or night.

SUSU

Susu is like the courtyard house we've always wanted. The converted courtyard is hidden away down Qianliang Hutong; finding it makes the stylish Vietnamese dishes all the more satisfying. Settle into the sheltered courtyard for an evening sipping Asian-inspired cocktails.

ASIA BISTRO, JW MARRIOTT

Lush grass is a rarity in perpetually drought-ridden Beijing and that is exactly what makes Asia Bistro so special. The setting at the base of the towering skyscrapers of China Central Place gives a decidedly *Sex and the City* feel. Look out for frequent barbecue and seafood promotions throughout summer.

SALT SPRING (BEST OUTDOOR DINING, THE BEIJINGER READER RESTAURANT AWARDS 2015)

The newly renovated terrace at Lido's Salt Spring overlooks

leafy Side Park, making the terrace seem much larger than it actually is and the comfy patio seating encourages lingering.

YIN ON 12

One of the big openings of last summer, Yin on 12 offers panoramic views of old Beijing from its perch on the rooftop of the New World Hotel in Chongwenmen. Yes, we admit Chongwenmen is probably not your first choice for partying, but Yin on 12 is a one-stop destination. Try the Long Yin Iced Tea.

XIAN

XIAN is our favorite hotel bar, made all the better by their expansive terrace. The sunken booth seating and soft lighting make for one of Beijing's classiest outdoor venues. Stop by on Friday night for buy-one-get-one Veuve Clicquot Champagne.

MÁS

The terrace at Más may be small, but like the many hutong venues that have gone before it, the crowd tends to spill right out into the street anyway. Their potent Tiki drinks are the main draw, but the bar menu of tacos and Cuban sandwiches is excellent – we love the carnitas.



SWISS TASTE

DON'T MIND IF I FONDUE



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 11am-10pm. Room 101, Bldg 18, Central Park, 6 Chaoyangmen Waidajie, Chaoyang District (6597 9229)
瑞士餐厅: 朝阳区朝阳门外大街6号新城国际公寓18号楼101室

🚶 850m southeast of Dongdaqiao (Line 6)

After 13 years in China, including a recently concluded stint at the Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce, founder of new Central Park restaurant Swiss Taste Peter Troesch is well qualified to introduce his country's cuisine to the currently lacking Beijing market.

Instead of the stereotypical "Swiss chalet" motif, Swiss Taste us all about clean lines and white furnishings. Shelves and a small deli counter feature a selection of imported produce, including cheese, yogurt, milk, and chocolate. With this and other activities planned, Troesch sees Swiss Taste as a window to showcase the Swiss lifestyle and culture as a whole, rather than just simply a restaurant.

Not that the food is an afterthought. The menu focuses on the staples of the small country's cuisine – cheese fondue (RMB 138/258), *raclette* (RMB 88), and *flammkuchen* (RMB 88-258), a type of thin bread pizza topped with sour cream instead of cheese. Our favorite is the traditional *flammkuchen* (RMB 88), finished with a generous portion of onions and bacon lardons. Elsewhere, a selection of mains feature dishes from Switzerland's neighboring France, Germany, and Austria (none from Lichtenstein, for now). We enjoyed the white veal sausage (RMB 108) and its accompanying rosti, although we could have done without the overly reduced onion sauce.

Wash it all down with a bottle from surely the largest selection of Swiss wines in Beijing. The same bottles are available to take away at a 30 percent discount. With the weather warming up, we're looking forward to settling in to their ample terrace with a glass of white wine and big slice of *flammkuchen*. Robynne Tindall



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business hour : daily from 10:30 to 22:30

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WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS




COLD VERMICELLI WITH ROASTED CHICKEN

VIETNAMESE HOUSE

FOR COZY VIETNAMESE

Daily 9am-2am. 1-217, B1/F, Bldg 1, Sanlitun Soho, 8 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (5785 3852)

越舍餐馆: 朝阳区工体北路8号三里屯SOHO 1号楼B1层217室

 1 km southwest of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Adding a touch of Southeast Asian style to the otherwise fairly soulless basement level of Sanlitun Soho, Vietnamese House is a welcome addition for everyone who frequents the area, providing friendly service and authentic Vietnamese food in a casual setting.

Vietnamese House has become a favorite among the *Beijinger* staff in just a few short months. A typical visit will see us ordering the small chicken pho (RMB 53), Vietnamese fresh spring rolls (RMB 58 for three rolls), and a large roasted chicken and vermicelli dressed with special fish sauce (RMB 63); plenty for two people. The chicken pho is fresh and piping hot with delicious broth that tastes like it has been bubbling in an authentic and romantic Vietnamese alley. It comes with a generous

portion of bean sprouts, chili, and lemon so you can flavor to your own taste.

The fresh and tasty spring rolls come with a generous portion of dipping sauce. However, the cold vermicelli with roasted chicken and fish sauce is by far and away our favorite dish. The tender and beautifully marinated chicken comes with plenty of thin slices of fried garlic, crushed peanuts, and a bunch of shredded vegetables so you can convince yourself you're eating healthily. To sum up, you should pop into Vietnamese House if you want a decent Vietnamese meal without overpaying, whether it's a solo lunch during the week, with a group of friends before a night on the town, or even on the way home as they are open until 2am. *Margaux Schreurs*

PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

WUYUE XIAOCHU

SPECIALIZING IN SHANGHAI CLASSICS

Daily 11am-10pm. 2/F, Bldg E, World City, Jinhui Lu, Chaoyang District (8590 6698)

吴越小厨：朝阳区金汇路世界城E座2层

 700m south of Dongdaqiao (Line 6)

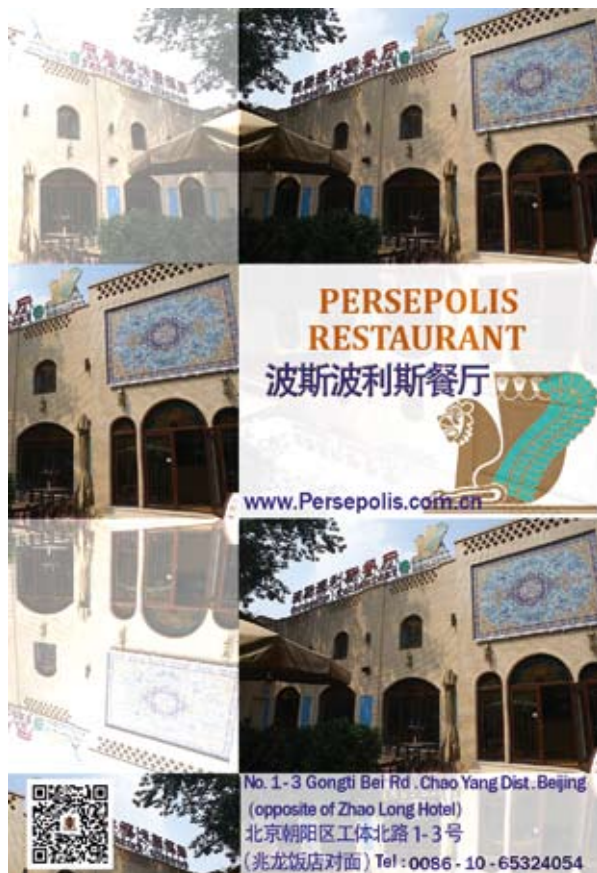
It's not always helpful to turn up to a review with a ravenous appetite, as it tends to cloud the judgment.

When we opened Wuyue Xiaochu's extensive, colorfully photographed menu (although with no English), we bubbled with excitement, calling out dishes that we wanted to order in rapid succession to the distracted waitress.

Without too much delay our anticipated dishes started arriving at the table. As the hunger pangs started to subside, however, our enthusiasm also took a dip. What began as a mouth-watering advertisement, turned into a slightly hit-and-miss representation of classic Shanghai cuisine.

For cold dishes we started with the *sixi kaofu*, a quintessentially Shanghai dish of fried wheat gluten in a sweetened sauce. This was especially good and we were quick to polish it off. On the other hand, the recommended *zilei pidan suanhu qiezi*, a dish with a fun twist that requires the customer to do their own smashing of ingredients with a pestle, was an un-enticing blend of long, stringy pieces of cold eggplant and century egg, mashed together with a dominating chunky raw garlic sauce. We will admit that perhaps our pestle and mortar skills were not up to the mark. Thankfully things improved again with the *aniangdao xiangzharou*, a tender, slow-cooked, deep red pork belly dish, with an intense richness thanks to a thick layer of fat.

Reaching the end of the meal, we looked to the specialty *shengjianbao*, Shanghai-style pan-fried buns, to balance things out. Despite their uniform puff, however, inside there was an equally uniform scarcity of meat, and the dough lacked crunch on the bottom and pillowy softness on the top. Certainly there are better *shengjianbao* to be had in town, even this far north of their spiritual home. Nevertheless, for an inexpensive lunch Wuyue Xiaochu is not a bad choice in the CBD area. *Shannon Aitken*



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50/5F JOY CITY chaoyang Mall,
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BACK FOR MORE

THE CUT

CUT FROM A DIFFERENT CLOTH

Daily 11.30am-2pm, 6-11pm. Fairmont Hotel Beijing, 8 Yong'an Dongli, Jianguomen Waidajie, Chaoyang District (8511 7777)

刀扒房：朝阳区建国门外大街永安东里8号华彬费尔蒙酒店

 450m southeast of Yonganli (Line 1)

When The Cut's former chef Andreas Block departed for Kuala Lumpur in 2014, he left pretty big shoes (and aprons and chef's whites) to fill. Block was well known around Beijing not only for his hearty food at The Cut, but also for his collaborations with other local F&B brands like Great Leap Brewing. However, young, ambitious new chef de cuisine Christoph Zoller doesn't seem to be fazed by the pressure. Fresh off a stint at Swissôtel Kunshan, Zoller is ready to bring a new take to the menu at The Cut.

