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2018

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Stat: China's blooming billionaires
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The most important upcoming dates

WHAT'S HAPPENING



DEC 8

Drag Brunch: The Christmas Special

Beloved Beijing drag queen Ms. Anna Summers and a number of her cohorts will don festive Christmas threads for this raucous Home Plate Sanlitun dining extravaganza. RMB 300 gets you a three-hour DJ-backed buffet brunch and unlimited drinks, not to mention the drag show.

DEC 14

This Will Destroy You

This Texas-hailing, LA-based post-rock act is one of the genre's top draws on account of their lengthy, deep diving, and textured instrumental tracks. Critics have praised them for being "weirder, darker, and noiser" than their contemporaries. Not only loud, they're also sure to leave you wowed.



DEC 18-19

Lord of the Rings in Concert

Grab some popcorn as well as your fanciest threads for this cinema and high art mash-up. China's National Opera House Symphony Orchestra will take you on a journey through Middle-earth, performing the epic and soul-stirring classic score by Howard Shore alongside *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

UNTIL FEB 24

Nicolas Party: Arches

M Woods plays host to this Swiss artist best known for his deft use of a variety of mediums; be it using paint, pastel, sculpture, or video, Party creates "carnavalesque" site-specific pieces that exist once and once only before they are torn down and scrapped forever.



Visit theBeijinger.com for even more events and details.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I'll start by saying that this issue – the last before we breach the murky waters of 2019 – was a pleasure to put together. An exercise in recollection, dissection, and reconsolidation, we chose the 16 people that make up this issue's cover feature for their first-hand knowledge of their individual scenes.

As with any year, there were small triumphs and big losses, which have impressed on our subjects both a quiet confidence and renewed vigor to fight for what's to come. It was our intention to capture these moments and create a tidy collection of wholly personal accounts of the past year as well as a summary of where you should be looking for the action in 2019.

We hope you too had a memorable trip around the sun and that you'll join *the Beijinger* next year in taking pleasure from the opportunities that this fine city continues to provide.



Tom Arnstein
Managing Editor



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CITY SCENE

STAT // BEST OF THE BLOG



819

The number of billionaires in China in 2018, which is more than in any other country in the world. Despite a slowing economy (the country once again missing growth projections of 6.6 percent by a nine-year low), it apparently has not put a damper on the ascent of China's super-rich.

Back in 2016, China sat in second place on the total billionaire's list with 206 to its name, less than half of the US' 585. Since then, however, China has shown the US who's boss, almost doubling the number of exceedingly loaded people (819 versus 571) of their economic rivals. To put that into perspective, China added 210 billionaires to its rich list in 2018 alone (equivalent to four people a week) whereas the US could only muster 19; no mean feat even when you take into account that China's population is four times larger.

Of those, more than one in ten live in Beijing.

That means that the Middle Kingdom's capital is now home to 94 billionaires, six fewer than last year but not far off the UK's 118 total number of billionaires or India's 131, who sit in third and fourth place respectively in the rankings.

Looking to grab a piece of the action? You may want to consider quitting your teaching gig and follow in the footsteps of these Chinese billionaires, 120 of which made their fortunes from real estate, 115 from manufacturing, and 78 from technology. And if you're aiming for the top, you'll be pleased to hear that overall fortunes are falling, with 229 of this year's Forbes China Rich List poorer than in 2017 and nearly one third seeing declines of 20 percent or more in their net worth. That means that you'll now only need to trump Jack Ma's (pictured above) smooth USD 34.6 billion, USD 4 billion less than last year, to become the country's richest person.

PHOTO: FORTUNE.COM

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Every issue, we tally the hits from *theBeijinger.com* and bring you the most-viewed blogs from our website.



1. How to Register Your E-Bike

Beijing authorities continue their crackdown on e-bikes, requiring driving permits and license plates as of Nov 1. Drivers of e-bikes found without license plates will have their vehicles impounded and be fined RMB 20, and anyone who purchases an e-bike after Nov 1 must apply for a driving permit within 15 days. Fortunately, our step-by-step guide makes doing so easy.

