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thebeijinger 2015/11



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FEBRUARY

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March

Annual Reader
Restaurant
Awards



APRIL

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May

Annual Reader
Bar & Club
Awards



JUNE

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August

Burger Festival



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October

Pizza Festival



NOVEMBER

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DECEMBER

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CITY SCENE

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Sponsored Content: Blue Focus
Best of the Blog: The most popular stories from *theBeijinger.com*
Scene & Heard: Go on, take a look at yourselves, you beautiful people

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SEASONAL
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NOVEMBER 12

Cover photograph of
Tien Ching. Photo by Uni.



The most important dates this month

WHAT'S HAPPENING

NOV 7

CHI FAN FOR CHARITY

One of the biggest charity events of the year is back, with a night of eating, drinking, and being merry, all to benefit two worthy charities: Bethel China and Educating Girls of Rural China. The event is entering its sixth year.



NOV 14

JOB FAIR FOR FOREIGNERS

Learn more about your employment opportunities in Beijing and throughout China at this job fair aimed at foreigners living in China. Expect a great atmosphere, big names, and big career changes.



NOV 17-DEC 20

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

The Phantom of the Opera comes to Beijing for four days only. The world-renowned musical, originally published as a serialization in *Le Gaulois*, takes its inspiration from historical events at the Paris Opera.

NOV 29

THE NUTCRACKER

Experience this two-act ballet by the Russian State Ballet, directed by the Russian Ministry of Culture. *The Nutcracker* is a Christmas-themed ballet appropriate for all ages, and will be performed at the Beijing Poly Theatre.



Visit theBeijinger.com for even more events and details.

For more events, see p56.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

While the giving season in Beijing is traditionally December, specifically the time around Christmas, the departure for home by so many members of the international community during that time has shifted charitable activities into November.

Most prominent among the annual events designed to generate support for worthy causes is Chi Fan For Charity, held each year on the first weekend of November. It's a simple formula that has so far raised over RMB 3 million for various organizations. Choose a restaurant. Donate at the level indicated for the restaurant. Have a good time. All the proceeds collected from participants' fees goes directly to the year's designated charity partners. This year, those partners are Bethel China and Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC), both of which are featured in our cover story about Beijing-born organizations dedicated to doing good works in and around China.

Our cover model this month, Tien Ching, founder of EGRC, was born and raised a Beijinger until the Cultural Revolution sent her and her mother, a doctor, to rural Gansu province, where she saw first-hand the lack of opportunities for women, and the need for education. Read more about EGRC and Bethel China inside. We also look at homegrown fundraising effort Maovember, which generated over RMB 100,000 for life-changing cataract surgery for men, also in rural China; and we offer a few options for people looking to volunteer their skills or time right here in Beijing.

In this issue, we also sat down with our old friend, William "Wild Wall" Lindesay, a man who has dedicated his life to researching and preserving the Great Wall. With the publication this month of his new book, *The Great Wall in 50 Objects*, Lindesay finds yet another way to tell the history of the Wall, and show us again that we don't know as much about our nearby Wonder of the World as we think we do.

Also inside, Kipp Whittaker sits down with another old friend, DJ Zhang Youdai, once China's first rock n' roll radio rebel, who has since moved on to DJing (the kind done in a club, not a broadcasting booth), with a whole lot of other musical knowledge gathered and shared in between. Margaux Schreurs interviews director Fan Popo about the lawsuit over his documentary, *Mama Rainbow*.

I hope you enjoy the November issue of the Beijinger.

Schwankert

Steven Schwankert
Executive Editor

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CITY SCENE

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POSCO CENTER: AN ICONIC 5A AND CLASS A OFFICE BUILDING IN ALL SPHERES

As the owner of an enterprise, do you get confused by various standards of office buildings such as Class A, T5 and 7A? Are you puzzled about choosing the right office building? In fact, the international recognized criterion for rating office buildings is the Class A and 5A rating system, which focuses on intelligent business and human orientation.

The POSCO Center, located in the Wangjing business district in Beijing, is elaborately constructed by POSCO Group, which leads the industry modernization and economic development of Korea. The Center has established the best hardware and software system to become a new iconic 5A and Class A office building with its favorable and convenient location, fashionable space layout, refined and quiet green surroundings, and intelligent office and building control system.

Location: Prime Business District

The location of high-end office buildings is of particularly crucial importance. The POSCO Center is located in the prime business district of the Wangjing area. It is midway between Beijing Capital Airport and the central business district (CBD), linking new business

districts including Zhongguancun and Financial Street. The Center is also near to the Airport Expressway, which forms a three-dimensional transportation network together with the 4th and 5th Ring Road.

In terms of the transportation plan, the ramps to the underground garage are built at the two sides of the main entrance of motor vehicles, and connected with the circular transportation system. In this way, the number of cars parking on the ground is reduced, visitors won't be bothered when getting on or off the car and driving into or out of the garage, and quiet and pleasant surroundings are ensured.

Exterior Design: Dynamic Curves

In respect of exterior design, Tower A and Tower B of the POSCO Center are staggered vertically at different floors and built at different heights, not only ensuring a broad view and sufficient sunlight, but also manifesting dynamic changes in the rhythm of the urban space.

With regard to the layout, the design of the glass curtain wall and core cylinder enables office space to enjoy light from all directions and a broad view, which helps to spark more inspiration for business ideas; a 36-

meter-high pillar-less lobby and a magnificent iron tree lets natural light pour into the spacious hall. The open business office connects rest space with conference space, which introduces the idea of separating office space and expanding the personal work area to the design and manifests the human-oriented idea perfectly.

Green Space: Harmonious Coexistence Between Man and Nature

The POSCO Center makes a perfect combination with the bustle of urban space and the environmental protection of green architecture, achieving harmony between man and nature, as well as between city and nature. The POSCO Center adopts Chinese three-star authentication technology, the highest-level authentication in assessment criteria of Chinese green buildings, and green building materials, keeping a more energy-saving and environment friendly operation of the building. In addition, the CO2 automatic regulatory system, together with the temperature and humidity automatic regulator system, maintains a steady oxygen level in the air and the most comfortable temperature and humidity, enabling the settled staff to enjoy fresh air anytime and anywhere in the building.

In addition, the urban park green space is southeast of the POSCO Center, so that the settled staff is able to enjoy a broad view. Its northwest side houses a courtyard space, offering the building maximum natural ventilation and lighting. In addition, the sunken garden, rooftop garden and lounge garden are the highlights of the humanized design, providing the settled staff with space close to nature and space to have a rest and adding the environmental and green space image to the entire architectural complex.

Intelligent Systems: Convenient and Efficient Business Communication

The intelligent office of the POSCO Center is an open business rest area; every detail inside has been created with a focus on "intelligence". The office also boasts an efficient workstation which meets business features, and in the aspect of the ambient lighting, it employs the LED lighting technology which avoids the glare caused by the excessive watching of the computer monitor. In addition, the Center is equipped with a high-speed communication system and a high-end intelligent video conference system which supports the highest-level business video conference, facilitating business communication between the settled enterprises and every corner of the world. The intelligent passage control system adopted by the POSCO Center prevents unauthorized access to the building, thus ensuring the safety of the settled enterprises and avoiding the risk of

leaking their business secrets.

Considering the health of office workers, the intelligent office is equipped with office furniture designed on the basis of human engineering and the best control and assistance system applicable to all kinds of working environments. Rest space and health management space seems indeed a luxury in the Wangjing area where space comes at a premium.

Multi-function Layout: A Human Focus

The POSCO Center is equipped with essential facilities including sightseeing elevators, a fitness center, an international food court, a leisure center, shopping malls, and a medical center. All these facilities completely focus on humans, inspiring workers' initiative and sense of belonging, and enhancing enterprises' recognition of the values of the POSCO Center. The business district around the POSCO Center also includes an international food court supplying foods around the world, a variety of international retail outlets selling international commodities, and a great many other international entertainment support facilities, enabling people to enjoy various kinds of entertainment in busy and quick-paced work environments.

Property Management: World-class Service

The POSCO Center is managed by an experienced international management team, and realizes the computerization of office property management. An office management information system has been established, so that all systems of office property are connected and under centralized management. A series of property management services including 24-hour maintenance and repair, and security, an intelligent passage control system, an access control system, and a vehicle and bicycle control system also create a sound work environment for the whole building.

In a modern city bristling with buildings, office buildings have already become a specific space creating culture and fortunes for the city. In a certain sense, office buildings in the top level of the production chain are no longer an independent entity serving themselves, but integrate the architecture with wider urban space and pay more attention to living conditions of citizens. As a new landmark in the Wangjing area in Beijing, the POSCO Center achieves a new peak of business with its progressive design ideas, perfect management service as well as permanent and constant market operation. The POSCO Center will become a part of the wonderful urban life and usher in the flourishing development of the Wangjing business district.

For more information, please contact at 010-84717777.

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



1. Marks & Spencer to Finally Open in Beijing's The Place By End of 2015

Beijing will be finally getting its first location of the iconic British retailer by year's end, with a 1,500 sqm store to open in The Place. A fixture in Shanghai since 2008 and in Hong Kong for far longer, the nearly 100-year-old British retailer is known by many UK-centric shoppers for selling high quality women's wear, menswear, and British comestibles.



2. Please Place Your Flight Attendant in the Overhead Bin

A photo circulating on the Internet of a Chinese flight attendant lying down in the overhead compartment of a plane generated plenty of comments this month, while taking the tradition of professional shaming to new heights. China Daily suggests it's not necessarily all in good fun. "These stewardesses were reluctant to do it but were still lifted to the rack due to the concerns of being not cooperative with their colleagues."

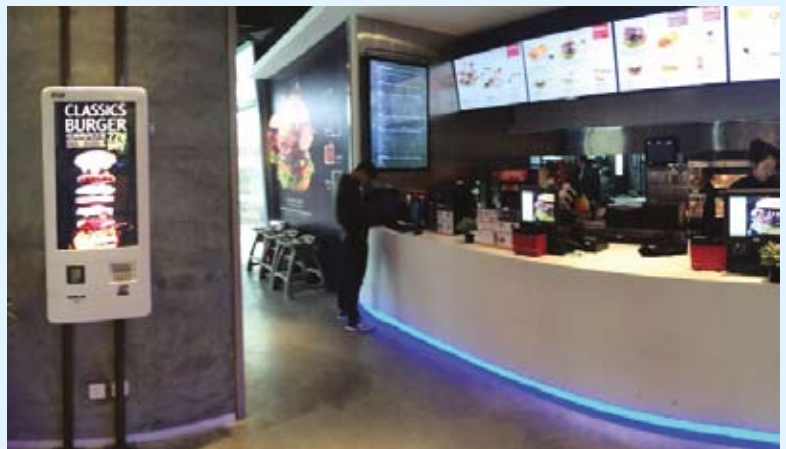


3. Paris Hilton Trapped in Crowded Beijing Elevator

Once again terror strikes in the heart of a visiting celebrity. The hotel heiress, reality TV star, and so-called world famous DJ Paris Hilton, got stuck in an elevator (luckily not an escalator) for over an hour on Oct 16 just before her Beijing premiere at Boombar in Gongti. Was that hot?

4. Culinary Mad Scientist Da Dong's New Duck Burger Aims at Toppling KFC (in Tackiness)

China's mad scientist of food has KFC and McDonald's in his crosshairs with the creatively named Da Dong Duck. The centerpiece of this new venture is a duck hamburger – in essence, a piece of roast duck meat and a slice of crispy skin, crammed in with the standard fast food accouterments of a soft wheat bun, lettuce, onion, and tomato (and in this case, thin-sliced cucumbers).



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



5. First Night of Megadeth's Dystopia Tour Comes to Abrupt End in Beijing

Megadeth's opening night of its Dystopia tour ended abruptly after only an hour in what seemed to be an abbreviated set by the American metal band in Beijing. Signs indicate that the performance at the MasterCard Center's Huiyuan Space may have been shortened or stopped by officials. For example, one well-known Megadeth track, "Skin of My Teeth," was played instrumental instead of with its usual lyrics. In the end, turned out that that was just Megadeth's set – not so amazing for a group with a 30-year history on its Beijing debut.



6. SmartBeijing.com Shuttters After Three Years
SmartBeijing.com suddenly shuttered its website on Oct 20 after three years of music, nightlife, and gut busting gonzo journalism. A message on the site cited "the cool circumstance of modern love, warfare, and business is you've got to make money to survive. And we didn't really make any." The duo of Morgan Short and Josh Feola made the Gulou area and the Beijing inner city's entertainment scene their own personal journalistic fortress.

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SCENE & HEARD



the beijinger 2015 Pizza Cup at Galaxy SOHO on Oct 17
Photos by Uni and Zeus





THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

TIEN CHING AND EGRC ARE CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, ONE

by Steven Schwankert

Tien Ching has seen both sides of education for women in China. Born and raised in Beijing earlier in her life, Tien and her mother, a doctor, moved to poor, rural Gansu province, during the Cultural Revolution, where she saw up close what her life could have been like if she had been in another part of the country.

For many, education never enters the picture. "Girls were and are married off early to bring cash to the family as a dowry, and to become a source of labor for the new family," she said. Tien saw other situations that left a deep impression on her, including where women were kicked out of a family for repeatedly giving birth to girls, or were sent to their family's home to give birth on one condition: if the child is a girl, don't come back.

After eight years in Gansu, Tien continued her own education in Beijing, before emigrating to Canada in 1983, where she has lived ever since.

Tien stored away the lessons of both her fellow women in Gansu and her own education for later in life. But she wasn't spurred into action until 2005, when her daughter sang at a show in support of Go Girls! Education for Every Child, a UNICEF initiative to boost education for girls, especially in Africa. "If a woman is educated, her children will be educated," Tien thought, and conceived of the initiative that has become Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC).

EGRC has three primary goals: Sponsor female students from rural regions with their four year undergraduate studies in Chinese universities; sponsor female high school (grade 10 to 12) students with their three year studies in rural region high schools; and assist EGRC-sponsored students with BA diplomas to enroll in post graduate

programs offered by Canadian universities.

To date, EGRC has supported 287 girls, mostly at the university level, but the program has now expanded to include some high school students.

"I'm quite proud that these girls and young women need more than just money. They need moral support," Tien said. "Every summer I meet all the girls in their hometown."

Tien has more to be proud of: EGRC's girls have a 100 percent graduation rate, with two of their top graduates having gone on to Tsinghua University and Manitoba University in Canada, respectively.