Zoller originally hails from Switzerland, but he won't be adding too many Swiss dishes to the menu (with the exception of rösti potatoes). Instead, he is focusing on consolidating the existing menu while adding his own twists – a new risotto dish, a weekly changing lunch menu – here and there. A current promotion featuring China-grown white asparagus suggests a willingness to

incorporate more seasonal ingredients.

For all that, few people are visiting The Cut just for the risotto. The steak (namely, Australian wagyu beef) is still the main event. Not that the accompaniments are an afterthought. Take, for example, their signature fries. Thick-cut potatoes are first blanched, before being fried not once, but twice in a light beer-based tempura batter and sprinkled with paprika salt. With Zoller at the helm, The Cut is set to maintain its place among Beijing's favorite steakhouses. *Robynne Tindall*

Try The Cut's "Friends and Family" menu, available Monday-Wednesday. Priced at RMB 1,200 for four people, the menu features soup, salad, a surf and turf main course (1kg of oyster blade steak and eight prawns) and a dessert, all presented family-style. Trust us when we say you will not be going home hungry after this.



PHOTO: JINI

A TOUCH OF GALLIC CHARM

YANNICK EHRSAM, EXECUTIVE CHEF, CONRAD BEIJING

by Robynne Tindall

Hailing from the village of Bourbach-le-bas in Alsace, chef Yannick Ehsam joined Conrad Beijing in the beginning of 2013 after a stint at Sofitel Macau Ponte 16. Here, he tells us about his vision for the Conrad and his efforts to promote French cuisine in China.

What inspired you to first become a chef?

I've loved food since I was a child. I used to stop by the local restaurant in my village and help out during the weekends. This was my first taste of good food and the start of my passion for food.

What is your signature dish? Has it changed over time?

One of my signature dishes is my lobster ravioli with sauerkraut. I consolidated this dish after many years working in China. This dish is a mix between Chinese and French culture.

What is your vision for the Conrad Hotel's dining outlets?

We are always looking to find the best possible product and keep our guests interested, whether they are staying with us or live locally in Beijing. One of the ways we do that is by implementing special promotions. For example, we have our afternoon tea, which is put together by our pastry chef Teresa, and our Sunday roast promotion at 29 Grill, with myself and chef Florin.

How have you seen the food scene (restaurant industry) in Beijing change since you were first working at Le Pre Lenotre?

I actually think it has improved a lot. There is a much greater range of products available, including much more organic produce. We are working with Shared Harvest, an organic farm in Mafang Village in east Beijing, to hold an organic farmer's market on the last Saturday of every month.

Has there been any change in the level of appreciation of French cuisine in China since you first started working here?

I think local guests are starting to gain a better appreciation of French cuisine because we are trying to adapt the food to the tastes of Chinese customers. Many French chefs, including myself, are working hard to change the Chinese



perception of French food, which is mainly that it is expensive and always comes in small portions! In truth, authentic French food is always generous.

You are the only member of Maitres Cuisiniers de France (a global organization for the preservation and promotion of French cuisine) in China. How can you use this title to promote French cuisine in China?

It's true that I am the only member in China for now, but I hope to develop the association in China to better promote France. I have received a lot of support from the Chef de Cuisine at the French embassy, Thomas Ciret, for example through the recent Gout de France / Good France initiative organized by the French foreign ministry.

What is your aim in bringing so many guest chefs from France to visit the Conrad?

Firstly, it's nice for me to spend some quality time with my fellow chefs. Secondly, it's a great opportunity for me and my team to learn about new products and cooking methods outside of China. Finally, I want Chinese customers to experience the French culinary arts and by doing this encourage them to visit France not just for the history and the shopping, but also for the food!



Beijing's Best Caterers

LET THEM DO THE WORK FOR YOU

by Margaux Schreurs

Summer in Beijing brings with it al fresco dining and drinking, courtyards, barbecues, and parties. Want to host your own party or event? These catering companies will at least help you take care of the food aspect. Get planning!

Q Chefs

Q Chefs provide international or fusion cuisine catering with customized menus as well as a mobile bar for the full experience, perfect for big events and gatherings. They will also organize DJs, bands, and other entertainment, all you have to do is tell them how many people, what kind of setting it is, and what cuisine you'd prefer. Once you've specified the type of event you want they will propose different types of dishes.

Most events that they have catered in the past have been very large, including the Berlin-Beijing Movie Festival at Solana Mall for 300 people, or the Mexican Pavilion Event, which fed 200 people for two days. In terms of pricing, an event of over 50 people can come in at between RMB 118 and 148 per person with a buffet that includes soup, two salads, three appetizers, four mains,

three sides, and two desserts. There is also a RMB 198-248 range if you want to wow with a menu featuring more exotic ingredients.

To get in touch for a specific quote, email contact@qchefs.com or call 138 1179 9516.

Sue Zhou

Sue Zhou Does Food is run by Sue Zhou, who boasts over 15 years of experience in the hospitality and food and beverage industry in both China and Europe. Zhou takes pride in quality and wholesome food, using local and seasonal ingredients as much as possible to ensure her food isn't only fresh but also has the smallest possible carbon footprint.

Zhou can prepare many different traditional cuisines, for example, she is currently working on a traditional Dutch and Indonesian menu for the Dutch community. She also caters to special requests: a vegan canapé menu, for example, for vegan clients.

Sue Zhou Does Food doesn't only organize the edibles – she can also organize service staff, bartenders, tables, flowers, tableware and musicians at additional cost.

However, if you have no need for these additional services you can also just have the food delivered.

To get in touch with Zhou and get a quote for your event, email her at suerzhou@gmail.com.

Fat Face Dining

Founded by Taiwanese-American brothers Chef Eli and Hsu “Fatbuddha” Li, Fat Face Dining was originally set up in order to bring people together through food. They will cater anything from a gourmet plated dinner to a casual mid-afternoon soiree, promoting farmers, chefs, food lovers, and entrepreneurs in the process.

The menu is diverse – we’re talking salads of all origins, pasta, rice, meats (ribs, steak, chicken and more), vegetarian dishes, soups, seafood dishes, and desserts. Their favorites are meals based around proteins, such as oven baked barbecue ribs and pan-fried steaks: they take special pride in their flavored meats. Sounds good? They can even provide their services without electricity or running water, perfect for summer courtyard parties. Last year they catered a five-course dinner for 40 guests in a dilapidated courtyard.

In terms of pricing, Fat Face’s minimum budget is RMB 10,000, meaning they mainly cater to larger dinner parties. For around 20 guests, at RMB 500 per person, you can receive a delicious five-course meal, while events and gatherings with a wide range of canapés and a full dinner service come in at around RMB 200 per person. It all depends on what kind of event you had in mind.

To get in touch with them email fatbuddha@fatfacedining.com.

com or call 158 1080 6284.

I Crepes you NOT!

I Crepes you NOT! is a Beijing catering start-up specializing in home-cooked, Dutch-style pancakes courtesy of food aficionados Pernille Son Paulsen from Denmark and Marte van Os from the Netherlands. While Paulsen first came across pancakes while studying abroad in Rotterdam, van Os grew up with them, and their love of all things batter shows through in their pancakes.

The duo can provide these circular beauties for a range of events, including private parties, sit down dinner, cocktail parties, children’s birthday parties, or basically any other type of event you can think of. All preparation and grocery shopping is taken care of, and portable gas cookers mean that catering can be undertaken in your living room or at a pre-arranged outside location.

If the event is taking place at your home, I Crepes you NOT! will typically use your own cutlery and plates. If you would prefer not to do this, let them know and everything can be provided at an additional charge. Currently, their menu offers a range of sweet and savory pancakes in a number of delicious combinations: think apple, raisin, icing sugar, and wine reduction sprinkle, or bacon, caramelized onion, and cheese. Their service starts at RMB 750, which covers preparation time. A party for 15 people with 1-2 pancakes served per person will set you back around RMB 2,000.

For further quotes contact them at icrepesyounot@gmail.com, or on 185 1085 8845/188 1145 1870.



PHOTO: KEN

COOKIE

DO THEY RISE TO THE PLATE, OR CRUMBLE TO THE FLOOR?

Real cookies as they exist in the West are few and far between in China, but that doesn't mean that there aren't any suitable equivalents. That's the way the cookie crumbles. Or is it? In order to find out, we put six varieties of biscuits and cookies commonly found in Chinese convenience stores to the test.



Mini Hetao Cakes (RMB 8.5 for 108g)

"It has an oily, burnt glaze on top, like a crème brûlée that was beaten by a gang of fake French patisserie fiends."

"Egg is clearly the number one ingredient, there's the unmistakably rancid aftertaste of yolk from a chicken house gone wild on steroids."

"The texture elicits memories of necking sand on the beach as a kid but looking past the grit, there's a pleasant buttery nuttiness."



Sweet Chocolate Stuffed Biscuits (RMB 4.5 for 96g)

"Like messed up Nutella smeared between stale biscuits."

"This tastes like a bunch of stale hazelnuts got crushed to death, sealed forever in Chinese-made chocolate."

"In a blind taste test the smell of this biscuit reminds me of the swirling chocolate icecream McDonald's serves, but since I'm not blind and I put it in my mouth I'm almost positive the brown swirl has been siphoned out of the Beijing sewer system."



Soda Stuffed Biscuits (RMB 5.5 for 125g)

"These smell like gym socks and taste like butter that has been left out too long."

"I love it when my tongue goes all clammy and plastic-like after eating something. It's kind of like I am protecting myself for future *mala* meals."

"I just wonder whether they would actually improve if the butter was yak butter."

MONSTER

VERDICT

None of the cookies were very recommendable, but if you found yourself starving to death in a barren wasteland with only a Chinese supermarket for sustenance we recommend your least awful sugar rush will come from the Fate & Date brand Choco Cookies. We do not suggest you buy them for your date though, if that's what you had in mind, or you might have to take fate into your own hands.