2. Wudaoying Hutong Institutions Stuff'd and Arrow Factory Taproom Closed

We're no longer strangers to news of our favorite venues closing, but some still sting. Like when Wudaoying's haven for homemade sausages and craft beer finally caved to the pressure of Beijing's bricking campaign in mid-October. Luckily, the restaurant's Liangmahe location is going as strong as ever.



3. Dear Singles' Day, Enough Already

The lead up to Singles' Day is a time tinged with both excitement and anxiety. Like Christmas, Black Friday, and your parents' birthdays all rolled into one, the pressure to buy crap on 11.11 can be overbearing. This guest post from Shanghai-based Green Initiative eloquently laid out why the biggest shopping day on the planet is a danger to our wallets, our health, and the environment.

4. Three Simple Steps to Calculate Your New Salary Income Tax in China

The limit on non-taxable income for foreigners has gone up from RMB 4,800 to RMB 5,000. A small increase perhaps, but it doesn't hurt to know exactly how this new policy will affect your salary, which is why we made this guide to calculating what you now stand to lose on your paycheck each month.



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



5. Expat Supermarket Institution Jenny Lou's Celebrates 25 Years in the Biz

Everyone's favorite market for cheese, booze, and any number of other foreign products turned 25 in November, a commendable feat given the mercurial and picky nature of us *waiguoren* when it comes to the comforts of home. To celebrate, they've launched their new café and dining concept Jenny Lou's Green, in a store near you soon.

6. Much of Forbidden City Perimeter Wall Now Open to Visitors for First Time

Visitors who want to escape the red-hatted ground troops at the Forbidden City will be happy to hear that they can now take refuge up above, on the sprawling tourist site's outer wall, three-quarters of which is now open to the public. The move is part of an ongoing push by the Palace Museum to open unseen sections of the ancient walled city, as well as to reduce overcrowding.



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2018

At first glance, this year could be viewed in many ways as unexceptional. Businesses continue to disappear behind the brick walls that so defined Beijing last year, but we find ourselves increasingly numb to news of the closure of yet another bar, restaurant, or local grocery store. The incumbent businesses' generic plastic signs serve simply as a reminder of the city's waning character.

Yet, the first thing that struck us from interviewing the following 16 individuals about their respective fields is that by and large 2018 was a year of progress. The positivity and hope displayed among these seemingly disparate endeavors, including art, activism, mental health, and even the leisure pursuits have arisen from communities quietly coalescing around a number of shared and strengthening goals and beliefs. Though some of those objectives fell afoul of the authorities, advancements over the last 12 months have laid a solid groundwork for what looks to be a fine year ahead.

Before we gaze forward, however, it's time to read back on Beijing's 2018 from (nearly) every angle.



2018 in 5 words: Busy, Fruitful, Significant, Challenging, Confidence

“When I saw them coming toward me to shake my hand and say hi, I was like ‘Oh my god, I’m actually meeting them in person!’” recalls Ai Jing AKA AJ, about meeting UK shoegaze legends Ride. “We booked them right after Chinese New Year. Almost everyone I knew told me not to do it and that it was too risky.” One of the tireless and enthusiastic minds behind Haze Sounds, a promotional branch of ticketing platform Showstart with a focus on bringing international acts to China, AJ’s gamble paid off, selling over 700 tickets for both the band’s Beijing and Shanghai shows. The event proved

just the first of many achievements for the trailblazing promoters.

The writing was on the wall – international acts are increasingly eager to enter the Chinese market, and with Haze Sounds, AJ has created a sanctuary for some of the West’s mammoth acts to reach their audience; from the indie music kids who found euphoria at Slowdive back in September to the more pop-oriented (and rabid) fanbase of Sweden’s The Royal Concept who played to 20,000 people at the Rye Music Festival this fall.