"I am happy to study here," Liu Yanxia, an EGRC alumna and current Manitoba University student, wrote. "I can see that the students and professors are passionate about the research and the projects they are working on. Now I believe if you love and have passion for something you will do well. I look forward to my second term of studying."

A support commitment for a student requires at least RMB 6,000 per year only for tuition, but more like RMB 15,000 per year including food and living expenses. High school students require about RMB 5,000 per year.

Fundraising is EGRC's biggest challenge, Tien said. And it's not getting any easier, either in Canada or China. "It's very difficult to compete with local charities in Canada. People think, 'China has many millionaires and billionaires, why don't they help?'" she said.

Educating Girls of Rural China is a charity partner of 2015 Chi Fan For Charity. To learn more, visit www.egrc.ca. To participate in Chi Fan For Charity, visit www.chifanforcharity.org.

MAOVEMBER RETURNS FOR 2015

LOCALLY-FOUNDED FUNDRAISING EFFORT GENERATED OVER RMB 100,000 IN DONATIONS IN 2014

by Steven Schwankert

After a humble beginning in 2013 that raised more than RMB 20,000, local charity event Maovember exploded in 2014 when it generated over RMB 100,000 in donations for eye health organization Orbis, with every RMB 800 raised representing cataract surgery for one recipient in rural China. As it gears up again, we spoke to Maovember co-founder and prime mover Jim Boyce about its roots and the plan for this year.

The Beijinger (TBJ): This is the third year of Maovember. Tell us about 2014's efforts.

Jim Boyce (JB): If 2013 was a pencil 'stache, 2014 was a full-fledged flavor saver with bonus sideburns. This time, there was a men's health angle – George Smith, a part owner of The Irish Volunteer, works for Orbis and said we could fund cataract surgery for men in rural China at RMB 800 per operation. We also had a lot more events – over a dozen – and participating bars, restaurants, and vendors. And it turned out many people were willing to donate RMB 800 to fund an operation. In the end, we raised over RMB 100,000, enough for more than 130 surgeries, including 60,000-plus from events, 20,000 from personal donations, and 20,000 from sales of Maovember pins for RMB 50 each.

TBJ: How do you choose your charity partner each year?

JB: The idea is to choose charities that show a visible result. We couldn't find a men's charity in time in 2013, so we teamed up with Library Project. Andrew Papas and I went

to the partner school on the edge of Beijing to help put the tables, chairs, and shelves together, and stocked the shelves with books, so we saw the physical manifestation of the donations. Or maybe a more accurate way to describe it is that we figured we were going to some ribbon-cutting ceremony and ended up being given hammers and screwdrivers and set to work.

TBJ: What's planned for this year?

JB: My suggestion is to focus on the basics, to be less concerned about beating last year's donation total and more concerned about maintaining the spirit of the event and its focus on small businesses, transparent fundraising, and concrete results. My big worry is that as Maovember grows, so do the odds of something dodgy happening and reflecting poorly on everybody, one reason we were pretty picky about events last year. We also raise money through pin sales and it would be nice if the venues who sell them paid up front – we're talking RMB 500 for 10 pins – as a lot of time was spent running around collecting money and unsold stock last year that would be better spent elsewhere. But mostly it's about teamwork. I'm not even keen on doing interviews like this because there were literally hundreds of people involved last year, from bar owners to donors to – once again! – The Beijing Beatles. And why not get involved – most of us have our sight, and our health, and are lucky to be able to help.

Keep an eye on the Maovember website, www.maovember.com, for a full list of fun events.



FRENCH FATHER

GUILLAUME GAUVAIN'S HELPING HAND TURNS 10.

by Nick Richards



Founded in 2003 by Guillaume Gauvain, Bethel China Foundation has worked with disabled orphans in Beijing. Along with providing housing and education, Bethel offers trainings every three months in different provinces in China to parents and caregivers, special education schools, and orphanages on how to care and raise a child that has a visual impairment. Through their outreach efforts, Bethel has noticed that families really craved more support and educational opportunities for their children so since last year, leading them to open a preschool to children from families as well. There are practically no early intervention services for children with visual impairments and it is Bethel's goal through the preschool to prepare these children to be able to attend school and function with their peers. We hope that by equipping families to raise their children we can reduce the rate of abandonment for visually impaired children.

Originally from France, he is the founder of the Bethel China Foundation, which has helped countless disadvantaged children in China live more fulfilling lives. Bethel is now in their 12th year. Although Gauvin now lives in the Philippines full-time and oversees Bethel's efforts there, he talked to Nick Richards during their 10th anniversary celebration.

Blind Chinese orphans. That's a scary issue to tackle. What was the spark, the one moment were you said to yourself, "Right, I'm going to do this?"

When I got home with David, my adoptive son, I was overwhelmed with the feeling of how big of a difference it was to bring an orphan into a family. That was the spark that led to Bethel. For blind orphans specifically, we found that even though blindness is not a mental illness, they were treated as such with little hope of moving forward, so we decided to do something about it.

How did you feel/react the first time you met these disabled children over here?

I still remember coming back from the orphanage with the first three blind children in my van and looking at them and thinking, "what am I doing?"

What is the first thing you try to teach Bethel's children?

The first thing we teach is, "You are beautiful, and you're worth it."

Where do you hope these kids will end up? What kind of future is there for them?

Well, like any parent you want kids to be the best they can be and achieve independence. But above all, I want them to feel good about themselves and have a fighting spirit since society will not make it easy on them.

What were the main steps to get things started here? Any bureaucratic or official hurdles?

In the beginning, there were no steps [no roadmap]. For foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), everything is in the gray, no matter how many new so-called laws and regulations there are, in the end there is no clear way to independently register a foreign NGO in China. So yes it created a lot of challenges when the organization began to grow, such as not being able to have a professional bank account, for example.

Bethel China Foundation is a charity partner of 2015 Chi Fan For Charity. To learn more, visit www.bethelchina.org. To participate in Chi Fan For Charity, visit www.chifanforcharity.org.

Excerpts from this article appeared previously in the December 2013 issue of the Beijinger.

THE LIVING PROJECT NEPAL FOR EXAMPLE

HOW A LOCAL SUCCESS STORY CAN SERVE AS A MODEL FOR ANYONE WANTING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

by Kipp Whittaker

At 11:56 am on April 25 of this year, the 7.8-magnitude Gorkha earthquake struck Nepal, killing 9,000 people and injuring 23,000 more. It was a devastating day for this place known for its ancient culture and majestic Himalayan backdrop that has attracted spiritual and outdoor adventurers since it first opened to the outside world in the 1950s.

With little infrastructure in place to deal with a disaster of this size, the Nepalese weren't prepared for the kind of devastation caused by such an unpredictable and deadly event. It became quickly apparent that both the people of Nepal and friends from around the world to provide the financial support necessary to rebuild this beautiful place before it sank ever further into despair. This is what was going through the minds of Valeria Chan and Joanna Baxter as they decided to get involved in resurrecting this beautiful country from the other side of the continent.

Since they initiated The Living Project, the two friends

have successfully raised awareness of the plight of the Nepalese people and amassed over RMB 40,000 in funds through their various sponsored events throughout Beijing. People seem to be responding to the sense of community growing from this project and the potential for it to grow with its open source model, which seems to be causing it to take on a life of its own. "This is not only about raising money. This is also about celebrating humanity. We are not making a huge difference with what we are raising. Maybe we can only build and fund one school, but what we are creating is positive thinking and awareness. Most of the people who decide to work with us are coming back because they feel fulfilled about what we are doing with this project, and people are becoming friends," Valeria says in regards to her and Joanna's motives towards starting this initiative.

The Living Project initially generated funds to help the people of Nepal through tutorials on soap-making that Joanna had been participating in leading up to the disaster. Joanna thought it would be great to use these classes to raise some much needed funds. This ended up being more successful than she and Valeria had anticipated, and led to more and more people offering their services through other events, like meditation groups, yoga classes, dance tutorials, and film screenings. They decided to call this homegrown initiative The Living Project because from these early stages it grew naturally into a community of people willing to donate not only money but also time and other resources to the plight of Nepal.

After some difficulty finding the right organization that



was ideologically aligned with the type of community-based aid of the Living Project, Valeria realized it was essential to go to Nepal and find out for herself who was not only rebuilding and providing shelter for people in need but also laying down a solid foundation for the future. Here she documented her encounters with the people directly involved in physically and mentally raising the Nepalese people up from the ruins of this natural disaster. Unfortunately, she discovered that the government and many of the NGOs she encountered weren't providing aid in a timely manner to those in need but rather distributing the funds after a lengthy process of delegation.

Through her visit, she discovered The Nepal Survivors Fund. This group consisting partially of out of work tour guides turned aid workers from Alobar1000, a famous hostel in Kathmandu, were using their limited resources to hike into villages accessible only by foot to directly provide food, medicine, while also rebuilding homes and schools in these remote areas. Valeria fell in love with this small community of aid workers delivering shelters and educating children in these remote villages.

After two weeks of getting involved in the rebuilding process, Valeria returned to Beijing invigorated by the beautiful people she had experienced. There was hours of video footage to be edited and used to show people what exactly their contributions would be used to accomplish. Following recent screenings of this documentary titled "Olang The Village of Hope," things began moving faster than ever and now you can find The Living Project all over the city, promoting the cause by selling a variety of items including Nepalese crafts, tote bags featuring drawings from village children, and encouraging people to visit this beautiful country (tourism accounts for 8 percent of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product).

"The only thing we can say is do it. Everything is about action. It's not about thinking about what you are doing because at the beginning when people start to do something, they don't always realize what they do. They just have this feeling that they are creating something good, and this is what we did," Valeria said when asked what sort of advice they would give anyone wanting to start a community based charitable organization. Joanna added "Even now actually, this feels like a relatively small thing but many people know about it now and are getting involved and spreading the word without our involvement."

For more information about The Living Project, contact Valeria (Valeria@livingproject.me), or donate directly to the Nepal Survivors Fund through their GoFundMe page.



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

FOOD & DRINK

QUIRKY RESTAURANTS // GUIZHOU // BEIJING BITTERS // NINGXIA WINERIES



With sweater weather well and truly under way, there's no excuse not to indulge in a cake or two. Turn to p. 32 for our chat with Four Seasons Beijing's new Executive Pastry Chef Francesco Mannino, who is here to oblige all your pastry-based desires.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS BEIJING

NIBBLES AND SIPS

If Britain isn't the first country that comes to mind when you think of fine cuisine, you're probably not alone, but **British Menu Week** is here to change that. Organized by the British Embassy and the Food is GREAT campaign, from November 2-8 a selection of Beijing's best restaurants and chefs – including Bistrot B, TRB Bites, and Mosto – will create a range of bespoke menus based around British recipes and ingredients, from free-range pork to fresh Scottish salmon. Among the not-to-be-missed events are a special edition of EAST's popular Carnivore's Club themed around British pork on November 5, and an evening with GREAT UK Drinks Ambassador Olly Smith at Mesh in The Opposite House on November 6.

If that's not enough to get homesick Brits salivating, then this definitely will: Beijing looks to be getting its long-rumored first branch of iconic British retailer **Marks & Spencer** by year's end, with a 1,500sqm store to open in The Place. In addition to clothing, groceries, and well-priced wine, the store will have an onsite bakery and coffee bar.

Following an extensive renovation of the space earlier this year, **Modernista's** long-awaited restaurant is finally in soft opening. The food is loosely European, put together by a chef who learned his trade under the tutelage of former Chef de Cuisine at Agua restaurant, Jordi Valles. Head down to try their new menu from 6pm daily.

The team behind Opera Bombana and Michelin-starred Hong Kong eatery Ciak – In The Kitchen have teamed up to take on Beijing's crowded pizza market with **Pizza View**, a casual eatery on the second floor of Parkview Green serving pizza, panini, and salads. The Roma-style pizza is a departure from others in Beijing, featuring a thick, almost focaccia-like crust that stands up well to the ample toppings. We were quite taken with the *tagliatto*-heavy four cheese. Pizzas are available whole or by the (very large) slice.

Liangmaqiao's The Grand Summit has had a bit of a facelift recently and is now home to the first Beijing branch of Baker & Spice. Based in Shanghai, **Baker & Spice** supplies breads and cakes to parent chain, Wagas. Also of interest: they directly import wine from both the old and new world, offering an interesting selection at pretty unbeatable prices.

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Main course

Beef tenderloin with mushroom and truffle RMB 128 (含橄榄油)

Grilled salmon with lemon and herb RMB 128 (含橄榄油)

Dessert

Hot chocolate with cream RMB 18 (含橄榄油)

Chocolate cake RMB 18 (含橄榄油)

*The calories are approximate

Salmon

Salmon 3 courses: 38
Salmon 5 courses: 28

Salmon menu is coming soon, reservation needed



BIZARRE FARE

OUR PICKS FOR BEIJING'S QUIRKIEST CHINESE RESTAURANTS

Chinese cuisine can be an endless source of culture shock for any foreigner new to the Middle Kingdom. From street-side stinky *doufu* to the pig intestines served at countless Chinese eateries, there's no shortage of options that will leave foreigners cringing, giggling or both. But then there are other venues that go out of their way to be strange. Beijing has plenty of examples, a mere few of which we have outlined below. Some are endearingly quirky, others are horrifically bizarre, and none will bore patrons, be they expats or local Chinese. So get ready to dig in as we present our top picks for Beijing's quirkiest restaurants.



Patriotic Dongbei fare at Renmin Gongshe Dashitang

It's hard to imagine a Khmer Rouge restaurant in Cambodia, but Beijing at least has a strange fondness for Cultural Revolution-themed eateries. This restaurant not only evokes another place, but another era. Its staff cooks up authentic *Dongbei* (northeastern China) fare like sweet and salty *guobaorou* (RMB38), and the staple vegetable dish *disanxian*, consisting of eggplant, potatoes, and green peppers (RMB 26). Most of these menu items are hearty and wholesome to help the people of its region of origin withstand frigid temperatures. That means the food is quite palatable for most foreigners (especially those hailing from wintry locales), many of whom are still adjusting to the spicier options at southern Chinese restaurants. However, that doesn't mean Renmin Gongshe Dashitang (literally "People's Commune Cafeteria") will

disappoint foreigners craving exotic flavors. The tin drinking cups emblazoned with Communist slogans hark back to *Dongbei's* Maoist heyday, a sentiment echoed by the vintage newspaper pages (many dating as far back as the mid-70's) adorning the squat toilet's walls. Any curious patrons looking for surprises beyond the decor need only look further down the menu, past the more straightforward dishes to weirder fare like barbered silk worms (RMB 49 for a heaping plateful), which are crunchy on the outside, squishy soft on the inside, and feature a bitter flavor unlike anything that even the most adventurous foodies have tried.