Rich Milk Biscuits (RMB 4.6 for 130g)

"Literally the worst thing I have ever eaten in my life. And I had to try all those convenience store burgers!"

"I bet the cows that gave their milk for this gross disaster grew up drinking water from Houhai."

"Circle of Death took on a whole new meaning. What sorcery compelled someone to mash soap flakes into a circle and flank it with such a generic biscuit?"

Sultana Biscuits (RMB 12.50 for 200g)

"You know when it's rush hour and you're in Sanlitun and drunk and you have to go to work the next day and there are no taxis? And then, that one empty taxi slows down, sees you're foreign, and speeds off? Yeah, that's what this cookie tastes like."

"I like them, deeply. Simple and elegant."

"I actually want a second one of these. Maybe it's just because the others are so terrible."

Choco Cookies (RMB 9.5 for 100g)

"It smells like a wood cabin, complete with the saliva sucking texture of fresh sawdust."

"It's like the cousin of chocolate who comes to family parties drunk, the relative you hate the ever living hell out of yet still see showing up in pantries."

"If offered this cookie I'd hesitate with a maybe, like the same maybe you whisper to yourself when someone asks if you want to stay for just one more drink after happy hour."

Baijiu Bloopers

PACIFIC COFFEE'S BOOZY ABOMINATIONS

by Kipp Whittaker

Baijiu drinks have been hanging out on Hong Kong-based chain Pacific Coffee's menu for over a year, but no one seemed to notice. We like Pacific Coffee's stores' homey feel, although the products they serve in Beijing are far inferior to the quality offered in Hong Kong. As a possible daytime drinking alternative, and just to find out why these items exist, we purchased all three of their alcohol-laden beverages and brought them back to *the Beijinger* Flavor Lab for proper sampling.

The formula is a classic: a bit of booze discreetly poured into an otherwise innocent looking cup of coffee. "What do you say we make these coffees 'Irish'?" Fun Bobby said in that episode of *Friends*. We guess the service being rendered by these questionable products is to start the party early for the salaried alcoholic in search of a clandestine cubicle buzz. Baijiu on its own usually smells too strong, more so than, say, a small bottle of whiskey in your desk. Nonetheless here is the latest and greatest attempt at repackaging baijiu into a consumable product, and the, um, results.



Huadiao Mocha (RMB 48)

Not a true *baijiu*, this one is made with *huadiaojiu*, a popular glutinous rice and wheat wine made for cooking. From the get go, chocolate flavor mixed with wine is a tricky concoction that more often triggers a gag reflex opposed to the nectarous warmth of a proper Merlot. You would have to be a complete nincompoop to think this union is at all worth the trouble. Ultimately it should be avoided as it tastes like a moldy fermented gym sock soaking at the bottom of a decent cup of coffee. If you wish serious ill towards your employer or frenemy, fix them up with this disgraceful beverage charade.



Erguotou Pink Grapefruit Chillino (RMB 48)

Definitely the most potable of the unholy trinity, but it still failed to convince us that these drinks should remain on this or any other plane of existence. Here you'll find the same concept as the Zesty Chillino, but the grapefruit syrup and juice used in the slush did a far better job of concealing the presence of that abusive *baijiu* bouquet with just enough of that bittersweet citrus taste extinguishes some, but not all, of the unpleasantness. We can't help but wish tequila was used in place of Erguotou though both have a peculiar ability to tear your consciousness to shreds with hyena-like ferocity.



Erguotou Zesty Chillino (RMB 48)

While Chillino sounds like Italian slang for a cool little kid, this doesn't reflect the disgust we felt for this unstable concoction. This flavor definitely falls into the category of an acquired taste. "Zesty" is certainly not an adjective we'd use to describe it. It ultimately tastes like lemon flavored cleaning spray, very harsh in an acidic way. We learned that *baijiu* burns and brain freezes don't necessarily cancel each other out but rather create a feeling of twice as much unpleasantness.



Two brave volunteers agreed to finish the Chillinos to see if they did indeed create any type of buzz or impairment. Although sobriety is in the hand of the beholder, for RMB 48, we would have expected to be well on our way to becoming tired and emotional, but alas, we were stone cold.



CHILL CAFÉ BAR

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Daily 9am-2am. 2 Andingmen Xidajie, Dongcheng District (6405 9575)

东城区安定门西大街2号

 150m southwest of Andingmen (Line 2)

If, like us, you have started craving Sunday afternoons at Drum and Bell Bar, which was demolished late last summer, fear not. The venue's staff, drinks, and happy hour have moved over to another delightful location, complete with courtyard for alfresco drinking. Not quite a rooftop, we know, but unfortunately the hutong demolition gods have no mercy.

Chill Bar has three areas: an inside living room-esque space where comfortable seating with a large table makes for great daytime working. The middle area is a courtyard, perfect for blue-sky days and warm summer nights. The third area is a cozy room with plenty of sofas and comfy seating - great for when summer starts bringing those sudden rains and for a little bit of air-conditioned relief.

But that is not all, because the drinks at Chill are extremely good value. Vedett on tap goes for RMB 30 per pint, and bottled beer and cocktails range from RMB 20 to RMB 45. Of course, there is also wine for those who like to have fermented grape salad for dinner.

One of the crucial successes of Drum and Bell Bar was the Sunday happy hour, which has also made the move and continues to ruin Monday mornings, with an RMB 50 open bar on bottled Tiger and Tsingtao, and mixed drinks from 3-5pm. There really is no better way to end a beautiful Beijing weekend than with an indulgent happy hour coupled with one of their pizzas (RMB 70-80).

Margaux Schreurs

SNAKE LIVEHOUSE

SLITHER IN FOR PUNK

Mon-Thu 10am-10pm, Fri-Sun 10am-late. 7/F, Yashow Market, 58 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (040 0922 2991)

朝阳区工体北路58号雅秀服装市场7层

 500m west of Tuanjieshu (Line 10)

Until recently we thought that Yashow Clothing Market was completely shut down. This isn't quite the case. Nestled on the seventh floor of this temple of commerce is Snake Livehouse, a recent rock-oriented addition to the mass of alternative music performance spaces continuing to open around the city. Existing as a joined venture with CYT Tattoo Parlor, this venue is pretty unique.

We couldn't help but love the name, which brings to mind images of Snake Plissken from *Escape From New York*. We wouldn't be surprised if the proprietor had a huge cobra inked on his chest or an eye patch from getting an ocular nerve severed by a flying kick.

The aesthetic of the place is a mix of Tiki bar flair and lots of vintage photographs of people inked up from around the world because it is, after all, first and foremost a tattoo parlor. The dance floor has a slick terrazzo sheen

that would be pretty fun once doused in beer, which we were witness to at the recent Punk It Spring, the first event we attended at Snake Livehouse.

The music showcased here ranges from punk, to rap, to hardcore, and onwards to new metal. We overheard that there's a heavy fee for booking shows at this space, which may not be ideal for promoters, especially those of a DIY ilk, but the drinks and shots were pretty darn cheap (RMB 20).

To experience the madness of Snake Livehouse and maybe get inked while listening to some ferocious licks, enter through the west side of Yashow and take the elevator to the sixth floor, then continue up one flight of stairs and you'll be right in the middle of it. Once Yashow reopens there will probably be a far less confusing way to enter, but for now it's a little tucked away and we like it like that. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER



FRY THE BAI

NOVEL USES FOR CHINA'S STRONGEST SPIRIT

by Jim Boyce

Windy City Ballroom Chef Dustin Merrett recently took some liquor from Kweichou Moutai and deep-fried the *baijiuzes* out of it. Moutai, the most famous *baijiu* brand, is symbolic of a booze many people love to hate. The intense and unfamiliar aroma, the alcohol content of close to 60 percent and the tradition of repeatedly gulping it bottoms up – *ganbei!* – tend to facilitate negative associations from the first shot.

But what if you eat the stuff?

Merrett went to work with some *baijiu* in the kitchen and discovered his customers – a mix of mostly Chinese citizens and a small number of foreigners – enjoyed it deep-fried.

"They were looking at it like little kids, they all thought it was really neat," he says.

It was part of a series of taste tests with China's national spirit ahead of World Baijiu Day on August 8 and inspired by other experimenters who have deep-fried tequila, Bourbon, and any number of alcohols. It also led to a second session at the Jing A Taproom with a trio of

baijius.

The recipe is simple. Take an angel's food cake, cut it into one-inch cubes and soak the cubes with booze. Then carefully slip them into a deep fryer and cook until the sides are golden brown and crisp. Merrett says that in lieu of a dedicated fryer, you can use a deep pot and fill it one third full of sunflower oil, as olive or soybean oil can impart off flavors.

"Wait for the bubbles to lessen, then test one of the cubes and see if it's crunchy on the outside," he says. "You want to be careful not to burn off all of the alcohol."

Remove, garnish and eat. Merrett sprinkled his with icing sugar and added whipped cream and blueberries. The topping options are nearly limitless, with everything from candied hawthorn and dried fruits to honey and jams offering potential.

In our taste tests at Jing A, a sorghum-based 52-percent-alcohol "strong aroma" *baijiu* by Xiaohutuxian in Guizhou placed first. Deep frying tamed the sharp alcohol edge while accentuating the savory and fruity elements and made for a pleasant snack. The contrast

between the crisp exterior and moist interior of the *baijiu* cakes made it even better. You do lose some alcohol during the cooking process but the red faces at the tasting shows some spirit remains.

That particular *baijiu* is not cheap and is one aficionados might enjoy sans frying. The cheapest option we tried, a “light aroma” Niu Lan Shan Erguotou that costs a mere RMB 11 per bottle and weighs in at 42 percent alcohol, offered hope for those seeking value. While it did retain some intense *baijiu* features, it showed enough potential to warrant further testing. (In the imported booze category, the deep-fried Bourbon was especially well-received.)