The shift can also be felt on the local scene as “more and more Chinese musicians, managers, promoters, and

record labels ... are starting to realize the potential of small and medium-sized live music venues.” That’s great news for the ‘next generation’ of bands, but even better news for audiences in the long run. “More and more people will shift into a ‘going to a gig as a regular leisure thing’ kind of lifestyle,” AJ believes. “There are more industry forums and panels where anyone can come and listen” as well as “WeChat fan groups that give people a channel to communicate ... that’s a good thing.” At a time when news coverage of Beijing’s music scene leans too hard towards despair, AJ’s positivity as to what’s possible here is a welcome sentiment.



AI JING

Project Director, Haze Sounds and Showstart

By Will Griffith

MARTIN YANG

Director, China AIDS Walk

By Jo Darrington



2018 in 5 words: Survival, Powershift, Outcry, Intersectional Solidarity

As an activist in Beijing's LGBTQ+ arena, Martin Yang's year was marked by a number of small victories and one great loss.

"Choosing the biggest developments in 2018 is pretty difficult," reflects the director of the Beijing-based China AIDS Walk, citing his desire to mention the reversal of Sina Weibo's ban on LGBT content, but also his doubt in the difference the outcome made, adding that "trans groups picked up the pace," referring to the growing number of activists in the capital.

China AIDS Walk, along with two other LGBT organizations, also successfully gained 'special fund' status under larger registered foundations, giving them previously denied legal

recognition. "For me that was a big breakthrough ... it means we can influence mainstream organizations to make space for LGBT issues," Yang says.

Other highlights include major events like the Rainbow Media Awards, the 10th anniversary of Shanghai Pride, and a new project, the LookOut Festival – "China's first arts festival on gender, engaging artists and mainstream society" – all launching successfully. Other notable outreach involved Yang speaking on national TV about LGBT issues a handful of times and a segment in CGTN senior reporter Han Bin's short film *Rainbow Rights* marking significant forays into high-profile state-backed LGBT coverage.

However, this year's progress has been overshadowed by the sudden

death of Yang's colleague and long-time activist Sun Bin (AKA Sam/Liangma) in June. A man of many talents, Sun organized theatrical performances, training, and outreach events for the HIV/AIDS cause before joining Beijing Gender to manage the Rainbow Media Awards. "He was loved by the community," says Yang, noting how this widely felt loss triggered conversations about ongoing stress-related health problems that arise from stigmatization. However, he in turn believes that this has encouraged further self-organization among his peers.

And what of the year to come? Martin warns us to brace for "cold weather" (the alt-right), and to "Stick together to make it to 2019!"

PHOTO: JINI YOU

DONG FANGYU

Food and Wine Writer, China Daily

By Kyle Mullin



2018 in 5 words: Retro, Vibrant, Diversified, Family-Friendly

The chef at Qu Lang Yuan certainly makes an impression, setting down the platter of beef and searing it with a culinary torch, in keeping with flashy modern restaurant trends which delight the eyes as much as the taste buds. As she looks on, *China Daily* food and wine writer Dong “Jessica” Fangyu is not only taking in the tableside spectacle, but also the contrasting backdrop, namely the Qing dynasty brick walls and wooden rafters above and behind the torch-wielding chef, one of the hutong restaurant’s hallmarks. Such combinations of traditional Chinese culture with modern culinary flair have been a major trend

that Dong has covered in her articles over the past year.

According to Dong, that sense of history is “especially great for the ‘post-’80s generation who didn’t grow up in a traditional environment.” However, she by no means thinks Beijing’s dining scene is stuck in the past. Dong has also taken note of modern crazes, such as a boom of Cantonese-style hot pot restaurants like Biao Ge, Zhen Zi Wei, and Having Luck, which favor fish or poultry-based broths over the more conventional spicy beef. “People are dining at these restaurants with their kids and elders more and more, indicating that healthier eating with

organic concepts is getting more popular,” she says.