Renmin Gongshe Dashitang

Daily 9.30am-10.30pm. 1 Shilipu Huatang Houjie, Chaoyang District (close to Sihui Station) (138 1098 8173)

人民公社大食堂：北京市朝阳区十里堡华堂后街1号（近地铁四惠站）



Monstrous bunny skulls at Grandma's Rabbit Head Restaurant

The notion of chewing on a cute bunny's head would surely give most foreigners pause. But those willing to try will be downright shocked when they see that braised, Sichuan-style rabbit heads are anything but adorable – instead, the pointed teeth, visible eye sockets, and nose bones make these rabbit heads look more like baby dinosaurs that will eat you if you don't dare to eat them first. Grandma's Rabbit Head Restaurant in Shuangjing is famous for serving up this creepy fare, giving patrons

plastic gloves so that they can take hold of these highly affordable RMB 8 craniums and pluck out the tongues, brains, and other morsels of meat. Even the pickiest of foreigners will find the cheek flesh on these rabbit heads to be undeniably delicious, but otherwise the scant amount of meat (aside from the abundant, and unsettling, rabbit brains) will likely do little to satisfy their appetites. Thankfully, the restaurant has several other dishes to quell your hunger once the novelty of chomping on the rabbit heads wears off. Those more accessible dishes include the “sweet ginger taste rabbit” (RMB 38, *chuanxing doufu*), rife with tofu, and the gloriously Chinglish-titled “green pepper detonation seed rabbit” (RMB 78, *qingjiao baozai tu*). The rabbit meat in both of those dishes tastes dry, dark, and savory, a bit like turkey. But we implore you to not fill up on those comparatively normal dishes before taking at least a nibble of a rabbit head. It may be scary, but after one bite, you’ll feel like you defeated a monster.

Grandma’s Rabbit Head Restaurant

Daily 11am-2.30am. 48 Dongsanhuan Nanlu, Chaoyang District (6540 5858)

双流老妈兔头：朝阳区东三环南路48号



Nostalgic broth at Number 8 Hotpot

Countless Chinese high school students have surely daydreamed about gobbling up some hotpot, and perhaps even gulping down some beer while they hunched over their desks and endlessly crammed for state exams. That fantasy finally comes true at Number 8 Hotpot. Instead of standard restaurant tables, this venue has outfitted school desks with hot pot heaters. Patrons can feel like pupils again as they check off the items they wish to order with a pencil on a paper menu that resembles a pop quiz (that food is quite simple when compared to the decor, like a plateful of lean and savory lamb (RMB 28), or the sweeter, more tender servings of mutton (RMB 22). The walls are lined with *jiang zhuang*

certificates of merit, and the servers wear adorably childish hoodies emblazoned with pictures of red scarf-clad young pioneers. These creative elements will not only make customers want to chow down, but also “good good study, day day up.”

Number 8 Hotpot

Daily 10.30am-late. 8 Xinjian Hutong, Xicheng District (6608 8880)

8号苑秘制火锅：西城区新建胡同甲8号



Carnivorous chuan'r at Tulang Buluo Chuanba

This *chuan'r* joint's wolf motif will make meat eaters feel like they're head of the pack. Statues and photos of carnivorous canines line the walls (one particularly strange photoshopped image literally depicts a wolf in sheep's clothing). Patrons can feast their eyes on that surreal decor, then bare their teeth and devour chicken wing (RMB 6) and lamb *chuan'r* (RMB 15 for five). Prudent patrons looking to balance their meals can order the roast eggplant dish (RMB 8), which fills a small plate and is doused in savory garlic and pepper sauce. However, the meat fiends comprising most of this restaurant's clientele will likely prefer the bacon-wrapped mushrooms (RMB 5). As customers chomp away on their *chuan'r*, they're sure to be amused by not only the wolf imagery on the walls, but also the rope swing seats in the far corner, and the criss-cross wooden lattice barriers between many of the rows of tables, which resemble the branches of a forest. Together, these features make diners feel like they're answering the call of the wild.

Tulang Buluo Chuanba

Daily 10.30am-3am. Tuanjiehu Lu Beikou, Chaoyang District (6582 4637)

土狼部落串吧：朝阳区团结湖北口肯德基向南50米路西

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

MODERNISTA EUROPEAN-STYLE
RESTAURANT



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 6-11.30pm. 44 Baochao Hutong, Dongcheng District (136 9142 5744)
东城区宝钞胡同44号

🚶 900m southeast of Gulou Dajie (Line 2, Line 8)

For the first four years of its existence, Modernista's bar and restaurant shared the same space – we'd be lying if we said we hadn't hoovered up a plate of their hummus and pita at the bar after one too many draft beers. Now, following extensive renovations earlier this year, Modernista European-style Restaurant finally has its own corner of the kingdom, just next door to the current bar and performance area.

The revamped food is modern European with a hint of Asian here and there, for example in a starter of tuna tataki with ginger-soy sauce (RMB 62). Chef Luis Wei honed his skills under the tutelage of Jordi Valles, former chef de cuisine at Agua in Nali Patio (now sadly no longer in Beijing).

The short-but-sweet menu offers something for everyone. From the starters, we were most impressed by the shrimps a la Boqueria (RMB 45), featuring tender shrimps in garlicky oil with quite a punch of chili (although the portion could have been bigger). Mains include both meaty (pork belly, lamb medallions, bacon-wrapped salmon (RMB 88) – our table's favorite dish of the night) and vegetarian options, such as a hearty homemade ravioli stuffed with pumpkin and topped with a sage cream sauce (RMB 72). Complement your meal with a bottle of wine from a mostly-European selection, or start with an aperitif cocktail.

It's early days, so you can expect some changes and tweaks to come over the next few weeks but with friendly service and Modernista's well-known cozy French-themed décor, we can see this becoming a popular dinner destination come winter. *Robynne Tindall*



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西城区炭儿胡同23号

 1km southwest of Qianmen (Line 2)

Beijing in 2015 is not exactly short of places peddling coffee every which way, so we like to seek out venues with a bit of personality to accompany our brew. With the recent opening of Living Room Coffee, there is a least one more reason to visit Dazhalan to get your caffeine fix.

Set in a 70-year-old courtyard residence on a quiet hutong just north of the comparative hustle and bustle of Yangmeizhu Xiejie, Living Room Coffee's Singaporean proprietors have converted the formerly cluttered dwelling into an airy open space with a large communal table that opens out into a corridor/coffee bar area underneath a glassed-in roof. There is a small, plant-filled courtyard for smokers (or, you know, to enjoy good weather).

They have kept things simple, both in terms of design

(your standard polished concrete and reclaimed wood), and in terms of menu, the latter featuring a short selection of espresso-based coffees and seasonal coffee variants such as Singaporean kopi (depending on whether the owners have had chance to visit home and buy some). The coffee, which is a blend of Kenyan, Rwandan, and Brazilian beans, is roasted on site in a vintage roaster that takes pride of place across from the bar. The result of that careful roasting is an espresso that starts out bright and fruity on the palate, before smoothing out into some rich chocolate notes. Speaking of chocolate, if all that coffee has given you the shakes, they have a variable selection of homemade cakes available for around RMB 30 a slice.

Robynne Tindall

A WANG

QUICK AND TASTY SOUTHEAST ASIAN

Daily 7.30am-10.30pm. B1, 111, Fortune Financial Center, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhonglu, Chaoyang District (6596 9078)
朝阳区东三环中路7号财富金融中心B1层111

 At Jintaixizhao (Line 10)

The creators of A Wang have brought us a new lunch destination – less bar, more sit-down, and with an even more diverse range of Southeast Asian options on the menu. Located in the basement of the Fortune Financial Center, the place gets busy around lunchtime with office workers pouring in from above and nearby.

We started off with both the deep fried spring rolls (RMB 28) and the fresh rice paper rolls (RMB 28), the former sinfully delicious but still maintaining the crunch of the vegetables, the latter brimming with huge prawns, and both offering an authentic taste of Vietnam. Combined with their respective sweet-and-sour sauces, these make for great sharing starters.

The Vietnamese beef pho (RMB 58) was brimming with sliced beef, beef tripe, beef brisket, beef balls, and beef tendon, giving the broth a, well, particularly beefy flavor. A side of bean sprouts, spices, herbs, and onions allows

for a little bit of DIY action. The steaming broth is both delicate and complex, especially with herbs and spices added to your taste.

Having adopted Singapore as my home country, expectations were high for the recommended Singapore Hainanese chicken rice (RMB 48), and it did not disappoint. The chicken was full of flavor and retained its juices. In combination with the chicken broth, the deliciously flavored rice, and as many sauces as you want, it makes for a wholesome and comforting lunch. As the temperatures drop, expect to see *the Beijinger* team here on a regular basis.

A Wang's location means a couple of things: prices are decent and service is fast – the perfect combination if you're looking for both a quick lunch, as well as specific Southeast Asian dishes with great flavors. *Margaux Schreurs*



PROVINCIAL RESTAURANTS

GUIZHOU PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RESTAURANT

NOT THREE DISHES TO ORDER AGAIN

Daily 11.30am-2pm, 5.30pm-9pm. Bldg 18, Yinghua Jie, Heping Xiqiao, Beisanhuan

Donglu, Chaoyang District (6444 4466)

贵州大厦：朝阳区北三环东路和平西桥樱花街18楼

 50m north of Heping Xiqiao (Line 5)

The first time I passed through Guizhou by train many years ago, I remember looking the province up in Lonely Planet, only to come across a rather harsh traditional saying describing Guizhou: “Not three feet of flat land, not three days without rain, not a family with three silver coins.” Ever since then, I’ve steered away from the province and its cuisine.

From the get go, the provincial government restaurant didn’t help alleviate my doubts, as even being seated was a trial, a perfect example of why nationalization – or perhaps provincialization – doesn’t work in the food and beverage industry. After 15 minutes of back and forth, with my party of three still forbidden to sit at a six-person table regardless of the fact that the restaurant was 95 percent empty, we were shoved into a dark corner.

We swiped through the sticky iPad, ordering the potato cake (RMB 36), the fried spring chicken with red chili (RMB 52), fried pork and bamboo shoots with chili sauce (RMB 58), and cold eggplant salad (RMB 28) from the “Guizhou

specials” tab.

Only minutes later, the star of the show arrived: the cold eggplant salad, which was a delightful mix of charred eggplant and peppers, vinegar, and the typical Chinese *liangcai* dressing. Flavors were fresh and moreish, bringing to mind Vietnamese cuisine.

The potato cake was also good: thin strips baked until golden and crispy, coated in just the right amount of spice. The fatty meat dishes, on the other hand, were disappointing.

Despite the anticlimax of the Provincial Government Restaurant, our interest in the cuisine itself had been piqued and we resolved to explore further. Thankfully Guizhou cuisine able to redeem the province’s reputation does exist in Beijing: the inappropriately-named Train Spotting, located in the courtyard of 46 Fangjia Hutong. Their mint and beef rolls won’t disappoint and their deep-fried eggplant dish topped off with coriander is always a hit. *Margaux Schreurs*



PHOTO: MARGAUX SCHREURS



BEIJING PIE

THE PIE'S THE LIMIT

Daily 10.30am-10pm. 159-2 Beiheyuan Dajie, Dongcheng District (6528 2187)

河沿肉饼：东城区北河沿大街159-2号

 1km west of Dengshikou (Line 5)

We are admittedly stretching the definition of Alleyway Gourmet with Beijing Pie, since its location one block east of the Forbidden City is hardly a sleepy byway (although these days you're just as likely to run into a flag-toting tour group in the hutongs as you are near the Forbidden City).

With a location so close to Beijing's defining tourist attraction (sorry Great Wall), it makes sense that Beijing Pie is shooting for both the local and foreign crowd. Although the restaurant was full of mostly local patrons when we visited one weekday lunch, the affable owner speaks excellent English and the menu has been translated, not to mention that the sign outside gave more than one of our party flashbacks to Chinese study flashcards.

Beijing Pie specializes in *roubing* – the eponymous “Beijing pie.” More of a pancake than a pie, *roubing* usually comes filled with pork or beef, but here they have also fancied it up with a Peking duck version. *Roubing* is

never going to be the healthiest of snacks, but Beijing Pie's version is remarkably grease-free and comes with a generous filling.

Pies aside, the restaurant also offers Chinese comfort food classics, mostly leaning towards a northern Chinese style. Portions are big and the food is homestyle – the kungpao chicken thigh (RMB 36), for example, is a simple, spicy stir-fry, rather than the sickly sweet deep-fried version you find in many restaurants. Our waiter was also happy to offer recommendations, suggesting a seasonal dish of stir-fried loofah sprouts (RMB 22).

Prices are a little higher than your average hole in the wall joint, but then this isn't your average hole in the wall joint – you're paying for a bright, clean restaurant with English-speaking servers. Don't worry though; you can still roll out of here extremely full for about RMB 50 per person. *Robynne Tindall*

BACK FOR MORE

NUAGE

MODERN VIETNAMESE IN A
TRADITIONAL CHINESE SETTING

BACK FOR MORE

Sun-Thu 11.30am-10pm, Fri-Sat 11.30am-10.30pm. 22
Qianhai Dongyan, Xicheng District (6401 9581)
西城区前海东沿22号

 200m north of Shichahai (Line 8)

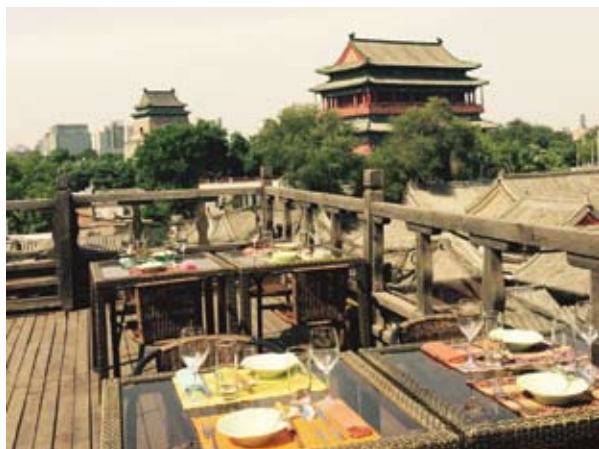
Nestled on the banks of Houhai, on the tourist-heavy side, lies the building of a Shandong cuisine *laozihao*, also known as a time-honored brand, and also home to a Vietnamese restaurant, Nuage. The atmosphere and location makes it worth taking visitors this way.