Merrett finished by saying that he’ll add deep-fried *baijiu* to the summer menu at Windy City Ballroom and it’s safe to assume there will be more experiments to come, including with different brands, proofs, garnishes and batters.

And he isn’t the only one utilizing *baijiu* beyond its usual role as a drink served neat. The team at Jing A is planning to make its second beer using *qu*, the agent that *baijiu* makers use to turn grain into booze.

“Last year, we did it total home-brew style, basically fermenting in a 15-liter carboy,” says co-owner Kristian Li. “It turned out very similar to a Belgian-style *saïsson*.”

Li says this time around he hopes to draw out more of the traditional *baijiu* flavor.

“There’s a *baijiu* tang and it’d be cool if that came through,” he says. “It’s probably going to be a blond beer, a light beer, with a milder *baijiu* aroma.”

Meanwhile, next door at sushi restaurant Okra 1949, Max Levy is using *baijiu* for the Guizhou-style sausages he sells via deli operation Traitor Zhou’s.

The fat is cured in *baijiu* before being cut up and used in the sausages, says Diana Dang, general manager of Okra 1949. “The high proof and natural sugars help season the fat.”

All of these products suggest *baijiu* has more versatility than many people expect. That is not to say there is anything wrong with using the beverage to toast one’s friends around the dinner table. Rather, it might also be fun to share everything from a plate of deep-fried *baijiu* cakes to a refreshing ale fermented with the same starter that gives the country’s national spirit so much kick.

World Baijiu Day aims to get people together on August 8 to taste the planet’s most-consumed spirit, including flights featuring different styles of baijiu, and baijiu-inspired cocktails, foods, infusions, and even beer. More details at worldbaijiuday.com.



WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS



SOI BAOCHAO

GET WRECKED AT THIS THAI THEMED BAR

Daily 7pm-3am. 10 Baochao Hutong, Dongcheng District (6401 1066)

东城区宝钞胡同10号

🚶 400m southeast of Gulou (Line 2, Line 8)

Soi Baochao is a Thai-themed beach bar at the northern-most end of Baochao Hutong. Just to put things in perspective, it's about three or four minutes by foot north of Modernista. Although a work in progress, it's a comfortable place, with plenty of secret zones for lascivious activity and cheap drinks that will quickly put you on island time.

They've got all of the special potions to bring you back to those debauched mouthful-of-sand hangovers that are inevitable on a Southeast Asian beach adventure. You can find all your standard selections of beers (RMB 15-40), beach themed cocktails (RMB 45), and mixed drinks (RMB 20), which can be super-sized to bucket (RMB 80). We tried a couple of their more popular shots, and the grasshopper (RMB 15) was by far the favorite because it tasted deliciously like minty melted ice cream.

It's all the seedy parts of visiting a Thai beach town but

in a funny and relaxing environment. It's a place that's specifically designed for a wild night composed of losing total control of your motor skills. Every Friday make sure to check out Make Out Club, where they attempt to teleport you to that delightfully simple time when punk, new wave, and disco ruled the radio waves and unchecked hedonism corrupted the dance floor.

There's some gaming to be done if you're one of those annoying competitive drunks, with both foosball and pool tables. If you want a little privacy from those types, go upstairs where you will find a cozy loft area with couches and more tapestries. You shouldn't come here expecting a craft tiki drink because it's far from being a Trader Vic's, but if it's unpretentious island-style raging that you crave at a bar that's laying down some serious tropical panache then Soi Baochao definitely has it. *Kipp Whittaker*

PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER



...ice 冰

Beijing diners looked down at their drinks in disgust a few years ago after it was revealed that nearly 80 percent of packaged ice was produced by unlicensed factories, sourcing the water for their ice from lord knows where. Just a few months later, government media battered international food chains including KFC after a test found that its ice cubes contained 13 times more bacteria than toilet water. So remember: Only take ice in your drinks at trusted establishments. It's not all doom and gloom, however. Visit Beijing's former Royal Icehouse (now a renovated restaurant serving imperial cuisine) on Gongjian Hutong near Beihai and Jingshan Park, for a taste of how the Qing Dynasty emperors kept cool during the long, hot summers.

... Indian-Chinese cuisine 印式中餐

Thought to have been introduced to India by the small Chinese community that developed in Kolkata in the late 18th century, Indian-Chinese dishes combine Indian spices with Chinese dishes and cooking methods. Although the results bear little resemblance to what we would know as Chinese food they are incredibly popular all over India, particularly in the south and east. Popular dishes include gobi Manchurian, fried cauliflower in a sauce of chili, onion, garlic, and soy sauce, and fried noodles, often made with Maggi instant noodles.

...instant noodles 方便面

Is any smell more evocative of train travel (or just travel in general) in China than that of instant noodles? The convenience, cost, and myriad flavors of instant noodles make them an essential part of daily life for many people in China. Although statistics indicate that the Chinese consume more than 40 billion packets of instant noodles every year, sales have been declining in recent years, due to the rising view of instant noodles as junk food (a viral post last year suggested that instant noodles take days to digest). Local brands like Master Kong are feeling the pinch, and are also facing increased competition from popular Korean brands like Shim Ramyun, which produce spicy, kimchi-inspired flavors.

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PAUL ROCHON

GENERAL MANAGER, PADDY O'SHEA'S

This may be one of our best questions ever: what is a French psychobiologist doing running an Irish pub in Beijing?

Well, I've been here in Beijing for seven years now. I study sleep, and I figured that by coming to China, there are a lot of people sleeping, and probably a lot of people with sleep problems.

I've always loved sports, it's in my background: I played rugby professionally in France from when I was 17 to 20, and so I started coming to Paddy O'Shea's to watch rugby. Then Karl [Long, former Paddy's manager and part-owner] was looking for some help, so I started working here. I didn't realize at the time that two months later, he'd be handing me the keys.

If you're having a drink rather than serving one, what are you drinking?

For me it's a cocktail (*laughs*). I worked in some of the best cocktail bars in Paris, so that's my background and that's what I like. But Paddy's is a beer bar. (*Picks up his glass*) This

is a Coronajito – a sort of mojito that also uses Corona. I'd like to do more with beer cocktails here, so we're trying some out. It would be nice to serve more cocktails, but it doesn't make sense for me to have a full-time cocktail bartender when we'd only serve about five per night.

What are you trying to do at Paddy's that's different from before?

Hopefully nothing! (*Laughs again*). If anything, I'm trying to do more with what Paddy's is famous for, especially sports. We now sponsor or are the home bar for 18 different sports teams in Beijing. That includes our rugby team, the Beijing Aardvarks, the Beijing Celtic Football Club, the Beijing Oilers hockey team, and a lot of others, including darts. We even have a cheerleading squad – although that may need more work.

And those are just the sports that are being played. As for what we show, there's of course rugby (union and league), football (soccer) from all of the big European leagues, Australian rules football (AFL), Gaelic football, hurling, cricket, Formula One, tennis, cycling, and now we can also show all of the American sports, including the NFL, baseball, basketball, and NHL hockey.

On the drink side, like I said, Paddy's is a beer bar. But now we have 16 different kinds of cider, including a craft cider that's made locally, it's pretty good. I also worked on the wine list – c'mon, I'm from Bordeaux.

There will also be a new food menu, it's being printed right now. People will still be able to order Ganges from upstairs, but there are things we want to have and get right, like a burger and a pizza.

We have some different events now, including Paddy O'Ladies, our Ladies Night on the first Friday of every month. There's also Paddy O'Friend, so that people who love sports can meet each other and find out how to join a team or a league if they're interested. The next one is coming up soon.

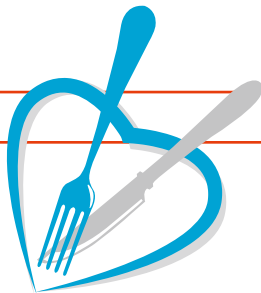
Other things will stay just the way they are. There will still be live music. We're an Irish bar and we'll have Irish music. And quiz night will continue, people like it.

Catch Paddy O'Friend at Paddy O'Shea's on June 19. See paddyosheasbeijing.com for information.



PHOTO: KEN

Every month, we like to shine a spotlight on the most delicious dishes we've stumbled upon recently. Chow down!



breakfast burger

Ramo, RMB 58

Up and coming Ramo in Fangjia Hutong has some mean new brunch items on their menu. Take the breakfast burger for example: A bun stuffed with a meat patty topped off with beautifully melted cheddar cheese, crispy bacon, avocado slices, a fried egg, some lettuce, tomato, and onion served alongside baked potatoes.

triple whole grain salad

Element Fresh, RMB 68

Made with quinoa, bulgur wheat, Chinese adlay millet, and grilled tofu with pesto, this vegetarian dish will win over even the committed carnivore. The delicious mix and satisfying crunch is part of Element Fresh's spring and summer menu, which also features five new dishes developed in cooperation with the restaurant chain's new partner, former tennis champion Li Na.

mixed paella

Q Mex, RMB 198

Part of Q Mex's new menu, this paella has a real kick. It mixes both the seafood and the chicken & sausage version, and is filled with goodies: Tender chicken thigh, huge mussels, mouth-watering spicy prawns, sausage, and chicken wings.

yunnan fried goat's cheese

Dali Renjia, RMB 29

Every once in a while you'll crave that cheese, and forget that Yunnan restaurants can generally satisfy that craving. Especially the fried goat's cheese at Dali Renjia, seasoned with salt, chili flakes, and other delicious spices originating in that Southwestern corner of China everyone loves so much.

tribe xiao mian

Tribe, RMB 62

Tribe's healthier take on this traditional Chongqing noodle dish swaps out pork for vegan ground sausage, cuts down on the oil and includes gluten-free buckwheat noodles. Spice fiends will find it's just as hot as the original though.