And then there’s the biggest trend of all: *wanghong*, or key opinion leader (KOL) “influencers.” Dong says: “*Wanghong* restaurants are on a whole other level this year, paying people to queue up around the block and loading up their restaurants with business gimmicks.” But that doesn’t make her despair. Instead, she takes joy in restaurants that draw attention to the good old-fashioned ways in this digital era. Or, as Dong puts it: “Some of those restaurants are so good that they automatically attract influencers, rather than the other way around.”



SONG ZHIQI

Music Director, Zhao Dai

By Tom Arnstein

2018 in 5 words: Dance Backwards, Club, Play Forwards

Taking its name from the disappearing breed of government-funded guesthouses that formerly populated China's cities, Zhao Dai once looked like it might face a similarly lackluster fate. But despite an inauspicious start in October last year, the underground club has staved off closure and carved out its own growing fan base.

"I'm still quite optimistic about the future ... We have built a very good reputation in Europe, so we got a lot of interesting artists and agencies contacting us after they knew we were open again," says Song Zhiqi, music director of Zhao Dai, and quite often the last person to leave the party.

A combination of astute (and uncompromising) international bookings, a strong roster of local talent, and a crowd hungry for more bass than Beijing previously had to offer means that Zhao Dai's dark belly now rumbles with partygoers throughout any given weekend.

A year in and the club's emerging stature is already apparent, boasting acts as varied as ambient techno collective Giegling, acclaimed Japanese crate digger DJ Nobu, and punk-strut cross-dressing rapper Mykki Blanco. Each of these acts represent an issue close to Zhao Dai's heart, whether it's providing a platform for dance genres not seen elsewhere in Beijing, scoring

big names among club die-hards, or supporting marginalized groups like the local LGBT community.

Moreover, Zhao Dai's *raison d'être* is to approach techno from a cultural perspective, building, in the words of the club's mission statement, "an open space for open minds," or as Song explains, "striving to create a moment where everything comes together, where everything makes sense."

"There are a lot more young people starting to go out and listen to electronic music ... and in the next two, three years it's going to blow up." With a little luck, Zhao Dai may be poised to help lead the way.

PHOTO: UNI YOU

2018 in 5 words: Challenging, Travel, Creativity, Synthesis, Teaching

// I was shocked that our neuroscience-backed mindfulness programs were so well received here."

In the eyes of Erin Lee Henshaw, 2018 has been a boon, both for her professionally and for the mindfulness movement more broadly, a community that she says has "exploded" in size and popularity in Beijing. As proof, Henshaw cites both the rise of yoga studios and the number of large companies that are embracing "not only an annual wellness week but more weekly offerings for rest, reflection, and movement."

This appetite for the mental health and stress management benefits that come with mindfulness training has allowed her to branch out to

offer trauma-informed courses aimed at yogis, tour guides, and teachers. However, she stresses that mindfulness is for everybody.

Looking back on the year, she is especially proud to have collaborated with her former company, cultural center The Hutong, to develop their wellness offerings. "I really hope to help more schools and companies add mindfulness tools to their curricula to help teachers and students manage stress."

When it comes to community, Henshaw doesn't just talk the talk. As well as working with The Hutong, she credits partner Taozi Tree Yoga Studio and School for "creating a welcoming community for students to look further

into their personal journey in Beijing," even though she regrets that those programs weren't available back in 2010 when she first arrived in the city.

As interest in mindfulness builds, Henshaw predicts more and more texts will be translated into Chinese, making information more widely available than before. For those starting out, Henshaw recommends attending a hatha yoga class and tapping into the many great resources online such as Mindful Schools' course Mindfulness Fundamentals, The Berkeley Center for Greater Good's (free) Happiness Course, and the resource library of her own website at themindbodyproject.com.