The food is decent: ingredients are fresh and combinations balanced, but the final kick is missing from some of the plates. The lightly-spiced green papaya salad (RMB 38) and the Saigon sizzling beef (RMB 78) are both missing punch. Although the beef is tender and cooked well, the sauce just doesn't pack enough flavor.

However, other dishes are beautiful. The assorted spring rolls (RMB 52) are a great mix of deep fried and fresh, something for everyone. Accompanied with a sweet-and-sour chili sauce, the filling retains its crunch and flavor.

If you are into fish, the Mekong blackfish soup (RMB 38 per person) is also a must. Whether you prefer soup to accompany your meal or as a starter, this light soup tastes of fresh fish but also allows typical Vietnamese spices to shine. The lemongrass prawns are definitely worth ordering too, as they are huge, fresh, and crispy, if you don't mind the mess of peeling them, that is.

All in all, this is one of the better options around Houhai, especially if you'd rather not eat *lamian* or even more Nanluogu Xiang-style snacks-on-sticks. Take visiting friends or your folks here instead for some soup, spring rolls, and prawns, and enjoy one of the few remaining relaxing venues at the lake. *Margaux Schreurs*



THE TREE

A TREE (STILL) GROWS IN SANLITUN

Wed-Mon 10am-10pm, closed Tue. 2-201, China View, Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District (8587 1561)

朝阳区工体东路中国红街2号楼201室

 800m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

I remember in 1996, a colleague telling me about the opening of a new bar in what was then Sanlitun South Bar Street (now underneath the cement of Sanlitun SOHO). It was called The Hidden Tree, and he uttered a phrase that few dared use then: "They have real pizza."

That was 1996. Hidden Tree was one of the last operating survivors of South Bar Street, until the walls came down and the mighty tree, hidden as it was, was finally felled. But unlike Minders Café and Café Café, two South Bar Street stalwarts that never reappeared, soon proprietor Patrick De Smet had found a new, similarly concealed courtyard site just off Sanlitun Back Street, complete with, of course, a large tree that once again sits at the middle of the restaurant.

The experience, and the menu, has changed little over the years. The Tree only does a few things, but does them well: pizzas baked in wood-fired oven; salads; toasted sandwiches, and beer. Oh yes, Belgian beer, did we mention that? While Belgian beer has proliferated in Beijing to the point of even having a bar named Brussels a few years ago (now The Local), it was The Tree that first purveyed it in quantity to the capital. And that's where The Tree made its name: the place where you could go and get an authentic, wood-fired, handmade pizza, fries/frites served with mayonnaise, and a cold Belgian beer to

wash it down.

I went back not so long ago to see what, if anything, had changed. Of course, there's now also Nearby the Tree, in case the extra 30 meters to reach The Tree is just too far, or in case your navigation skills suck and you can't find the flagship location.

The Tree still has the same artwork that has graced its walls at least since its opening – I even know the woman who served as the model (no no, it's not like that). The music is still generally dreadful. But no one goes to The Tree for that anyway. As the chill of November sets in, sitting next to the pizza oven sure feels warm and comfy. I ordered a number 10 pizza (RMB 75), with parma ham, olives, cheese, and tomato sauce. At times, it has been my favorite pizza in the world – sorry, New Jersey. I also asked for a Leffe Blonde draft (RMB 40). The mix of toppings with the mozzarella cheese was pleasingly salty and almost buttery, and Leffe was slightly sweeter as a result. It may have been the best pizza I've had there, but maybe I think that every time I go.

Longevity among Beijing eateries, especially those catering primarily to foreigners, is not common. But with owner De Smet having celebrated 25 years in Beijing in 2014, and this place going as strong as ever, there's no reason why this Tree won't continue to grow and grow.



PHOTO: THE BEIJINGER



MIAN HE TANG

HIDDEN HENAN

110, Bldg 3, China View, Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District (6771 2788)

面合堂：朝阳区工体东路2号中国红街3号楼110室

 900m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

The China View Building across from the east gate of the Workers' Stadium has, thanks to the likes of Korean restaurant Iki, the *Beijinger* Pizza Cup holders Gung Ho! Pizza, and Tribe Organic, and now new arrival Mian He Tang, become a dining destination in its own right.

Mian He Tang specializes in the cuisine of Henan province, one that often falls by the wayside in the face of culinary heavy hitters like Sichuan and Yunnan. Henan's, and thus Mian He Tang's, marquee dish is braised noodles, or *huimian*. The classic lamb *huimian* (RMB 28) features slippery, thick cut wheat noodles, silky glass noodles,

quail eggs, and *bok choy*, served in a broth of lamb bones cooked to a rich milky-whiteness (a vegetarian version is also available). We can see the savory, warming broth becoming a lunch time staple during the coming winter months.

The rest of the menu focuses on the steaming and stewing Henan is (somewhat) known for, such as a dish of tender pork, first fried then steamed with potatoes and lotus root (RMB 38, *surou kouwan*). Order up a bowl, grab a seat at the window side counter, and look smugly out on all the chilly fools wandering around outside.

Robynne Tindall

THE SWEET SIDE

FRANCESCO MANNINO, EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF, FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BEIJING

by Robynne Tindall

Newly arrived from London, Four Seasons Beijing's new Italian executive pastry chef tells us about his sudden conversion to the "sweet side," and about the challenges of balancing traditional Western pastry techniques with Asian tastes.

What is your culinary background? Where have you worked prior to joining the Four Seasons?

Although everybody in my family is passionate about cooking, I don't have a culinary background. I studied ancient Latin and Greek at school from an early age and I followed up at university by studying law in Rome. In my early 20s I had, let's say, a career change. I decided to pack my things and move to London. It was there that I stumbled into pastry. Since I had always been attracted to food culture, I decided to develop "my sweet side." I did my training in a number of five-star kitchens and establishments in London and Paris, where I also worked for Pierre Hermé, the master of pastry, for two years. This experience changed my vision. Back in London, I was head pastry chef at The Connaught Hotel and Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park before joining Four Seasons here in Beijing.

What inspired you to become a pastry chef?

My inspiration came from a desire for creativity, and a love of food and colors. In terms of people, Nicholas Patterson, my mentor during my time at Claridge's [in London], is the chef that I strongly feel inspired my career and helped me to achieve my goals.

How does being a pastry chef differ from being, say, a chef de partie?

The higher you go in the kitchen, whatever section you are in, the more responsibility you have. There are people to manage, budgets to meet, menus to create, and problems to solve. This is very challenging but also very exciting because I love what I am doing.

How do you find ideas and inspiration for new pastry and desserts?

Today social media has become more powerful and is in many ways the main source of my inspiration. Otherwise

I buy books, magazines, try food, and attend cake exhibitions. It sounds expensive but it is an investment in my career. I also get a lot of inspiration from nature.

What is your favorite dessert to eat and why?

I love mille feuille. It has great textural contrast and is very difficult to execute well. The puff pastry needs to be cooked to the right degree and caramelized well to create an insulating layer against the moisture of the cream. The filling needs to be firm and light, and it needs to be made fresh every day. In other words: tricky to master.

Which of your pastry and dessert creations are you most proud of?

All of them. When I produce something it is because I believe it is good and I put all my knowledge into it.

How do you balance catering for the different tastes of Chinese and Western guests?

Asian palates tend to prefer refreshing, less sweet desserts with more fruit content, while Westerners prefer richer desserts that have a crispy or crunchy texture. However, now I feel that people are more curious, adventurous, and willing to try new things. I try to fuse the two concepts and integrate some Asian flavors into my Western style.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS BEIJING



N

... naan 馕

If you order up a naan bread in a Xinjiang restaurant in Beijing and expect the pliable, teardrop shaped version common in South Asian restaurants, you are going to be severely disappointed. The style of Xinjiang naan most often encountered in Beijing is a sturdy, eminently stackable disc, the sort of thing you could pack as provisions for a long slog across the dessert. For something different, try it cubed and stir-fried with a hearty serving of grilled lamb, onions, and cilantro (*nangbao chaorou*).

... nangua 南瓜

A trip to any wet market in Beijing will reveal a dazzling array of squashes and gourds depending on the season, but for Western kitchens the most approachable is still the humble pumpkin, or *nangua*. *Nangua's* literal translation of "southern gourd" is simply because the bulbous beauty was first introduced via southern China. Our favorite Chinese pumpkin preparation is *nangua* bing, delightfully sticky pan-fried pancakes made with mashed pumpkin and glutinous rice (more on that below).

... ni 腻

The character *ni*, often translated as greasy or oily, is best imaged as the mouth-coating richness of a fatty, meaty dish such as slow-cooked pork belly. *To chini* (吃腻) is to eat so much of the same food – greasy or otherwise – that you get sick of it.

... nuomi 糯米

Often called sticky rice, glutinous rice (*nuomi*) shows up in a variety of forms in Chinese cuisine: milled into flour and used to make *niangao*, or glutinous rice cake; wrapped in bamboo leaves and steamed for *zongzi*; or topped with dried sausage and mushrooms for the savory Cantonese dish *nuomi fan*. Don't let the name confuse you – glutinous rice doesn't contain any gluten.



Bitter About Beijing

北京
BITTERS

Ross Harris of Mas Creates
Capital-Inspired Bitters

Bitters are like a spice cabinet for your bar top, and an easy way to take your cocktail creation to the next level by making it unique. All bitter brands are produced in countries outside of China and have a varying price depending on the scarcity and import tax of the product. Luckily for us, it's not very difficult to make your own with locally-sourced ingredients from the supermarket, that produces a unique Beijing flavor worth exploring. Ross Harris of Más created this special recipe from local ingredients, along with two cocktails that you can use it in.



Beijing Bitters Recipe

12 whole hawthorns
seeds from one pomegranate
large knob of ginger, peeled and diced
peel of one *chouju* (or any fragrant mandarin or tangerine)
3 tablespoons of Chinese brown sugar
5 cinnamon sticks, broken up
1 star anise
10 cloves
1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
1 teaspoon whole Sichuan peppercorns
1 large 500ml bottle of Erguotou

Place all ingredients in a large, heavy glass vessel. Using a Chinese rolling pin, crush ingredients very well. Once crushed, add the entire bottle of Erguotou and stir. Allow to sit for one week, shaking or stirring the mixture once a day.

After a week, it's all ready to go. Strain everything using a fine mesh metal strainer, then to further eliminate small bits of debris, strain again using a paper coffee filter. You can then bottle and store in the fridge. Should stay tasty for at least half a year.

These bitters are actually pretty subtle. Very fruity and funky, they would work well with aged rum, bourbon, cognac, red wine or fortified wine. One could use them in a Sazerac along with, or replacing, Pechaud's bitters. Flavor-wise, they pair with orange, cinnamon, grapefruit, apple, pear, and a variety of fall fruits.

"Kuazi" Sidecar

60ml cognac
15ml Grand Marnier
15ml cinnamon syrup
22ml fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon Beijing bitters, or more or less to taste

Shake ingredients well with ice. Strain using a mesh strainer into a pretty cocktail glass. Add bitters directly to top of drink. The name is the Chinese name for a motorcycle sidecar, which was a common trend to see a couple years back in Beijing. (I wonder why they all disappeared?)



"Best Time to Visit"

44ml bourbon
60ml fresh pressed ripe bosc pear juice
7ml runny honey*
1 lemon wedge
1 teaspoon Beijing bitters, or more or less to taste

Squeeze lemon wedge into shaker and drop in. Add rest of ingredients and shake very well. Add more honey if you have a sweet tooth. Pour everything in an old fashioned glass and garnish with a pear slice. The name comes from that common expression that the best time to visit Beijing is autumn.

*Melt one part honey melted with one part hot water. Allow to cool before using.



WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS



FANG BAR

SHARP COCKTAILS ON FANGJIA

Sun-Thu 7pm-2am, Fri-Sat 6pm-3am. 61 Fangjia Hutong, Dongcheng District (158 1038 2089)

东城区方家胡同61号

 500m south of Andingmen (Line 2)

It looks like Fangjia Hutong just grew a small but wild fang, spewing out serious drinks dreamed up by some talented cocktail fiends. Sitting just beside El Nido, this bar will certainly add to this hutong's reputation, as it was previously associated with decent eating and cheap beer consumption.

The menu is experimental in a way that we enjoy, using local Beijing ingredients, and creating some unique jams for flavoring drinks, bypassing infusions and bitters all together. While these experiments might not be agreeable to every palette, it hasn't stopped Fang Bar from quickly growing a dedicated following. We suppose taste is in the mouth of the consumer or something of the like.

We kicked off our boozy adventure with the Journey to the West (RMB 65), which was created with dates flambéd in overproof rum, and then tumbled together with brown sugar, dark rum, and apricot brandy. Pyrotechnics aside, it ended up being a delightful blend of sweet and sour

fit for a king of the monkey variety.

Next, we were treated to one of their shooters called the Fangrita: primarily a mid-level tequila served in a shot glass and then chased down with a mix of spiced citrus juices. We enjoy this kind of mix between high and low-brow, and have always wondered why many cocktail bars shy away from shooters. We appreciate Fang Bar for not being a one trick pony, and not only catering to the classy date crowd but by also being a respectable venue for those looking to get their drink on before a big night out.

Essentially Fang Bar is applying a bunch of good ideas that include having an impeccable atmosphere, solid drinks, and a unique concept to guarantee their success. You can tell that a lot of thought and elbow grease went into this venture, so we wish them the best of luck in being the odd but beautiful and classy duckling in this bustling hutong. *Kipp Whittaker*

PHOTO COURTESY OF FANG BAR

WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS

8-BIT

GAME ON

Tues-Sat 5pm-late, Sun 3pm-late, closed Monday. 13 Beilougu Xiang, Dongcheng District (134 8878 3848_东城区北锣鼓巷13号)

🚶 400m southwest of Andingmen (Line 2)

Many of us were very excited about the opening of the new and enlarged 8-Bit. We didn't quite expect the vast improvements that have been made and it took us a while to process. The new space at the top of Beiluogu Xiang is an ambitious gaming lounge, eatery, and cocktail bar that is playing diligently to appeal to everyone on at least three different levels, including a terrace.