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Things to do, places to be, stuff to try

GO

POP-UP BEIJING // SANLIPOP // STARFISH PROJECT // TAIPEI



FEIGE VINTAGE FAIR

MAY 1-3 – Join Feige on Labor Day weekend, as they fill up Wukesong Basketball Park with live music, games, and over 200 vendors of vintage threads for the city's largest market of vintage clothing and accessories. An essential event to get your wardrobe ready for those sizzling summer months. RMB 50. 1-9pm. Wukesong Basketball Park (137 1753 7531)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZERS

WHAT'S NEW VENUES & SHOPS



POP-UP BEIJING

DESIGNING WITH DILIGENCE

Daily 11am-9pm. Office 22, Courtyard 4, Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (6502 5725)

朝阳区工体北路4号院22号楼北侧首层

400m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

While many of us never venture beyond the discomforts of Ikea, Beijing is loaded with options that provide over-the-top decor at *tuhao* prices. Thankfully, Pop-Up Beijing is much more to the taste of the well-off expatriate community. The store provides a unique bilingual service, helping people candy coat their nest in the most thorough fashion.

The store is loaded with chic goods that range from refurbished antiques to expertly crafted items. Their collection of restored Belgian chandeliers is remarkable (RMB 8,765-11,550), their warm glow much more comforting than most headache-inducing fluorescent abominations. We were especially enamored by a beautiful antique hand-cranked coffee grinder (RMB 2,245), because sometimes the old ways are still the best ways.

As well as being collectors of top notch decor, the proprietors of Pop-Up Beijing can also help to refurbish your antique market finds. While their services aren't cheap, they are all performed on site and you can expect the best restoration or the tweaking of your found treasures so as to better fit your home's design.

They will also open a small concept bar for drinking in the atmosphere they've created. Grab a glass of wine and peruse their inventory of relics or imagine just how therapeutic it would be to smash everything to bits. Actually, don't do that. *Kipp Whittaker*



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SANLIPOP

POP GOES YOUR WARDROBE

WHAT'S NEW VENUES & SHOPS

Daily 10.30am-10pm. 1-103, 29 Sanlitun Beilu,
Chaoyang District (8405 9225)
朝阳区三里屯北路29号1-103底商

🚶 600m northwest of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

This store is a perfect alternative to the more glossy design shops in Sanlitun. Situated just north of Taikoo Li, Sanlipop was founded by a group of university friends who lived together in London. Following their return to Beijing, they decided to open up a retail space, promoting a range of goods from little-known designers.

They are a part of a new wave of multi-brand stores, focused on providing upscale shoppers access to threads and decor from the world's most eccentric designers. The styles here are minimal, vibrant, and absurd with dandy swag from brands like Maison Kitsuné and Parra. Our favorite item was the sleek but pricey VK-1 headphones from Aëdle (RMB 3,980). We were drooling when we saw those fashionable cans that likely look better than they sound. They also have delicious hamburger and vintage camera-themed iPad cases from Spanish brand Woouf (RMB 400) if you require some attention-grabbing protection for your precious tablet.

The group behind Sanlipop recruited whimsical architectural practice Ninkipen! from Osaka to create their sleek showroom. The space features polished concrete and white walls accented with neon lights and knitted pipe covers. Although a bit sterile, it's comfortable and colorful enough for customers to peruse the eclectic inventory without feeling like you are in a stifling gallery of elitist garbage.

Sanlipop is the kind of place you go if you have some money to burn and you would like to embody the form of a creative freak, but need a keen eye to guide you. Even if much of what they offer is beyond the ideal price range for many, it's still worth checking out to inspire your own fashion decisions. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER





STARFISH PROJECT

HOMEGROWN BEIJING CHARITY GETS READY TO
RAISE BIG MONEY

by Steven Schwankert



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STARFISH PROJECT



This Easter holiday marks Beijing-based Starfish Project's ninth year of helping women rise above sexually exploitive circumstances and giving them the tools and opportunities to work.

Today, Starfish Project is globally respected and has helped more than 100 women out of sexually exploitive situations by giving them alternative employment making original jewelry and helping to run the Project's business operations. The Project's jewelry is sold in more than 60 boutiques and throughout a network of Advocates in North America. The Starfish women now receive work and holistic care services in three different cities in Asia.

After successfully developing a business model and holistic care program, Starfish Project is now expanding into other cities in order to help even more women. To take the organization to the next level, Starfish Project launched a global crowdfunding campaign on crowdrise.com on April 21, with the goal of raising USD 150,000. The funds will be used to accelerate production and expand its services and operational capabilities.

"The more money we raise, the more jewelry we can sell into larger chains. That lets us save more women, which is always our goal," said Jenny McGee, founder and CEO of Starfish Project. "The CrowdRise campaign is a first for us and we're excited to see the response from our community and all those who care about giving sex-trafficked women a chance to break out of the cycle of abuse and start a new life."

Contribute to the campaign at www.crowdrise.com/starfishprojectinc. Shop Starfish Project items at <http://www.starfish-project.com>.

TAPPING INTO TAIPEI

TAIWAN'S MAIN CITY IS AN EASY WEEKEND GETAWAY

by Steven Schwankert

After getting a major tourism boost from Luc Besson's film *Lucy* in 2014, Taipei has been receiving even more attention from travelers. It's the best of a few worlds: it's not as expensive as Hong Kong, not as far as Japan, and doesn't have the language barrier (for Mandarin speakers at least) of Seoul.

Taipei isn't a particularly pretty city, but it is a pleasant one. There's plenty to see and lots to eat. For the weekend traveler who has been to Shanghai too many times, Taipei presents a nice alternative.

Environment: Taipei is like much of coastal southern China, hot and occasionally rainy in the spring and summer, with a drier autumn, and a chilly winter. Spring and summer aren't bad times to go if you don't mind hot weather, but bring an umbrella. The occasional earthquake shakes Taiwan – this author felt two of them during his visit.

Visas: Permits for travel to Taiwan vary quite widely. Americans, Canadians, and many European passport holders enjoy visa-free arrivals. Hong Kong passport

holders and some citizens of Southeast Asian nations may apply for a visa on arrival. People's Republic of China passport holders' eligibility depends on location of *hukou* and other factors.

What to see:

National Palace Museum: Think of it this way: if you want to see the architecture, the hardware, if you will, of the Ming and Qing Dynasty, then go to the Forbidden City. If you want to see the software, the dining vessels, the artwork, the treasures that dazzled and amused the emperors, then the National Palace Museum is the place to go. Located in the hills east of Taipei, visiting this museum should take at least a half-day. Open daily 8.30am-6.30pm. English guided tours are available.

Taipei 101: It's hard to miss Taipei 101, the centerpiece of a central Taipei revitalization that took place about a decade ago. For six years, it was the world's tallest building – it's still pretty tall. Depending on the weather, it either makes a perfect observation tower for northern Taiwan, or its spire (and some of its upper floors) gets lost in the clouds. The 91st floor features an observation deck, with restaurants that offer spectacular views on the 85th floor. To get to the 101st floor, you'll have to be a high roller or Hollywood star, otherwise access to the private Summit 101 Club will most likely be off-limits. Observation decks open daily 9am-10pm, weather permitting.

Where to stay: Stay at the W Hotel Taipei. The shopping in Taipei is not good as Hong Kong, so spend the money you saved on accommodation. About a 10-minute walk from Taipei 101, imagine your coolest friend just tossed you the keys to his/her flat in Taipei – that's what the W feels like. It ain't cheap – about RMB 1,700 per night – but it's so cool you won't need to go out.

What to eat: Dumpling lovers can trot over to the original Din Tai Fung and see how it compares to Beijing outlets. However, as is often the case, some of the best eating is to be done at night markets. It may not be the best, but Raohe Night Market offers the easiest access for visitors. Stick with the rules of night market eating – order what's being cooked in front of you to ensure freshness.



Introducing the people who matter

MEET

CHRIS HAWKE // BRADFORD PHILEN // JOHN SHEN, LGBT CENTER // SHAKESPEARE



OWL CITY

MAY 14 – Adam Young returns to what will probably be another sold-out crowd at the MasterCard Center's Huiyuan Space. With his ever-expanding creative domain as a singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist, Owl City will lure you into a blissful utopia of sunny harmonies, lush electronics, and lithe melodies. RMB 380/480/680. 8-10pm. MasterCard Center's Huiyuan Space (400 610 3721)

CHRIS HAWKE

BANJO, BASS GUITAR, AND LEAD VOCALS,
THE HUTONG YELLOW WEASELS

What is your favorite period or year for music?

I'm partial to the 60s, 70s and 80s. Folk music started being taken seriously, black musicians were coming into the public eye and their music was being taken seriously. The rhythmic drive of black music was mixing with the melodies of white hillbilly music with exciting results. And all the classic banjo books were published.

What song has the most plays on your iTunes?

"Jump Jim Crow." Eminem and Elvis were hardly the first people to get rich by adopting the sound, style and even pose of African-American musicians. In 1828, T.D. Daddy Rice went all the way, painting his face black and donning the supposed clothes and mannerisms of plantation slaves. He had a massive hit with "Jump Jim Crow," which was hummed and danced to throughout the Americas and Europe for over several decades, becoming something of the "Jailhouse Rock" of the era.

Many of the songs Americans now recognize from the 19th century are minstrel songs, although this origin is often obscured due to some of the very ugly historical associations. The Jim Crow laws were named after this song, rather than the other way around. I made this recording myself of Bob Smakula playing on a beautiful banjo from the 1880s, strung with gut strings.

If you could sing like one person, whom would you choose?

I'd sing like Randy Abel, who can capture a room with his range of expression and emotional power. But instead of tapping my inner pain and sorrow, I'd take a tip from Stevie Wonder and channel my inner joy and gratitude. So I guess the answer is I'd sing like Randy Abel having an ecstatic experience at a Croatian electronic dance music festival.



Name a song or record for your time in Beijing.