ERIN LEE HENSHAW

Mindfulness Trainer and Co-Founder, The Mind Body Project

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley

PHOTO: UMI YOU

ANTONIE ANGERER

Director, I: project space

By GJ Cabrera

Linyao Kiki Liu
刘麟瑶
2018.11.2-12.2

2018 in 5 words: Resistance, Female Power, Blue Skies

Taking art beyond the gallery and into the nightclub – that’s one of the proudest achievements of 2018 for Antonie Angerer, director of I: project space.

Since its opening in 2014, the gallery’s main goal has been to create an inclusive platform for art exchange, and research opportunities for artists. This year, that meant supporting projects such as The Nightlife Residency; a chance to “open [the] residency for an artist working as a hybrid between contemporary art and nightlife,” Angerer tells us. “After an incredible response, The Neighborhood, China Residencies, and I: project space brought [Berlin-based designer and

musician] Bonaventure to Beijing.” The intention of that specific assignment, Angerer says, was to “transcend the art gallery as an exclusive scenario for art socialization, while exploring other fertile spaces for creativity such as the local clubs.”

Another major task for Angerer this year has been organizing Beijing22, a project that aims to explore Beijing’s urban transformation in the run up to the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022. These works both help I: project space to thrive within the community by working towards a common goal. Angerer adds that this year’s “collaborative approaches became the means to create spaces for solidarity

and start much-needed conversations around current issues while representing different perspectives or themes normally overlooked.”

As for next year, Angerer states: “[2019] needs to be the year to take the conversations that started in 2018 even further ... It has to become the year to actually find solutions for the existing problems,” specifically, she says, by giving proper representation to minorities and the marginalized. With continuing collaboration, a good dose of creative thinking, and a whole lot of drive, the varied actors of Beijing’s local art scene are one step closer to that noble aim.

PHOTO: UNI YOU

A portrait of Manya Koetse, a woman with brown hair and bangs, smiling and wearing a white t-shirt with a red heart and a small circular logo. She is wearing large, triangular earrings. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

MANYA KOETSE

Founder and Editor-in-Chief,
What's on Weibo

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley

2018 in 5 words: Mobile, Cashless, Multidimensional, Credit-Based

As the founder and the editor-in-chief of What's on Weibo, Manya Koetse reports from the coalface of Chinese language social media, sharing insights to a devoted legion of readers about not only what's happening in the Chinese media landscape, but also how China is represented abroad.

Yet this July, her website was blocked in the PRC. "Luckily, many of our readers still have a way to find our website, but I also know there are many who do not have the means to access the site anymore." While disruptive and disappointing, the block did also generate media attention and motivate her to grow the site even

further. Across the board, censorship is on the rise in China, but Koetse reminds us that Western giants like Google, YouTube, and Facebook are also displaying increasingly oppressive censorship rules. She cites Facebook blocking articles about homosexuality or transgender issues in China as a "shocking" development.

Back in China, the biggest trend she's seen this year "is a growing gap between Chinese media consumers and state media ... readers view traditional media much more critically than before." They are also more likely to turn to bloggers and consume their news on mobile platforms. At the same time, however, state-run media is becoming tech-savvy,

producing "cool" news narratives and short videos, for example.

Yet for Koetse, human contact still trumps technology. She calls giving a talk about the 10-year anniversary of Weibo at The Bookworm as a 2018 highlight because it allowed her to meet many foreign and Chinese readers of her site. "I do most of the work for the website by myself, and it was incredibly motivating to realize that there are people out there who find the articles we publish valuable."

As for next year, Koetse refuses to be drawn. "When it comes to the world of Chinese social media, you just never know what will change tomorrow."

A portrait of Andy Mok, a middle-aged man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a pink tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a conference or exhibition hall, with blue and white lighting and other people visible in the distance.