On its way to becoming a Library of Alexandria for video games, 8-Bit is in our opinion the most dedicated venue for gameplay in the city. Adding five new gaming stations to the three they had previously at the old location on Jiaodaokou, they now boast every console worth having; Wii, PlayStation 4, Sega, Nintendo, and a pretty sick arcade console (though it would be dope to see a little Sega Saturn or Dreamcast in the ranks). This doesn't even include all the hardcore gamers talking

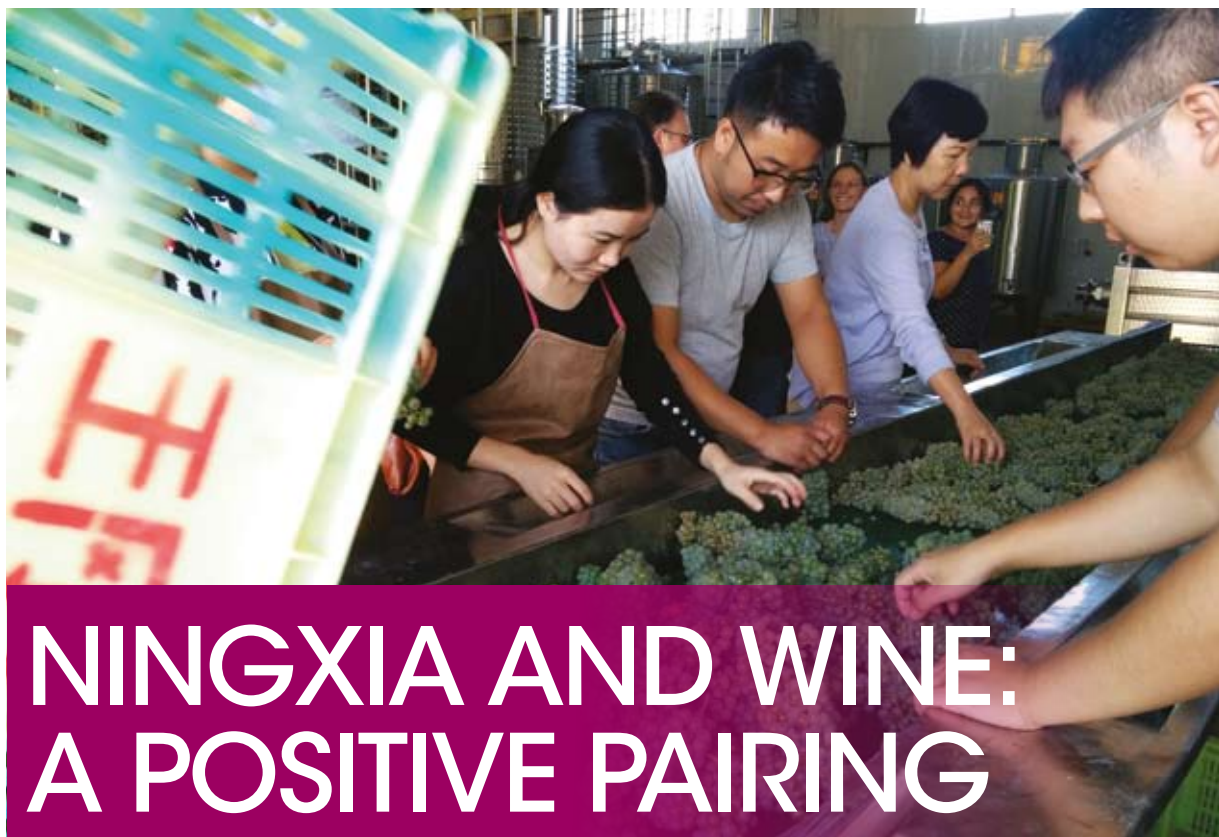
shop and looking up various secret move combinations on their laptops.

It's an intense vibe that's matched with a cool playlist, somewhere in between a Guy Ritchie or John Hughes movie soundtrack. The cocktails are also a dramatic improvement. Our favorites are the Perfect Dark (RMB 50), which has a nice caramel-flavored nectar, and Yoshi's Envy (RMB 50) reminiscent of the Hi-C Ectocooler from our youth that's deliciously combined with basil. These are like big kid cocktails: flavors that are fun for your mouth and give you a refined sugar high.

Break for a minute with their sushi burritos, burgers, and other snacks that totally match the vibe of this place. With three stories of fun to be had, 8-Bit mark II avoids the congestion of the previous location, not to mention there's a bathroom on premises, which all too many hutong venues lack. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER



NINGXIA AND WINE: A POSITIVE PAIRING

ONE OF CHINA'S LEAST VISITED AREAS IS HOME TO ITS BEST VINO

by Jim Boyce

Until recently, Ningxia and quality wine were an unexpected pairing, much like chili and chocolate, Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga, or Jamaicans and Olympic bobsledding must have seemed at first.

Consider that this region, some 1,100 kilometers west of Beijing, is smack dab in a harsh swath of northern China, fringed by desert on three sides, and home to winters so cold, dry, and windy that exposed vines are at risk of annihilation. That the Hui ethnic group represents a third of the population there and is Muslim. Or that China is far from having a global reputation for quality for its locally-produced beverages.

It doesn't seem quite the place to associate with fine wine. But Ningxia has been drawing a good deal of attention over the past five years. Its award shelf is crowded with medals from contests held everywhere from Shanghai and Hong Kong to London and Paris. It's home to a diverse group of producers that span boutique

family-owned wineries to an operation with measured capacity in the tens of millions of bottles. And it has a blend of inspired, local winemakers and seasoned global consultants pushing for even greater things. Speeding it along is massive government support for infrastructure and technical exchanges, with wine seen as useful for preventing desertification, due to land reclaimed for vineyards, and as the kind of value-added product to help reduce the income gap between China's coastal provinces and its interior areas.

It also helps that Ningxia has reasonably good conditions for grapes, in terms of its growing season, ample sunshine, and soils, with key vineyards neatly set between the protective facade of the Helan Mountain range and the meandering Yellow River. There are challenges, from water and labor scarcity to those harsh winters, which require burying vines each autumn and uncovering them each spring, but these haven't stopped Ningxia so far.

There is another key challenge: finding the better Ningxia wines in the region itself. Eight years of trips, with checks at shops, bars, and restaurants in the capital of Yinchuan, have turned up surprisingly few top brands. This is no doubt partly due to low production and high prices, and the popularity of beer and baijiu, but it is nevertheless striking. Last month I saw Goose Island beer from Chicago in Yinchuan but nary a bottle of Kanaan wine. It's a different story in Beijing, where these wines can be more easily found.

Here's a quick introduction to some Ningxia labels that have won awards and that deserve a place on your dinner table.

Silver Heights: Bordeaux-trained Emma Gao helped put Ningxia on the map with her first Cabernet-driven wines in 2007. Last year she took her operation from "garage" scale – a small shed within Yinchuan city limits – to a far larger winery near the base of the Helan Mountains, where she is putting a rockier terrain to the test. Silver Heights' two top options, Family Reserve (about RMB 300) and The Summit (about RMB 500) are pricey, like many Chinese wines, but worth trying. I suggest letting them breathe for an hour. Gao's first white wine, a Chardonnay, will be available in November. Distributed by Torres, available at Everwines (everwines.com), Pudao Wines.

Kanaan: Owner Wang Fang a.k.a. "Crazy Fang" spent more than a decade in Germany before returning to Ningxia and getting into the wine business. The best bets are the dry Riesling (RMB 150), inspired by her time in Germany, and the vibrant and slightly spicy "Pretty Pony"

Cabernet-Merlot (RMB 298). Those with a sweet tooth will get a kick from the off-dry white blend (RMB 150). Distributed by Summergate, available at Pudao Wines, trb-wine.com.

Chandon: The local branch of mother company Moët & Chandon in France, which also has bubbly operations in Australia, Brazil, India, and the United States, produced its first commercial wines last year under the eye of veteran winemaker Gloria Xu. If you need to choose between brut and rose, take the former (RMB 175). Available at Metro, City Shop, Mali Wine Cellar.

Helan Qing Xue: Winemaker/bundle of energy Zhang Jing has been visiting wine regions in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to fine-tune her wine-making skills, thus showing this operation's claim to fame – the first in China to win an international trophy from Decanter – has only stoked its ambitions. The wines are pricey, ranging from rmb360 to RMB 898, although hopefully the soft, supple, and less expensive "Qing Xue" brand will be available soon. Distributed by Wine Republic, Mali's Wine Cellar, trb-wine.com.

And there are more. Helan Mountain, the local label of global heavyweight Pernod Ricard, has received good reviews, especially for its Special Reserve Chardonnay. Mega producer Changyu has teamed with Austrian winemaker Lenz Moser in Ningxia and will release its first rose next year. And at least a dozen more producers have taste-worthy wines – and hopefully soon the distributors to deliver them in Beijing.





CHARLIE CHAPLIN BAR

FAR FROM CLUMSY COCKTAILS

Daily 7pm-2am. 27 Sanlitun Beilu, Chaoyang District (134 8885 3994)

朝阳区三里屯北区27号

 400m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Any time you use a celebrity, dead or living, to represent your business, you risk it seeming a bit contrived. Obviously the Chaplin estate had no say in the matter, but this is pretty much where our qualms ended, as luckily there were no exploding cigars, seltzer waters to the face or other slapstick shenanigans to deal with, only delicious cocktails at this new Sanlitun bar.

What Charlie Chaplin Bar is doing correctly begins with the ambiance, featuring numerous antiques and a warm amber glow that was definitely to our liking. While the speakeasy-style bar has been blowing up for the past two years, we are getting a little tired of this cookie cutter trend. This being said, Chaplin's is doing it a fair bit better than the others.

Now on to the drinks. First off, since we've been on a little bit of a tiki binge, we asked for a rum-based tropical drink. The main barman, Nick, came up with

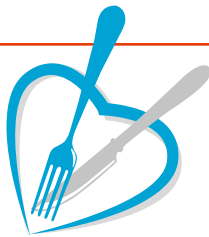
30 Years of Fun (RMB 80), a flashy display of Polynesian flair accompanied with a side of bitter melon, which we assume was put there as a garnish because it did nothing to benefit the cocktail. The drink was on the sweet side, which was to be expected, and gave us a cool island vibe. Next up was the gin fizz (RMB 80), which is pretty standard but exactly what we needed, featuring a cool citrus bite to purge that bitter melon taste from our mouths. Just a classic drink made to textbook specifications, with mid to top-shelf spirits.

The bartender previously worked at W Hotels in Taipei and in Beijing, so he is very familiar with the concept of hospitality. This matched with the fact that he's not afraid to experiment with flavors, or confined to a menu, makes this a good and intimate option any day of the week.

Kipp Whittaker

P.S. WE ATE YOU

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



sweet and sour mandarin fish

Country Kitchen, RMB 270

We love Country Kitchen for their faithful renditions of northern Chinese noodle dishes, but their southern cooking is equally as satisfying. Their version of the Suzhou dish "squirrel fish" (*songshu guiyu*) is among the best we've had, with the sweet and sour sauce made from real fruit juices, and the underlying fish crisped to perfection.

laoman xianbing

Xianlaoman, RMB 28

Xianlaoman's hefty stuffed pancakes come in sets of three, but we challenge you to make it through even one on top of all those dumplings. The signature non-vegetarian version come stuffed with an umami-rich mixture of Chinese chives (*jiucaï*), pork, and dried shrimp.

three-cup black cod

Jing Yaa Tang, RMB 238

The traditional version of this popular Taiwan dish cooks chicken with a cup each of soy sauce, rice wine, and sesame oil, with added ginger, garlic, and basil. Jing Yaa Tang's version is elevated with tender cubes of flaky black cod, plus the addition of sneakily hot fresh chilies.

lox and cream cheese bagel

9cmBagel, RMB 30

From the ashes of now defunct Tavalin Bagels comes 9cmBagel, a new company focused on bringing the bagels to you. Order your lox and cream cheese bagel – a serviceable rendition of one of our favorite carbs – on WeChat or over the phone. There are still some kinks to be worked out, but former fans of Tavalin won't be too disappointed.

gheimeh bademjan

Rumi, RMB 79

An on-a-whim order from Sherpa's led us to discover this delicious wintery dish, perhaps our favorite thing on the menu at Rumi. Tender lamb and grilled eggplant are stewed with yellow split peas in a fragrant tomato sauce. Dried Iranian limes add a palate-pleasing sour note.

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Things to do, places to be, stuff to try

GO

JIM TAILOR // GUANGFU MUSEUM SHOP // HIROSHIMA // ASICS //



PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

NOV 17 - DEC 20 – After 29 years, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* is still a masterpiece of musical theater. Starring Brad Little as the Phantom, and Emilie Linn as Christine, here's your chance at catching one of the most famous stories ever told at the brand new Tianqiao Performance Center. RMB 180-1,180. 7:30pm. Tianqiao Performance Center. (6406 8888)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZERS

JIM TAILOR

BUDGET BESPOKE AT YASHOW

Daily 10am-10pm. 4/F, Yashow, Sanlitun, 58 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (6462 6062)

朝阳区工体北路58号三里屯雅秀四层



500m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

The famed Yashow market has been reincarnated after an extensive renovation. There's something particularly unsettling and even a little creepy about the empty shopping mall that only re-opened to the public about a month ago: lots of shine and polish but not a whole lot of people.

One thing that hasn't changed with the upgrade, and has maybe even improved, is the assortment of tailors on the fourth floor. This has actually grown in size and includes a more varied assortment of styles, in a cleaned up atmosphere and at more or less the same prices as before. We checked out Jim Tailor, one of the more fashionable options and a new kid on the block, hailing from Tianjin. Sitting just east of the escalator, suits range from RMB 1,000-15,000 and like all tailors, the pricing heavily depends on the quality of the fabric chosen. Options include both imported and domestic fabrics.

They don't have any style books on hand, but they do have samples set up around the store that you can examine for inspiration. You can also bring a picture along if you already know what you want. After measurements have been taken you will be asked to return seven to 10 days later for a fitting.

In addition to suits, they have custom shoes made from some pretty funky leathers, like fish and crocodile skin, that will set you back anywhere from RMB 5,000-20,000. Most of these looked a little too "pimpy" for our taste, so we passed on the footwear.

One big plus is that the man we talked to spoke decent English, which proved extremely helpful when trying to explain that we needed a Colonel Sanders style suit complete with Kentucky necktie. Don't ask. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER

GUANGFU MUSEUM SHOP

THIS BELONGS IN A MUSEUM ... SHOP

Daily 10am-10pm. 51-17 Di'anmen Xidajie, Xicheng district (8322 8818)

西城区地安门西大街51-17号

 500m east of Beihai North (Line 6)

While Houhai can be too touristy for the tastes of long-time Beijingers, there is now at least one quality souvenir shop that even locals can appreciate. That's why we have officially declared Guangfu Museum the go-to classy knick-knack shop for the discerning traveler.

The store was founded by writer Ma Weidu and currently has locations in four cities across China. This particular store has three levels, where you'll find a barrage of boutique textiles, tea accessories, jewelry, and statuettes from moderately priced to fairly expensive.