"We've reached the limit," which refers both to going off the 500 point pollution scale as well as the end of a relationship. Beijing and I broke up, although we've recently started seeing each other again. We aren't right for each other, but the sex is still good.

If you could play any instrument, what would it be and why?

I'd play the fiddle. If you don't know what a fiddle is, it's a violin that never went to college.

Which singer would you bring back from the dead?

Pete Seeger. He believed music could help change the world for the better — then proved this was true. He played a big role in popularizing "We Shall Overcome" as an anthem for the US civil rights movement.

What is your favorite song to wake up to?

Bird songs. That's what I hear most days when I get up in my old wooden courtyard home on the foot of the mountains outside Dali, Yunnan. It's exciting coming down to Beijing to visit, and I sure meet a lot of people. But it seems like around here I wake up to those annoying little jingles on someone's iPhone, which sucks.

Get the Hutong Yellow Weasels' two albums from iTunes.

CHRIS HAWKE'S FIVE-SONG PLAYLIST



Banjoreno by the Dixie-land Jug Blowers



Lonely to Lonesome by Randy Abel



Ducks on a pond by Ken Perlman



Cushion Foot Stomp by Clarence William Wash-board Band



Trallalero Parts by Trallalero of Genoa (collected by Alan Lomax)

BRADFORD PHILEN

AUTHOR

The books on my shelf that have the most sentimental value are anything by my favorite authors, especially anything by James Baldwin is my precious. I like to hoard their works, kind of like how a kid might obsess over comic books or baseball card collecting (yeah, that was me, too). There's a lot of sentimental value on my bookshelf. I also have my mom's copy of *Hamlet* from when she studied it in college. That's a keeper.

The book I pretend to have read, but haven't really is *War and Peace*. Don't tell my colleagues [at International School of Beijing]. I'm a little scared of Tolstoy.

What I read while in the bathroom is all about basketball, especially Bill Simmons' *The Book of Basketball*. It's a friggin' encyclopedia about the NBA, but I do have beef with Simmons: he's totally biased towards his Boston Celtics. I'm a Lakers fan.

What I read on the subway is *The New Yorker* magazine. It's clever, poignant, and just important reading. It's fun too. I really dig the "Shouts and Murmurs" section.

The book I'm saving for old age is *War and Peace*. If I'm not ready in my old age, I'll never be ready.

The books that changed my life are James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* and Richard Wright's *The Outsider*, they have to be at the top of the list. There have been many, but I think these two works finally forced (and allowed) me, in a genuine and heartfelt way, to fathom perspectives and life experiences outside of my own.

The character in a book you've had a crush on is Sweet from Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, because, damn, she's fine... Milkman finally discovered how to love. I have a definite crush on Sweet, as should every reader.

The last book I read was, on a recent trip to Rome Anthony Doerr's *Four Seasons in Rome: a memoir*. Fantastic read for writers and/or travelers. If you're not up on Doerr, check out his short story collection *The Shell Collector*.

The last book I bought was *Native Speaker*. At this year's Bookworm Festival I met and briefly spoke with Chang-Rae Lee. He's not only inspiring to listen to talk about the craft of writing, he's also a totally kind and humble soul. I got *Native Speaker* ready to go on my Kindle.

The book I wish I'd written is *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy. My homeboy got me into the Border Trilogy. McCarthy's style isn't for everyone, but I just fall into it. Beautiful prose.

The book with the best ending is *The Old Man and the*

Sea. That's an easy one. I have a soft spot for Santiago and his dreams of lions on an African beach.

The book with the best beginning is, I hate to be cliché, but "Call me Ishmael." It's perfect, really. I went through a serious (and exhausting) Philip Roth stage. *The Swede*, as an intro to *American Pastoral* is up there as one of the most memorable beginnings.

The book I wish you hadn't read is *Taipei* by Tao Lin. It got great reviews, and I really, really wanted to like this book. It's just way too hipster for me. It's a book that, sadly, I could not finish. Do not recommend.

The book that surprised me most is a toss-up between Teju Cole's *Open City* and Chris Cleave's *Little Bee*. Having read a lot of Cole's essays, I think I was expecting a different pace. I read Cleave's work in one sitting. Both experiences were happy surprises for sure.

The fictional world I would most like to be part of throw me into *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor, but just for, like, an hour or two. Or, Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* would be pretty cool.

Bradford Philen's two books, Autumn Falls and Everything Is Insha'Allah are available from The Bookworm and Amazon.com.



BEIJING LGBT CENTER

PROGRAM OFFICER JOHN SHEN DISCUSSES THE STRUGGLES AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTER

The Beijing LGBT Center has been active in Beijing since 2008. They hosted the annual Gaymazing Race on April 25, and hold a range of activities in order to raise funds and awareness throughout the year. Margaux Schreurs talked to John Shen, program officer at the Beijing LGBT Center, about the role the center takes on in Beijing, upcoming events, and the struggle of operating in Beijing.

How did the LGBT Center start out?

We were founded in 2008 on Valentine's Day as the Beijing LGBT Activity Center. At that time there was no offline activity space for Beijing's LGBT community and it was not until 2010 that we thought we had to do more, so we changed our name to the Beijing LGBT Center.

What struggles do you face operating in Beijing?

We face a lot of struggles (*laughs*). There is pressure from the government, as well as funding pressures. Our events get cancelled a lot. [In 2014] we were holding our annual report celebration, but the police saw the event on Weibo and contacted the venue. They then told the venue not to host the event, so technically it wasn't cancelled but we were denied access by the venue. Secondly, we have funding troubles: many Chinese foundations want to provide funding for HIV or education, but not for LGBT.

What projects are you working on right now?

We have a lot of projects going on right now. We have set up an LGBT-focused mental health counselor training scheme, and are even hoping to have members from Pink Therapy, a specialized London-based LGBT mental health organization, visit to share their experience.

Last year we researched Chinese people's experience with conversion therapy. This year we are looking at the attitudes of psychological counselors towards the LGBT community, as well as Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) discrimination for which we are working with the UNDP and Peking University.

What events are coming up?

Summer is looking busy! At the Center, we hold English and Chinese corners on Thursday night, Saturday night is movie night, and on Sundays we hold a games night. Soon we are planning to run the LGBT Voice of Beijing (*laughs*). We already held it last year but it was only in Chinese, this year's will be bilingual and we are hoping for lots of participation from the English-speaking community. Then we are also planning on holding the LGBT Olympic Games in Beijing. We are continuing our monthly speed-dating event, and are hoping to celebrate Beijing Pride.

We are still considering whether it will be allowed or not. This year is very sensitive, five women want to hand out some stickers on the street and they get caught. So I don't know, we need to consider the risks.

What else would you like Beijing to know?

We do have a lot of interesting events for our foreign friends, and also would love to have more international volunteers at the center. If you have ideas for events but don't have the resources, get in touch!

The Beijing LGBT Center is located in Room 2606, Bldg B, Xintiandi Plaza, 1 Xibahe Nanlu Jia, Chaoyang District and can be contacted on 5903 3730 / 150 0114 5911. For more information visit their website www.bjlgbtcenter.com.cn.





SANLITUN SHAKEDOWN

BEIJING PLAYHOUSE DOES THE ENTIRE BARD IN ONE GO

by Steven Schwankert

If while you were reading Shakespeare in high school you thought, “This would work better as a cooking show,” you’re in luck. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* just may be the play for you.

Coming to the British School of Beijing (Shunyi) from May 8-21, the capital’s answer to Broadway, Beijing Playhouse, tackles all 37 of William Shakespeare’s works. “One work of Shakespeare is brilliant; all 37 at once is 37 times as good,” according to Kobus Van Der Colff, one of production’s four cast members.

This isn’t your average community theater. “With only four actors in the show, they all had to be really good,” said Beijing Playhouse Director Chris Verrill. Normally, “We can take someone very green, put them in a small part, and make them good,” Verrill said, but for this show, the actors needed prior experience, with all four having done Shakespeare before at some point.

One of the longest running plays on London’s West End, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* is a comedy about a Shakespeare production. “We all play versions of ourselves,” Van Der Colff said. The characters are not gender-specific to the actor, said Nicole Payne, who plays, among others, a nurse, a king, and Laertes. Men play both Romeo and Juliet in this particular case. The complicated bit is not the parts, but that “every character

change requires a costume change,” Verrill said.

The bits of the play that are actually from Shakespeare are played as straight as possible, so when it gets messed up, it’s funny, the cast said.

To demonstrate how unseriously the play takes itself, *Hamlet*’s famous “To Be Or Not to Be” speech is performed first at normal speed, then at twice normal speed, then four times faster, and then finally, backwards. Be to not or be to?

All four of the cast and their director lamented what a bad rap Shakespeare has. “A lot of people are turned off because their first experience with it was in an English class,” Verrill said. Payne was fortunate enough to first encounter the Bard by acting in one of his plays. “If I had read it first, I don’t know if I would have enjoyed it as much,” she said.

For the budding performer, Beijing Playhouse’s next play will be Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* in December. Despite the difficulties of producing English-language theater in Beijing, Verrill said that after nine years, the Playhouse is still “pushing forward.”

“The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)” will be performed at the British School of Beijing in Shunyi from May 8-21. For tickets and information, visit www.beijingplayhouse.com.