We loved some of their more affordable items, such as the bamboo tea containers (RMB 120) used for keeping your tea leaves fresh, the collection of scarves (RMB 155), and the woven basket purses (RMB 800). The bottom floor is where you'll find most of the utilitarian objects

like kitchen wares, notebooks, and fedoras.

In more ways than one Guangfu Museum is a mixture of a fancy gift shop and something like Restoration Hardware or Pottery Barn owing to the fact that they have a little of everything. They even have a couple of weird items in the mix that don't make sense, like a sonic denture sanitizer, mink oil, and about 30 different type of soap. One area of the bottom floor was dedicated to cheap hair bands that seemed out of place and were probably added to fill the space with color.

That being said, we'll return come time for the holidays as there are plenty of fancy trinkets for that momma bear or crazy tea enthusiast in your life. I know for sure mine would totally dig the lucky cat slippers (RMB 1,800) from local footwear designer Bing Xu. You can't really go wrong with gifting cat-themed apparel. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER



HIROSHIMA

A TRAUMATIZED CITY RICH WITH HISTORY, WARMTH, AND ... OKONOMIYAKI

By Tom Arnstein

It is unlikely that Hiroshima will shake its reputation as the first city to be the victim of a nuclear bomb, but far from tumbling into despondency as one might after such extreme shock, the city shows few signs of the trauma that devastated it 70 years ago. Instead, the Japanese coastal municipality has woven the events of August 6, 1945 into its conscious narrative while embracing outside influences, which posits it as the perfect getaway, rich with history and modern touches, and surrounded by smaller cities of exceeding beauty.

The center of Hiroshima is easy to navigate – 30 minutes by foot or a quick ride via the city's tram system will get you almost anywhere – and as with most mid-size cities in Japan, it is organized around a main indoor mall home to a mixture of big brands and neighborhood stores that allow for easy gift shopping on your way out.

Starting off in the south-east of the city, visitors can get a good introductory feel of Hiroshima and its past with a stroll down Heiwa-Odori, or Peace Avenue, which leads all the way up to the Peace Memorial Museum and Park. A visit to the museum is a must. Events that were once nebulous and distant come into sharp focus, largely through the harrowing anecdotes of school children and the articles that they left behind in the hours after the blast. Volunteers are on hand to describe the immediate explosion and the secondary effects of the radiation in better detail. The latter exhibits of the museum set out to

inform of the ongoing dangers of atomic war, taking a firm anti-nukes approach. Walking north from the museum, the Genbaku Dome, one of the few structures that survived the blast, stands defiant and acts as a temporal and structural marker for where Little Boy exploded as well as an area enjoyed by locals who congregate by the river to chat and eat lunch.

Gastronomically, Hiroshima is best known for its *okonomiyaki* (RMB 45), a thick, pancake-like mess of a food made with egg, cabbage, soba noodles, and meat, seafood, or cheese. To demonstrate the local pride that arises from this most fitting of beer accompaniments, there's an entire six-floor building dedicated to it in the form of Okonomi-mura. Once stuffed, craft beer lovers will want to head to Raku Beer – one of Hiroshima's, and Japan's, best taprooms – boasting an admirable 17 taps and an excellent mix of brews from all over the country. Although not particularly cheap (upwards of RMB 60 for 500ml), the space and warm atmosphere afford a place to relax after a taxing day.


Hiroshima has enough sites to warrant a stay of a few days but more curious travelers, aided by Japan's vast and convenient high speed rail system, may want to consider day trips to Miyajima and its floating *torii* (gate) to the west and Japan's best-preserved white castle, Himeji, in the east.

ASICS

FUNCTION OVER FASHION SNEAKERS

Daily 10am-10pm. S4-28, 2/F, Taikoo Li Sanlitun South, Chaoyang District (6415 2813)

朝阳区三里屯太古里南区S4-28 2层

 500m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

While there is a flagship store at Taikoo Li for almost every major brand of athletic shoe, none of these locations are as fitness focused as the new ASICS shop. Sitting in the space previously occupied by Blue Hawaii, this ASICS location differs greatly from its Onitsuka Tiger store and competition in the basement. While the Onitsuka classics, made popular by Kill Bill and Bruce Lee, are extremely fashionable, we wouldn't recommend running a marathon in these antiquated sneakers.

It is clear that ASICS focuses on performance rather than aesthetics. Seriously, the look of some of these shoes brings to mind the image of a little kid that has followed a diet of only Airheads and Skittles being sick all over your feet.

However, ASICS doesn't have to care about looks: they are ranked among the top performance footwear brands in the market. Right now their top-of-the-line shoe is

the Gel Kayano (RMB 1,390). Weighing in at 320g, they have been praised for their memory foam cushioning and durability. We hope the store will stock the new Gel Lyte EVO Collection, which was just released in the US on October 14. With a shell that mimics the armor worn by 12th century Japanese warriors, these elegant but functional kicks offer the best of both worlds.

In addition to sneakers, there's an average selection of fall and winter workout gear, including spandex pants (RMB 350) and windbreakers (RMB 590). The prices seem reasonable compared to other fitness apparel shops, which don't bat an eyelash about overcharging you for their imported threads.

If you are looking to take your fitness habits to the next level, or maybe getting ready for one of those marathon thingies, then this store has the products you need. Lightweight, durable, and ready to take you down that long and windy fitness road in comfort. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER

STAND UP COMEDY SHOW



DAMIAN CLARK



PAUL ZENON



ANDREW STANLEY



"Every joke – and I honestly do mean every single joke – is genuinely, gut-bustingly funny."
- Three Weeks

"The antithesis of the naff magician: he's fast, he's fresh, he's funny as hell and he's going to be massive"
- Comedy Review

"What the fringe is all about, young comics showing off their talents and having a fun time doing it"
- Fresh FM

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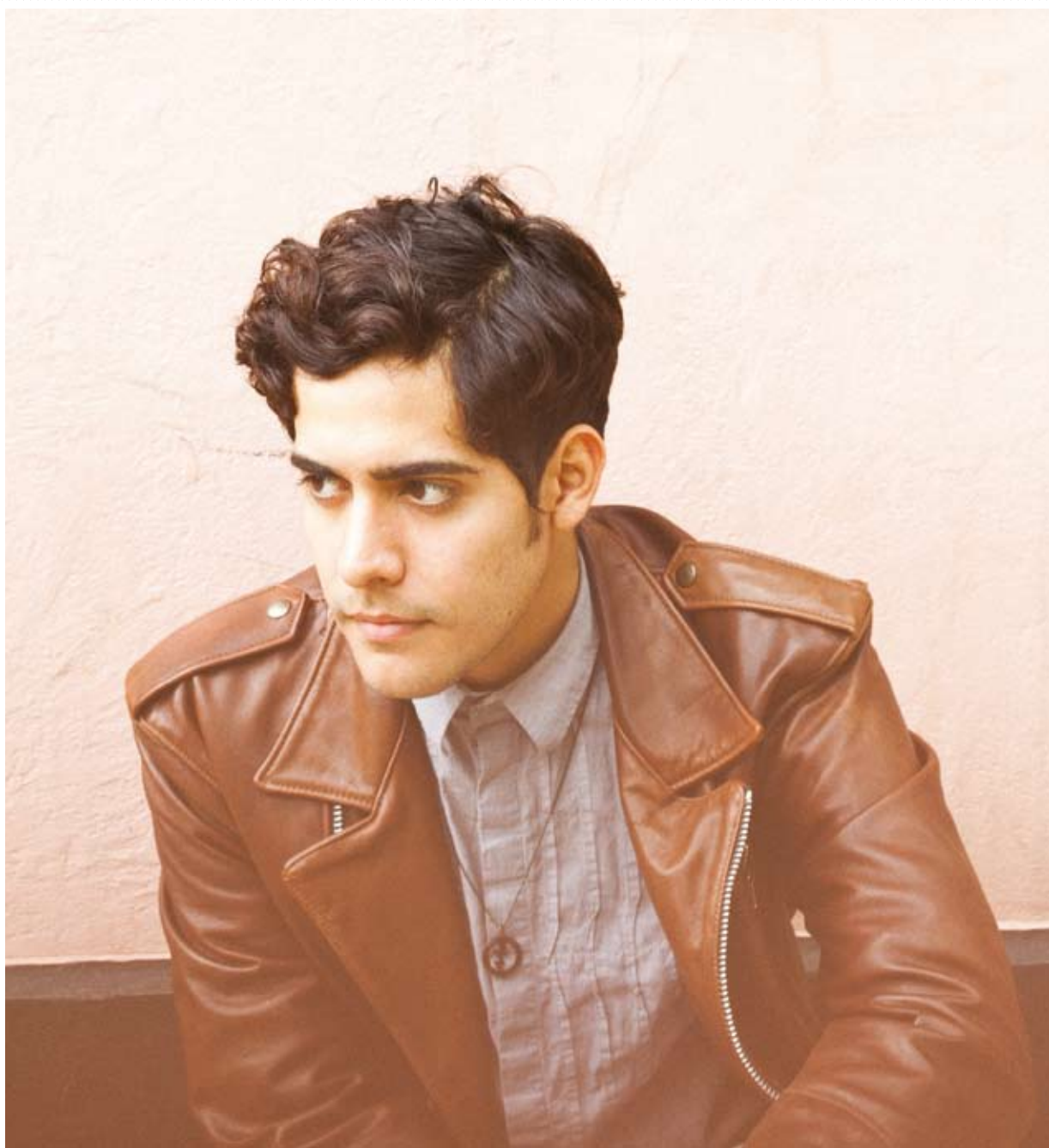

Hilton
BEIJING
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Introducing the people who matter

MEET

PUNCHLINE COMEDY // AMY DAML // ZHANG YUDAI // WILLIAM LINDESAY // DJ KEL



NEON INDIAN

NOV 19 - Riding on the wave of his critically-acclaimed new album, *VEGA INTL Night School*, Alan Palomo's Neon Indian project hits Beijing this month with his new and improved sense of sleaze that will surely make it a naughty night to remember. RMB 150, RMB 120 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZERS

PUNCHLINE COMEDY CLUB RETURNS WITH THREE COMEDIANS, NOV 24-25

STAND-UP FROM AUSTRALIA, IRELAND,
AND THE UK DOES A TWO-NIGHT STAND IN BEIJING

By Steven Schwankert

There's been a bit of a proliferation of comedy activity in the last two or three years in Beijing, but still a lack of, um, what's the word for it – professional comedy. Even Da Shan thinks he's a comedian these days. However, Punchline Comedy Club, a production of REDSTARWorks, brings people you may have even heard of before, more likely having seen them on foreign television or YouTube, and the Beijinger is now proud to be the exclusive media sponsor for this and future comedy events.

Punchline Comedy Club's history dates back to 1994, when its shows first started bringing overseas comics to Hong Kong. Punchline events now regularly take place in Beijing, Shanghai, and 10 other Asian cities, along with the Middle East and Australia.

Punchline's upcoming Beijing shows on November 24-25 will follow their usual format, with three comedians each performing a set. The November 24 show will be held at The Garage in Shunyi, and the show on the 25th at the Beijinger's local, The Local.

Aussie boy Damian Clark burst onto the UK comedy circuit in 2012 where his high-octane observational stand up has certainly caused some waves. Clark's infectious energy and childlike outlook has had audiences in hysterics from the get-go and was snapped up immediately to appear on BBC3 and Comedy Central. Edinburgh magazine *Three Weeks* said of Clark, "Every joke – and I honestly do mean every joke – is genuinely, gut-bustingly funny."

Paul Zenon is an English stage and TV magician, comedian, presenter, corporate entertainer, commentator,

writer, and actor. He has appeared in numerous television shows and is an outspoken skeptic with strong views on claims of psychic abilities and the paranormal. He is the author of three books and an expert on the magician, escape artiste, and spiritualist debunker Harry Houdini, and the history of magic and variety. Paul is a member of the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star status.

Andrew Stanley, from Ireland, is a comedian and TV personality best known for his appearances as host of hit RTE 2 TV show *I Dare Ya*. He has also featured on Neil Delamere's *Just For Laughs*, RTE's *The Cafe*, *Podge and Rodge*, *Liffey Laughs*, and *Tubridy Tonight*.

There's a bit of language in the shows that isn't always appropriate for children, and as such the shows are adults only.

To purchase tickets to either show, call Ian at 139 06390437, Abbey at 130 0116 1577, email info@redstarworks.com, or visit their website, www.punchlinecomedy.com/beijing/.



AMY DAML

HOST OF BEIJING STORYTELLERS AND
CURATOR AT LORELI-CHINA.COM



Favorite book from childhood?

Where the Wild Things Are. This book has great illustrations and a good moral. Don't be a jerk to your mom or she's going to withhold your dinner until you hallucinate. Let the wild rumpus start!!

Book you wish you had written?

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I really wish I were witty and nerdy enough to write a popular sci-fi series with its own novelty towels.

If you only ever read one book about China, make it ...

I would say *Factory Girls* by Leslie Chang because it is one of the best books that looks into the lives of migrant workers and even though it's heartbreaking, it shows some girls really kicking ass at climbing the ladder.

What's a good book to read during turbulence?

A book of crappy poetry written by a guy you made out with once (title to remain unnamed) because knowing that this is only his first published book makes you want to die.

Book you wish you hadn't read?

The Book From Above. I only read this book of crappy poetry because I got peer pressured into buying it to support the guy I made out with once. Since it costs a fortune for Amazon to send books to China, I figured I'd read it to get my money's worth. It was not worth my money.

What's the last book you read?

Empire of the Sun. We read it for book club at The Bookworm. I like to read personal accounts of historical events that occurred in places I travel. I actually thought it was fiction because it was so well written as a story until I read the little blurb on the front cover stating that, for the most part, this is the recollection of the author's experiences in Shanghai during World War II.

What's the last book you bought?

The Wisdom of Yoga. An RMB 5 impulse purchase found because I happened to attend a book sale at the same time that I was thinking, "I should get in shape."

What book do you pretend to have read, but haven't really?

Invisible Man. Don't tell my college professor, but I never finished this book for class. I got about three-quarters of the way and then just read the summary to find out what happened. I always meant to go back and finish reading it, but I got lazy.

Which fictional "world" would you most like to be part of?

I think it'd be cool to visit the Whos down in Whoville, but only after the Grinch gave Christmas back to them.

Loreli is accepting essays related to the theme of indulgence until November 20. RMB 1,000 will go to the winner. Send your submissions to rss@lorel-china.com

ZHANG YOUDAI

BEIJING'S FIRST RADIO HEAD

Responsible for pioneering Western music to millions throughout the past two decades via his radio show, Zhang Youdai found his start like any pre-Internet DJ, would by playing tapes at parties. He's still at it. Before his upcoming gig at Lantern this month, he talked to us about the past and the present.

Tell us a little about your history as DJ.

I was a DJ before I even knew what that meant. I started when I was in college at the Central Academy of Drama in the 80s. I was very into rock music when I was young, and at that time in China, not many people were listening to that kind of music, because there was no radio, no music shops, nothing. I found some foreign students to bring tapes back for me and I would play these at underground parties.

How did you first get into radio?

Then an American guy came to me and said, "you are a DJ." I had no idea what the meant, but he had a radio program on CRI every Sunday morning. Anyway, they needed a producer and decided to take me on to do the job. At first I just wrote scripts and translated the lyrics to the songs.

Do you remember the first song you ever played on the radio?

I'll never forget. It was "Radio Gaga," by Queen. That was the first time I did the midnight show, and I kicked it off with this song and said, "Now your radio will never be the same, and it's going to rock your life." That first rock show was called "New Rock Magazine."

How did you go from rock to also DJing electronic music in clubs?

When I was 19 rock n roll music changed my life, but ten years later house and techno music changed my life. Bands like Chemical Brothers, Underworld, and Prodigy were able to give the rock n roll soul a digital life. At the time, there were no clubs in Beijing. No country clubs either (laughs). Only bars and restaurants, and we would rent out a place during the weekend. After organizing parties for a while, I decided to start DJing electronic music

myself. So I bought two turntables, borrowed vinyl from friends, and practiced, practiced, practiced at home.

Along with being a DJ on the radio and in the nightlife circuit, you are a promoter for concerts. If you could bring any band or musician to China, who would it be?

I would like to bring Prince. Prince is my music god. Purple Rain was my first experience with rock n' roll, and he pioneered playing a kind of computer music, mixed with funk and rock that's just amazing. I've seen him five times.

Catch Youdai at Lantern on November 7.



THE GREAT WALL IN 50 OBJECTS

EXPLORER, GEOGRAPHER, AND BEIJINGER WILLIAM LINDESAY TELLS US WHAT'S LEFT TO DISCOVER ABOUT THE GREAT WALL

By Steven Schwankert

William Lindesay is a fanatic. While he may be a caring father of two boys, a loving husband, and an occasional innkeeper and photo guide, the study and conservation of the Great Wall of China is at the center of his life. It's been that way ever since a run with his brother along Hadrian's Wall in the UK, and a dream that one day, he might do the same thing on China's iconic, protective artifice. He got that chance in 1987, and completed what the Xinhua News Agency called "the most successful foreign exploration of the Great Wall."

In 2012, Lindesay discovered a previously unknown section of wall in Mongolia, along with Mongolia Professor Baasan Tudev, which he estimated to date to the Yuan Dynasty, in the 11th or 12th century.

Lindesay's fifth book, *The Great Wall in 50 Objects*, takes a fresh look at Beijingers' favorite Wonder of the World by using things found on and around the Wall to tell its story. "At first I looked for similar objects to group together. But

my son Jimmy started to put contrasting objects with each other, and that made more sense," Lindesay said.

Lindesay explains the story-via-objects methodology in the book's introduction: "How many objects? Surely a structure as long as the Great Wall merited a telling with a good number. The construction history of the Great Wall, actually a series of border-defense systems, spans approximately 2,000 years from around the third century BC to the mid-17th century, during which time umpteen different great walls – perhaps sixteen – built by different dynasties appeared in the northern territories of their domains.

"Of these, it is the Ming Dynasty Great Wall which is the face of the great walls as the world knows it today. As it's 'only' 500 years old on average, and therefore the best preserved of all the great walls, there is a plethora of antiquities that show and tell its history. That dynastic period alone could generate fifty objects worthy of study. But the Great Wall's story goes well beyond the Ming Wall's story; at least equal coverage of the pre-Ming era seemed reasonable.

"Was there any need to choose a round number, other than for neatness' sake? One hundred objects, I decided, would be too many for the magazine [the book began as a series of articles for the Chinese edition of *National Geographic*, but included too much material for the final published volume] to commit to, and for readers to absorb. I'd conceived my project, after all, as an exhibition which would showcase only the most enlightening, significant stories. This was not an academic project, a storage room; I wanted the exhibition to be succinct, accessible and personal."

After explaining the history of masks, weapons, drinking vessels, and wooden items, the book actually ends with a 51st object, the Borgia Great Wall scroll, which once belonged to that powerful Spanish family. We'll let you read that story for yourself.

Look for William Lindesay's The Great Wall in 50 Objects at the Bookworm later in November.

Photos and excerpt from the book The Great Wall in 50 Objects by William Lindesay published by Viking Penguin 2015.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WILLIAM LINDESAY

DJ KEL

THE GROOVE SESSIONS, CHINA RADIO INTERNATIONAL, 91.5 FM

It's almost jarring the first time you radio dial (now a digital scanner) lands on China Radio International's (CRI) 91.5 FM between 5-7pm, and the music coming out of your speakers sounds way too, well, funky, for what you'd expect from a state broadcaster. Thanks to DJ Kel (nee Kelechi Anyalewechi) and his nightly show The Groove Sessions, along with his occasional live sets around town, drive time radio in Beijing is a whole lot groovier. We asked him about some of his musical choices and influences.

Can you play any instruments? If so, what?

Man, I wish I could play an instrument. I would love to play the guitar. I was in the UK recently, and my brother lent me his. I was trying to play chords that I learned from YouTube lessons, but for me, it's so hard. This kind of thing takes a lot of patience, which I don't have. I should have learned when I was younger.

If you could sing like a person, who would you choose?

I like a distinctive voice, and there are a lot of vocalists that would influence me if I was a singer. Kurt Cobain, Mike Patton, Omar {UK soul singer}, Al Green. Even some female singers, I admire, too. Lisa Shaw, Erykah Badu, Aya. Too many to mention.

What was the first record you ever bought?

I may regret answering to this one because it's nothing that I'm proud of, but it could be a lot worse, trust me. The first album I bought was by a rock band from the UK



called Cast. A CD called All Change, and the first single I bought was by The Lightning Seeds, the song that they did for the England football team in 1996, called "Three Lions." I actually remember going into the HMV store and buying it.

What's the worst song for getting stuck in your head all day?

The singer Pink, has a song called "So What?" that is very catchy and annoying at the same time. Even thinking about it now, it's re-entered my head.

With what artist would you choose to take a long journey?

After watching his biopic, it would have to be Jim Morrison. There are many others, too, but that film blew me away, so I guess he would have some great stories to tell, if he were still alive.

What was your favorite period or year for music?

It depends on the genre: hip-hop music, 1987-1996; house music, 1995-now; metal, 1990s; soul, 1960s until 1982; drum n' bass, 1991-1997.

Catch The Groove Sessions daily from 5-7pm on 91.5 FM.

DJ KEL'S FIVE-SONG PLAYLIST



"Waiting for the Night"
by **Depeche Mode**



"Be Quiet and Drive (Far Away)"
by **Deftones**



"Hold It Down"
by **4 Hero**



"Chief Rocka"
by **Lords of the Underground**



"Les Fleurs"
by **Minnie Riperton**

FAN POPO

FILMMAKER TAKING ON CENSORS IN LAWSUIT
TALKS ABOUT MAMA RAINBOW AND THE JOURNEY
TOWARDS PAPA RAINBOW

by Margaux Schreurs



Beijing filmmaker Fan Popo is all over the media, following the news that a Beijing court has accepted his lawsuit against censors that took down his popular 2012 documentary titled *Mama Rainbow*, which follows mothers of gay children throughout China. The film documents mothers' responses to their children coming out and their unconditional love and support for their children; some mothers are positive from the very beginning, while others' talk about their transformation and change of attitude.

Fan's 30-minute long documentary was previously available on many Chinese video streaming platforms, namely Youku, Tudou, and 56.com, getting huge amounts of hits and receiving comments and reviews from people from all walks of life, both positive and negative. We sat down to talk to him about the situation with his current documentary, struggles for filmmakers, and his future plans.

"At the end of last year [2014], a friend of mine asked me for a link so that his friend could watch *Mama Rainbow*, however, I could not find it. So I checked the different websites, which all said that the content was blocked because it did not follow the rules" Fan told us.

After getting in touch with 56.com, Fan was told that they had received documentation from the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT), telling them to delete the documentary from their website.

"I applied for information disclosure from SARFT at the end of February, and got a reply at the beginning of March, saying that they do not have this document, and that they did not censor my film. I felt very puzzled, I couldn't figure out who was lying to me, so in the beginning of September I decided to file a lawsuit against SARFT."

The reason behind the documentary's removal remains unclear. Fan says that he "can only guess why the documentary was taken down. There are still a lot of documentaries with queer topics available online on all of those websites. Some are much more sexual or much more violent than mine, mine is very harmonious."

"From what my friends and I are guessing, it's that maybe because the video has been there for a long time and has a lot of people reviewing it, it has drawn a lot of attention. Also, it is a documentary and so based on fact rather than fiction, but we don't really know, we can only guess." Whether *Mama Rainbow* will be available again on these websites remains unclear; last year a 30-year-old man won a court case against a clinic that told him he required shock treatment for his homosexuality. "I hope the documentary will be available again soon, and also all the

reviews. It got almost 1 million hits, and a lot of comments that are also very valuable. Some of them are supportive, some of them are in the other direction, but no matter what they are opinions from people who watched my documentary. As a filmmaker, this is important to me, as well as for other people facing similar challenges," Fan says.

Regardless of what happens, Fan will not stop at *Mama Rainbow*. For over a year, he has been stepping out of his comfort zone and working on *Papa Rainbow*, as requested by his many fans at film screenings. "I have been working with six fathers from all over China. In the beginning I was a little bit scared because when we were working on *Mama Rainbow*, I was very happy that I didn't need to work with the fathers, because I am usually not very good at communicating with straight men, but these fathers have really given me a new idea on Chinese men. I have really enjoyed working with the fathers, they are really open-minded."

Fan estimates that *Papa Rainbow* will be finished at the end of this year, and whether or not it will face the same fate as *Mama Rainbow* on the Chinese Internet is uncertain. Undoubtedly, though, the documentary will attract a lot of attention from Fan's fans, as he shows how many parents love their children unconditionally, regardless of sexuality.



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.



CUP OF CHINA ISU GRAND PRIX OF FIGURE SKATING 2015

NOV 6-8 – The International Skating Union and Chinese Skating Association presents one of the highest-level figure skating series in the world, the Grand Prix, hosted in six countries since 2003. This is the 13th session in Beijing. RMB 80-1,500. Various Times. Capital Indoor Stadium (8437 1900)

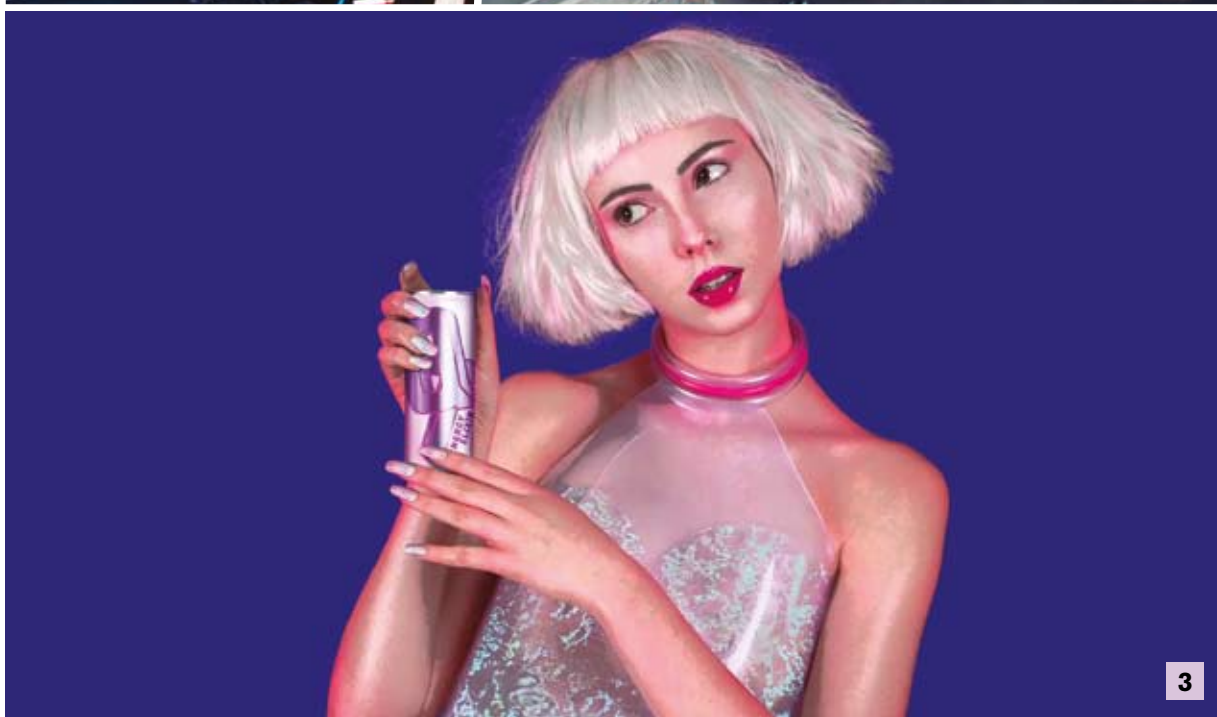
PHOTO: DARKROOM.BALTMORESUN.COM



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1. BEIJING UNDERGROUND SHOWCASE #2

NOV 21 – DDC brings us the best of underground Beijing, part two, featuring DJ Oshi, Nakoma, Orange Bud, Noise Arcade, Charm, Little Punk, and Djang San. More acts to be added closer to the date, don't miss this! RMB 70 (door), RMB 50 (presale). 6pm. DDC (6407 8969).