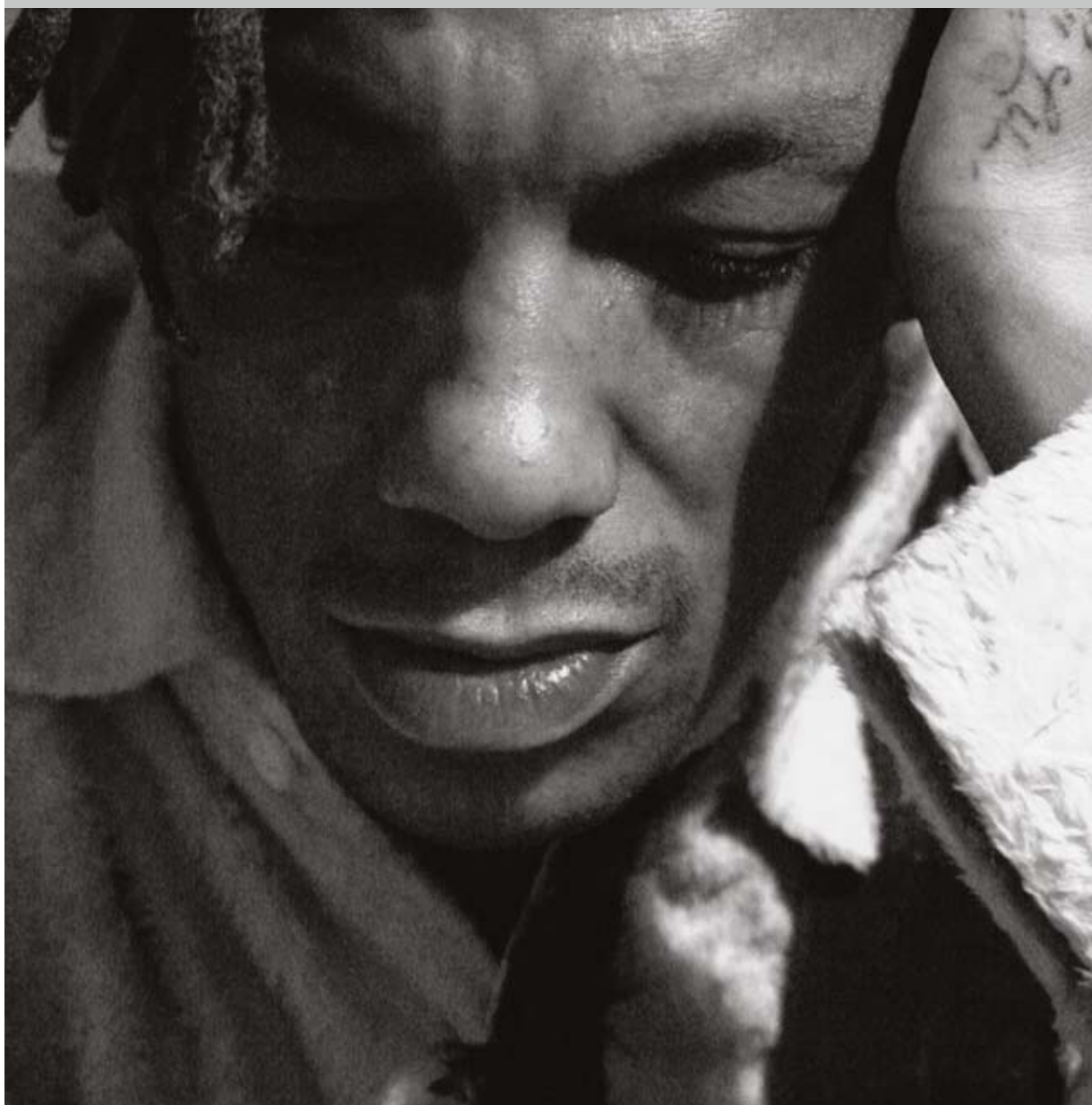
What are you planning to do?

EVENTS

OUR EDITORS PICK THE BEST OF THE MONTH

UPLOAD YOUR EVENTS AT THEBEIJINGER.COM/EVENTS

FIND ALL VENUE INFO AT THEBEIJINGER.COM/DIRECTORY. PLEASE CALL VENUES AHEAD OF TIME TO CONFIRM DETAILS.



TRICKY

MAY 2 – Known for his dark, rich, and layered sound and smoothed out lyrical style, Tricky is one of the originators of the trip-hop genre. He developed his musical fusion of rock and hip-hop as an original member of Massive Attack and has since collaborated with some of the biggest names in popular music. Catch him as he conquers Beijing with impeccable style. RMB 460, RMB 380 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPLIT WORKS

Festival Croisements 2015

TELOFOSSILES

APR 25-MAY 18 – Montreal/Paris-based artist Gregory Chatonsky presents *Telefossiles* as a result of his extended residency in China. His work questions virtual reality, variable fictions, technological ontology, flows and digital arts. Free. 10am-7pm (excluding Mondays). Unicorn Centre for Art (5229 7756)

MISS DIOR

APR 30 -MAY 31 – A look at Miss Dior through the eyes of artists such as Polly Apfelbaum, Lara Baladi, Carole Banzaken, Lee Bul, Karen Kilimnik, Liu Lijie, and more, glorified by cosmopolitan influences, colors, and passions that make the fragrance a contemporary item. Free. 10am-7pm (excluding Mondays). UCCA (5780 0200)

JACQUES DEMY RETROSPECTIVE

MAY 1-31 – A unique and unparalleled version of this successful show, accompanied by a retrospective of a selection of the filmmaker's cult films. *Lola*, *Peau d'âne*, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, and *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*. Various times, locations, and prices. (Check online for more info)

JUKEBOX

MAY 7, 9 – Jukebox consists of five musicians and composers from a young generation of French jazz that has found fame with some major artists. They take on various influences from jazz, soul, new wave and pop. Various times, locations, and prices. (Check online for more info)

DANCE: BALLET SELECTION

MAY 11, 12 – The China National Ballet celebrates ten years of involvement with Croisements Festival through a special evening with extracts from some of France's most beautiful production. Two dancers from the Paris Opera Ballet will participate. RMB TBA. 7.30pm. Tianqiao Theatre (8315 6170)

HORS-CHAMP

MAY 13-14 – *Hors-champ*, a feature-length stage production scripted for five contemporary dancers and a camera-man mashes up dance, theatre and is captivating in the way of a film. RMB 180-1280. 7pm. Poly Theatre (6500 1188)

EXTRAPOLIS

MAY 16-23 – *ExtraPolis* is an interactive installation that represents an imaginary city with which the visitor can interact. It draws upon a technique of augmented design, which combines drawing and video animation in order to bring an originally drawn piece of work of life. RMB TBA. Meridian Space (5160 0496)

VERONIQUE GENS

MAY 19 – Operatic soprano Véronique Gens performs in China for the first time, alongside the China Philharmonic Orchestra. Catch her rare program 'La Mort de Cléopâtre' by Berlioz and *Turandot Suite*. RMB TBA. 7.30pm. Poly Theatre (6500 1188)



EVENTS



1. WORKER'S DAY MAY 1ST

MAY 1 – To celebrate international workers' day Jing A is giving away a keg of Worker's Pale Ale! Anyone who shows up wearing a hard hat, overalls, or a bao'an uniform gets a pint poured from the free keg (until it runs dry). If you show up rocking both overalls and a hard hat, you get two beers. Free. 5PM-12AM. 京A (6501 8883)

2. CINCO DE MAYO AT JUICE BY MELISSA

MAY 5 – Stop by for some festive live music, specialty cold-pressed cocktails and delectable Mexican snacks. Included are their new margaritas with organic agave and fresh lime juice, and organic guacamole dip. RMB 150 (free flow margaritas and Coronas). 6-9pm. Juice by Melissa (130 4112 1556)

3. ARCADE COSPLAY PARTY

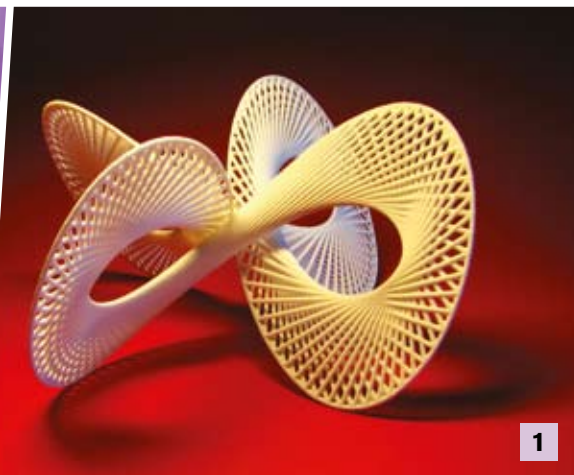
MAY 9 – Have some bit crushing fun with this fantastic costume party. Guests are encouraged to dress up as their favorite video game characters for a chance to take home some special video game themed prizes. There will also be some insane drink specials for all contestants. Free. 10pm. Soi Baochao (6401 1066)

4. BACK 2 BASICS PRESENTS: ATA

MAY 1 – As the main figure behind Playhouse, Klang, and Ongaku record labels and the man in charge of the legendary Robert Johnson club in Offenbach, Germany, you can expect Ata to keep the party going till everyone in the house melts into a pile of steamy goo. RMB 50. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

5. DIM SUM DISCO: ITALO EDITION

MAY 29 – The dynamic duo of Boflex and Crystal Bones break out onto the Migas terrace riding their Italian stallions. Dance, dance, dance in your spandex pants. RMB 50. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)



1. 3D PRINTING WORKSHOP

MAY 1 – The 3D Printing Workshop explores the relationship between Chinese traditional arts and crafts, and three-dimensional design technologies. RMB 350. 10am. The Courtyard Institute (1326 421 0307)

2. INTRO 2015 ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL

MAY 1 – An annual showcase of the best in China's thriving electronic music scene, INTRO rallies electronic music lovers from around the globe to the pulse of the world's most exciting emerging electronic music mecca. RMB 280-380. 2pm. Grand Epoch City (139 1120 7198)

3. MAGMA

MAY 31 – Experience one of the most eccentric French bands of the 60-70s as they explode from the dunes of Kobaïa with their fiery sound of highly technical progressive rock tunes. These guys are the stuff of science fiction, so don't be surprised if they vaporize into thin air after their performance. RMB 300, RMB 240 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (186 1125 7960)