2. KUNG FURY SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

NOV 2 – Kung Fury, by Swedish filmmaker David Sandberg, is about a Miami-Dade police department detective and

his partner Dragon who, while apprehending a red ninja, gain superpowers. The 31-minute long action, comedy, and fantasy film is screened in English with Chinese subtitles. RMB 80 (adults), RMB 60 (members). 6.30pm. UCCA (5780 0200) BEIJING PLAYHOUSE DRAMA CLUB WORKSHOP: READERS

3. ANTIDOTE PRESENTS QT

NOV 21 – Antidote presents QT all the way from Texas, one of the most controversial figures in pop culture today. This famous performance artist will be supported by DJs Shackup and Bloodzboi. RMB 80. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)



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1. SHADOW THEATRE FIREFLIES

NOV 1 – One of the best shadow theatre teams in the world originating in Ukraine is stopping by Beijing on their world tour. Expect an incredible evening of shadows and shapes by the winners of many talent shows throughout Europe. RMB 80-580. 3pm, 7pm. Rulun Lecture Hall of Renmin University (040 610 3721)

2. LA PETITE GUNTHER BAND

NOV 6 – La petite Gunther band brings you modern jazz tunes composed by the German piano and saxophone mastermind Andreas Gunter coming to Beijing from Shanghai for this performance. RMB 30. 9pm. Jianghu Bar (6401 5269)

3. DIM SUM DISCO FOURTH ANNIVERSARY WITH BORROWED IDENTITY

NOV 6 – Dim Sum Disco, a Beijing favorite, is celebrating its fourth anniversary and bringing Borrowed Identity from Germany especially for this celebration to ensure you're moving all night long. RMB 50. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

4. THEATRE ACTING DEVELOPMENT

NOV 3 – Come and explore charity readers theatre, aiming to teach you how to perform readers theatre without the audience catching one glimpse of the book. It's all about acting, there are no props, no sets, no lighting design, no sound design, and no subtitles. Free. 6.30-9.30pm. Beijing Playhouse (137 1890 8922)



4

1. BUHAOCHI 10-YEAR REUNION

NOV 6-7 – Ten years after their first show, this tasteless quartet returns for one more round. The band is back for two dates only, in order to refute each and every claim from those who said they'd never last: first show at School, next day at Temple. RMB 60. 9pm. School Bar (6402 8881)

2. NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE: THE AUDIENCE

NOV 8 – National Theatre Live brings top productions from the stages of London and New York live to Beijing via high-definition screenings. This time, they share *The Audience*, starring Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth, II in imagining a series of pivotal meetings on Downing Street. RMB 120 (adult), RMB 80 (members). 2pm. UCCA (5780 0200)

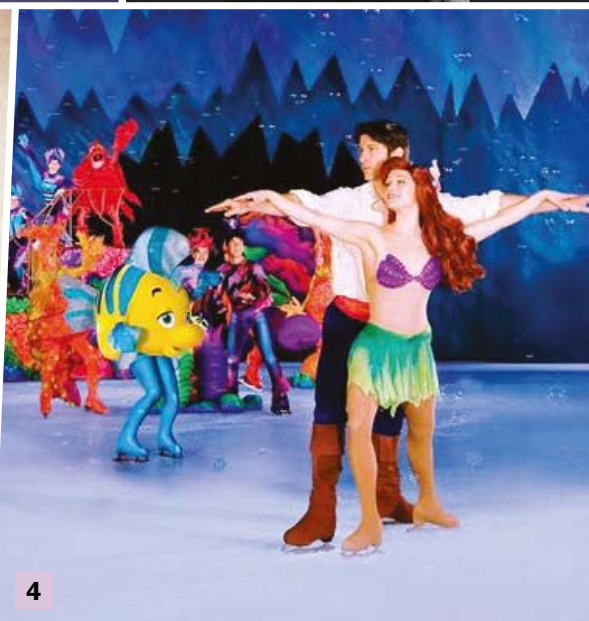
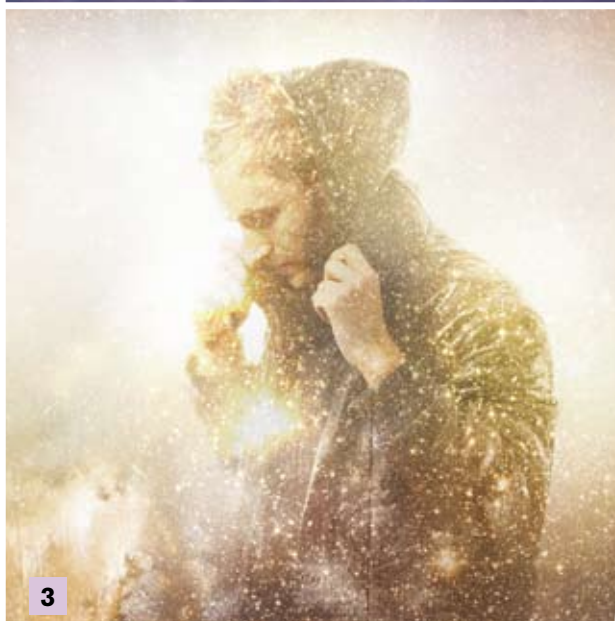
3. BLACK SHEEP WITH YODAI

NOV 7 – China's first and most influential DJ, Youdai, is coming to Lantern to make sure you won't be able to stop grooving to the tunes that have been exciting China since the start of clubbing. RMB 50. 11pm. Lantern (139 1197 7989)

4. NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE: SKYLIGHT

NOV 7 – National Theatre Live brings top productions from the stages of London and New York live to Beijing via high-definition screenings. This time, they share *Skylight*, a passionate piece about a schoolteacher and her former lover. RMB 120 (adult), RMB 80 (members). 2pm. UCCA (5780 0200)





1. MARIINSKY THEATRE BALLET

MIXED PROGRAM

NOV 13-14 – The Mariinsky Theatre, a historic Saint Petersburg Theatre from Russia opened in 1860, became the preeminent music theatre of late 19th century Russia. Today, it is directed by conductor Valery Gergiev, and is coming to Beijing for two days only. RMB 280-1,280. 7.30pm. NCPA (6655 0000)

2. SATOSHI KATAOKA JAZZ TRIO

NOV 11 – Presenting the fresh sounds of New York-based Japanese jazz trio including Satoshi Kataoka, Allan Mednard, and Nathaniel Gao. Expect to be surprised and to be swinging all night long. RMB 50 (door), RMB 40 (presale). 9pm. DDC (6407 8969).

3. ROBOT KOCH

NOV 14 – Experience the unique sound of organic electronic music that has won awards across the globe. Koch's music has graced TV shows, and he has remixed artists from Norah Jones to Max Richter's Vivaldi's Four Seasons. RMB 60. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

4. DISNEY ON ICE 2015

NOV 14-15 – Enjoy an incredible figure skating show produced under agreement with the Walt Disney Company, although aimed primarily at children, the amazing colors, songs, and skating techniques will appeal to most. RMB 180-380. 3pm, 10.30am. Capital Indoor Stadium (8437 1900)



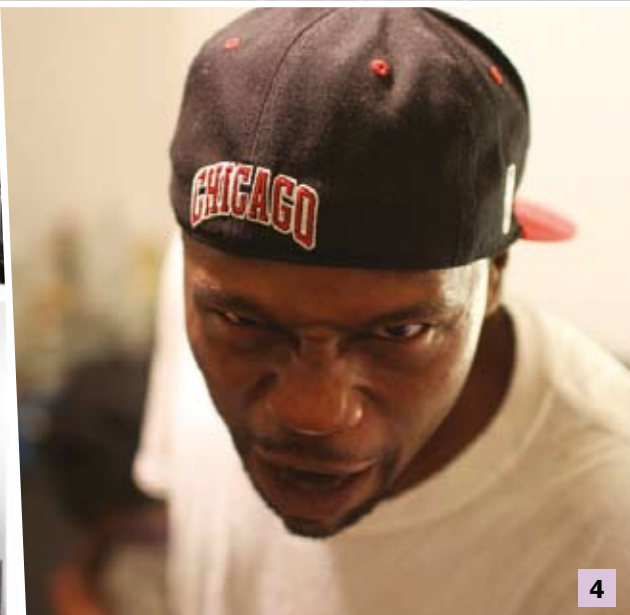
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1. THE CHINESE PHOTOBOOK REVISITED WITH MARTIN PARR

NOV 18 – The UCCA invites British photojournalist, documentary photographer, and photobook collector Martin Parr to discuss last spring's exhibition *The Chinese Photobook* at the UCCA with Ruben Lundgren. Free. 2pm-4pm. UCCA (5780 0200)

2. MODERNISTA NIGHT MARKET

NOV 19 – A lively monthly night market that goes on until 2am. There will be Beijing-based jewelry makers, second-hand sellers, vintage goods, books, designers, crafts, dancing, improvisation, live music, video art, a DJ, and poetry readings. Free. 6pm. Modernista (136 9142 5744)

3. NEON INDIAN

NOV 19 – Neon Indian helps you party like it's 1983. Put on your best flamboyant mirror shades, and party with warped synth wizard Neon Indian, playing off the back of his new album *VEGA INTL. Night School*. Special guests Lobi. RMB 150 (door), RMB 120 (presale). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

4. TRAXMAN

NOV 19 – Dada host Chicago legend Traxman, one of the creators of the legendary mixtapes on colored cassettes that were the prototype for Footwork's evolution, a type of house music deeply rooted in Chicago's history of soul, funk, house, and ghetto trax. RMB 50. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)



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1. FRANKENSTEIN BY TNT THEATRE BRITAIN

NOV 24 – Experience Frankenstein with TNT Britain: one of the most potent modern myths that takes you through Gothic comedy, dark exploration, and spine-tingling melodrama and horror. RMB 100-280. 7pm. Rulun Lecture Hall of Renmin University (040 610 3721)

2. BURN THE FLOOR

NOV 24-29 – Enjoy the ultimate high-voltage theatrical dance experience, incorporating jaw-dropping choreography, heart-pounding music, and breath-taking moves. From sexy to charming, this talented ensemble of dancers joins force with singers and a live band that will have you leaping out of your seat. RMB 100-1,000. Various Times. Beijing Exhibition Theatre (6835 4455)

3. A LECTURE-CONCERT: “BEETHOVEN IN CHINA”

NOV 12 – Fresh off the publication of Beethoven in China by Penguin China, Professor Cai will share his own experience of hearing Beethoven's music for the first time in the midst of the Cultural Revolution. He will also briefly tell the story of how Beethoven and his music became so deeply rooted in modern China. Free. 7.30pm. Stanford Center at Peking University (6274 4170)

4. PUNCHLINE COMEDY CLUB

NOV 24-25 – Join comedians Damian Clark, Paul Zenon, and Andrew Stanley for a night that sure to have you in stitches. Held at The Garage, Shunyi on Nov 24, and The Local, Sanlitun on Nov 25 RMB 290. 8pm. The Garage/The Local (139 0639 0437)



1. THANKSGIVING AT THE GREAT WALL BRICKYARD

NOV 26 – Relax with a private transfer to/from Beijing for two people, a superior queen Great Wall view room, a Thanksgiving feast, and breakfast for two at the lodge. You'll also have access to the jacuzzi, garden, and health center. RMB 2,388. 3pm. The Brickyard (6162 6506)

2. JING-A AND TRAITOR ZHOU'S THANKSGIVING DINNER

NOV 26 – Jing-A and Traitor Zhou's are teaming up again this Thanksgiving, bringing the good people of Beijing pumpkin ale, Traitor Zhou's famous fried chicken, and a

generous spread of Cajun-inspired side dishes. RMB 800 (with reservation, four person spread), RMB 1,000 (walk-in). 6-8pm or 8pm-late. Jing-A Taproom (6501 8883)

3. THE NUTCRACKER BY THE RUSSIAN STATE BALLET

NOV 29 – Experience this two-act ballet by the Russian State Ballet, directed by the Russian Ministry of Culture and famous throughout the world. The Nutcracker is a Christmas-themed ballet based on music by Tchaikovsky, and is magical for all ages. RMB 100-1,280. 7.30pm. Beijing Poly Theatre (6500 1188)

THE GENTRIFICATION OF SHUANGJING

by George Ding

It started with a wall.

A few years ago, the narrow alley behind my apartment complex that people used as a shortcut to the Third Ring Road was bricked up. I wasn't the only one to think this was a hassle – someone took a pick to the wall, chipping off a few pieces before giving up.

After the wall came the security system. All of a sudden, everyone in my complex had to buy a keycard. Building management expected tenants to pay for them, even though they had implemented this system without any input from us. Naturally, I refused to buy one.

Then they started locking the doors to individual buildings. My roommate, who also refused to buy a keycard, had a trick where he shook the door until it popped off its magnetized lock.

One night, he pulled so hard the door fell off its hinges. Another time the glass shattered. That's when he caved and bought us cards. Even so, a few months later, we came home to find the door shattered again. Someone was still fighting the good fight.

I guess it was hard for me to accept how times had changed. When I moved to this Shuangjing neighborhood five years ago, security was non-existent. At night, the guards would nap in their booths, leaving the gate conveniently open. Back then, the only people in my complex were a smattering of, foreigners, fuerdai, and mistresses. The street outside was completely deserted – no restaurants, nothing.

But now, the security guards – decked out in new, jet-black uniforms – won't unlock the gate for anyone. Families have moved in and young professionals walk their dogs around the courtyard. Porsches and Lamborghinis clutter the street, now full of pretentious eateries.

Just this year, metal barricades were installed to stop people from crossing the street willy-nilly. This was

so inconvenient that not one week passed before a section of the barricade was pried apart. Over the next few weeks, more parts of the barricade were removed and people started crossing in the middle of the street again.

Next came the traffic cameras, high atop their lofty perches. Around the same time, the restaurants on the edge of Third Ring Road disappeared – loud, messy places that used first-floor apartments as storefronts. Interspersed between them were the local printer, florist, and sex shop – pillars of the community.

Without warning, they were replaced by scaffolding and, a few weeks later, a gated flower garden abutting the reconstructed apartment wall. The wall had a fresh coat of paint and gave no indication that the units were ever open to the street, except for a desperate sign in the window of the flower shop, asking customers to go inside the neighborhood if they still needed bouquets.

Although I got used to them over time, I resented every change when it came. Sure, they made Shuangjing safer, cleaner, and more respectable, but I couldn't help thinking I preferred the neighborhood the way it was – rough, chaotic, unpredictable.

Recently, fresh paint appeared on the once barren street. Bright white strokes delineated parking spots; a canary yellow divider carved the road in two. Thick white slabs showed pedestrians where they should cross.

Along with the barricades and traffic cameras, my street now looks like a real, functioning intersection.

That is, until you notice the people crossing every which way. The cars don't even think about stopping at the crosswalk. Holes keep appearing in the barricades; one traffic camera is now tilted downward permanently, as if asleep. And though you still need a keycard to enter the complex, the door beneath my apartment is broken, and always unlocked.

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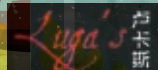


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