4. COLT SILVERS CHINA TOUR

MAY 1 – French act Colt Silvers are four eternally scruffy kidults, developing a generous style of indie rock that exists between bright pop intervals, silky electronic layers, and quivering dissonances. Top it all off with a little boys choir styled vocals and that's more or less what you can expect in these uniquely wholesome boys. RMB 80, RMB 60 (advance). 8pm. School Bar (6402 8881)

5. CARLY RAE JEPSEN BEIJING CONCERT

MAY 1 – Canadian Carly Rae hit it big on the pop charts in 2012 with her ubiquitous "Call Me Maybe". Catch this infectious tune live as she drops into Beijing and gets crazy baby. RMB 280-680. 7.30pm. MasterCard Center's Huiyuan Space (400 610 3721)



EVENTS



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1. LA FERIA

MAY 31 – Fez is partnering up with the Portacontes Flamenco School for La FERIA, a special Sevillian festival filled with flamenco dancing, delicious Spanish food and drinks. You will get to experience local Spanish life at its best. RMB 150. 6pm. Fez Bar (136 4128 1842)

2. YUNNAN CULTURE FESTIVAL

MAY 29-31 – Take part in this Yunnan Culture Festival, filled with singing, dancing, and a delicious spread of Yunnan delicacies. Eat up all of the Xishuangbanna barbecue, Yunnan snacks, juices and rice wine you can handle, while perusing some transitional crafts in the Yunnan bazaar and celebrating the Festival for the Bathing Buddha. RMB 228. 4pm-9.30pm. Crowne Plaza Beijing Sun Palace (6452 1616)

3. DEAD DAY

MAY 8 – On this holiday commemorating the legendary Grateful Dead, we'll be holding a tie-dye workshop. Buy a white Jing A shirt, and we'll help you make it a one-of-a-kind summer wardrobe staple! Free. 5pm-12am. Jing A (6501 8883)

4. QUORUM BALLET CORRER O FADO IN BEIJING

MAY 12 – One of the oldest styles of urban folk music, Fado, meaning "fate" in Portuguese, is a mournful, melancholic style that became popular around the early 1800s. Correr O Fado brings Fado and modern dance together, making it a breakthrough expression of the Portuguese soul. RMB100-480. 7.30pm. National Center for the Performing Arts (400 610 3721)



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1. THIS WILL DESTROY YOU

MAY 22 – This Will Destroy You, one of the biggest instrumental bands on the planet, is coming back. The bleakness is still there, as is the melancholic celebration of climatic spaces. RMB 120, RMB 80 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

2. THE KARPENTERS

MAY 22 – Formed in 2002, the Karpenters fully retain the integrity of the Carpenters music. Every note from the smallest percussion part to the richness of the huge backing vocal sound have been meticulously transcribed, recreating the unique sounds of The Carpenters to perfection. RMB80-580. 7.30pm. Beijing Exhibition Center Theater (400 610 3721)

3. PAUL VAN DYK

May 29 – Paul van Dyk, named the World's No.1 DJ in both 2005 and 2006, is coming to Beijing with his new album "The Politics of Dancing 3." Meet him at Liv in Vac with DJs Basestrng and Half/N/Half. RMB 200, RMB 150 (advance). 9pm. LIV Club (6708 9898)

4. MONTE CARLO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

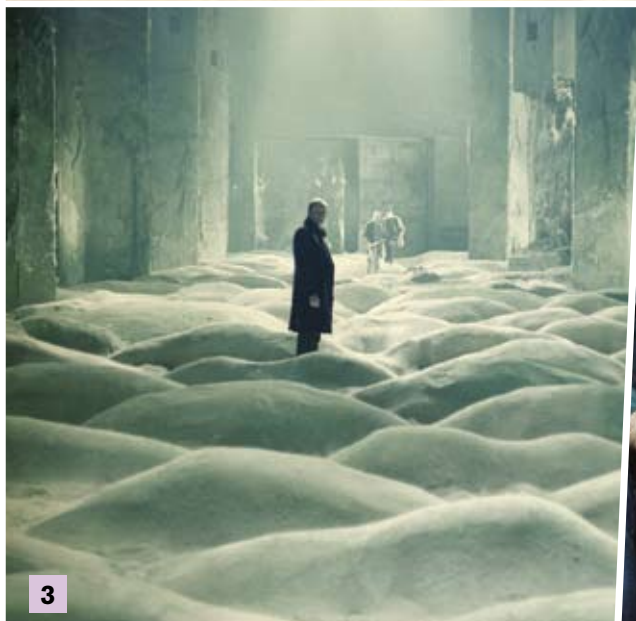
MAY 12 – Founded in 1856, the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra plays a major role in commissioning and performing contemporary operatic, choreographic and symphonic works and thus enjoys a rich repertoire of both traditional and modern compositions. RMB 50-380. 7.30pm. Forbidden City Concert Hall (6559 8285)



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1. MÁS 3 YEAR ANNIVERSARY PARTY

MAY 2, 3 – In honor of their third birthday, Más will be providing all of their loyal customers a tropical themed BBQ. Dance to some psychedelic tunes being blasted in this hutong spot and reminisce about all of those magical moments spent downing Presidentes, with even more Presidentes. Free. 6pm. Más (6405 4337)

2. DIY AQUAPONICS WORKSHOP

MAY 3 – Have a small apartment but still dream of growing vegetables? Learn how to build your own portable aquaponics system with this nifty lecture that will explain the ins and out of this efficient method of minimalist gardening. RMB 450. 11am. The Culture Yard (8404 4166)

3. CAPITAL M MOVIE NIGHT: TARKOVSKY'S "STALKER"

MAY 3 – Considered one of the top movies of all time, Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's eerie sci-fi vision of a forsaken world is an allegory of the perils of intellectualism in Russia, demanding and elusive. Cruz Garcia of Wai Think-Tank introduces the film. RMB 75 (Popcorn included). 5pm. Capital M (6702 2727)

4. PLASTIK FUNK

MAY 8 – Join Plastik Funk as this Berlin-based duo comprised of Rafael Ximenez-Carrillo and Mikio Grunschinske get funky at Circle. They will be supported by the ever so *kawaii* DJ Half/N/Half for an evening of reality shattering good times. Free. 10pm. Circle (6552 9988)



1. SHFT. PRESENTS: TROYBOI (UK)

MAY 16 – Troyboi had owned the beginning of 2015, with new releases every week for free download, headlining shows all over the globe, and collaborating with some of the world's most renowned producers. Check him out live as he blasts his way into your next playlist. RMB 60. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

2. DO HITS!

MAY 8 – Join Howie Lee as he's recorded live by the Red Bull Music Academy. He will be fresh off his first North American tour and joined by Guzz, Billy Starman, Veekey, and friends. Free. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

3. DISCOSMIC ADVENTURE

MAY 23 – Get cosmic with some deep disco diamonds from longtime Migas resident DJ, Tobias Patrick. Currently slamming clubs down in Shanghai with solid gold tunes, catch him once again for a night you lunatics are sure to remember. RMB 50. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

4. HOUSING THE BAR FEATURING SKINNERBOX

MAY 9 – Join these space cadets as they get extra heady playing live techno with synths and beat making devices, to purposely trip you out with neo-hippie textures and lush ambient drones. RMB 50. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

ALL THAT JAZZ

by George Ding

There's no doubt Beijing has good music. There's a lively rock scene, annual, pre-canceled music festivals, and some of the best Filipino cover bands this side of Manila. That's not even counting the occasional big-name DJ or pop star dropping by on an Asia tour.

Beijing has culture. It's what separates us from the Mammon-worshipping heathens in Shanghai. But as with any font of culture, the city attracts its share of pretentious artists.

Last year I went to see an experimental jazz band my friend was playing in. I usually avoid experimental music like I avoid experimental drugs, but my friend is an accomplished saxophonist so I thought I'd give it a shot.

The concert was in a hutong venue, of course. As I bought a ticket, the young woman at the ticket counter beamed.

"Aren't you excited?" she asked.

Eventually the lights dimmed and the band took the stage. They looked like a legit jazz ensemble — bassist, drummer, flautist, and my friend on the sax. The band leader, an expat, was a keyboardist who had a mic set up in front of him.

The first number was pretty much what I expected experimental jazz to sound like — sparse and erratic. It was difficult for me to follow but I picked out elements of freestyling and call and response. But as the night went on, the pieces became harder to parse.

At one point the band leader said while introducing a song, "Not to sound pretentious or anything, but I once read this passage in a book — and I'm not going to tell you which book — and thought, 'I just have to set this to music.'" And set it to music he did.

As the band riffed, he would spit out clusters of words with no discernable pattern or rhythm. It was

clear he felt strongly about whatever he read because the arrangement was sharp and sudden, every note a knife in my ear.

After the mystery book song came another ponderous piece, where the flautist changed flutes twice and the band leader mumbled quietly into the microphone.

Now, I'm not a big fan of jazz or anything but I think I know what jazz is, or at least the scope of sounds that qualify as jazz. But I had never heard jazz like this.

I looked around the room. No one else seemed to be as distraught as I, or, if they were, they were all hiding it better. The ticket seller, however, was enraptured and shouted "*who!*" after every song.

As the night wound down, I could no longer distinguish one piece from another — the notes raining from their instruments became a flood of random noise. Although it was clear each musician was extremely talented, the parts just didn't fit together.

At long last, the lead singer thanked the audience and introduced each player to cheers and applause.

"And I'd like to thank my girlfriend," he said, at which point the ticket seller screamed, "I love you!"

In a city with this much culture, with this many people making art, there's a following for just about anything. That's one of the great things about Beijing. The band tried something new, and although it didn't work for me, I think that others found some joy in it.

As I was leaving, the ticket girl asked, "So what'd you think?"

"I've never seen anything like it," I said.

She asked me if I was leaving.

"Don't leave, there's one more act."

I glanced at the stage, where a burly man was setting up a giant jug. He was preparing to play it.

I did not stay for the jug man.



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