ANDY MOK

Founder, Red Pagoda Resources;
CGTN Commentator

By Kyle Mullin

2018 in 5 words: Watershed, New Era, Strategic Rivalry

From investing in scrappy niche startups to commenting on tech, business, and world affairs for an audience of millions, Andy Mok's purview is certainly wide-ranging. The founder of 12-year-old Red Pagoda Resources, an investing and consulting firm for startups in China, has recently become a fixture on the CGTN television network where he regularly discusses IT and entrepreneurship on a number of shows.

That has offered Mok unique insight into the tech scene in Beijing and China at large, which he sees as brimming with potential even in the face of turmoil. "To paraphrase Leon Trotsky, you may not

be interested in politics but politics is interested in you. 2018 was the year that politics and geopolitics intervened in the world of tech startups and venture capital financing," he says.

Mok goes on to describe how the trade war between China and the US, and the passage of legislation like FIRRMA (The Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act), will deeply impact the flow of capital and cross-border entrepreneurship in the tech world.

Drastic as all that might sound, Mok is optimistic, saying, "Within an increasingly unsettled global environment, Beijing, as an engine of

tech innovation and entrepreneurship, goes from strength to strength." Mok chalks that up to increasingly affluent consumers and rising company valuations, adding, "the city and the tech companies based here have made significant advances in 2018."

And that bodes well for the year ahead, a period in which Mok says, "Beijing will continue to attract the best and brightest from around the world. It will not just be a base for the large and fast-growing China market, but serve as a platform for identifying and capturing opportunities in third markets like Africa and India."

PHOTO: UNI YOU

A portrait of Niki Tang, a woman with dark, wavy hair and bangs, wearing a dark blue off-the-shoulder top. She is looking slightly to the side with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

NIKI TANG

Freelance Fashion Writer;
Creative Consultant

By Meng Luyue

2018 in 5 words: 21st Century Entering its Adulthood

Niki “Nirokita” Tang, one of Beijing’s hottest rising fashion editors, has found herself in the middle of a domestic industry growing at sonic speed, forcing Tang to grow up just as fast. At barely 20 years old, she has already contributed content for clients from international mammoths such as Gucci to aspiring Chinese designers; projects that helped Tang secure the title of creative consultant at EPO, an ambitious international brand making bold moves.

Like many in the industry, Tang dubs the French photographer and fashion designer Hedi Slimane’s controversial Celine debut in October as one of the biggest shock moments of the year. She categorizes the backlash to Slimane’s work as largely a knee-jerk reaction

by critics confronted by a designer determined to follow his aesthetics: “In today’s world, it is a very adorable thing to do.” As opposed to an exclusive, and somewhat self-indulgent ‘fashion circle’ of years past, Tang hints at an industry gradually gearing towards building a new ecosystem where “there is no mainstream, no niche, just diversity.”

In this new climate, fashion media and labels are beginning to take note of the individual. In China there has been a rise of media outlets that introduce unconventional perspectives, such as *BusinessoffFashion*, igniting conversations about social responsibility, identity awareness, and advancements in information technology. The thriving “WeMedia” scene – content creation by people

who have decided to go it alone – also allows individuals to speak up for diversity, sometimes controversially. On the other hand, fashion labels are branching out to shape street culture and curate contemporary art shows. In this new world, it seems that the very concept of fashion is being redefined. “It is a mess,” says Tang bluntly, “but it is a good beginning nonetheless.”

Tang finishes by saying, as a Beijing native, she appreciates the city’s laidbackness: “Fashion is an accomplice to capitalism, brainwashing you to think about how special you are, how everything should be celebrated, while Beijing constantly tells you, ‘don’t take fashion too seriously, and don’t take yourself too seriously.’”

A photograph of Matthew Hu, a man with dark hair, smiling and holding a small white and orange kitten. He is wearing a grey suit jacket over a white shirt. In the background, there is a red vertical scroll with Chinese calligraphy. The lighting is warm, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

MATTHEW HU

Trustee, Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center; China Representative, Prince's School of Traditional Arts; Co-Founder, The Courtyard Institute

By Tom Arnstein

2018 in 5 words: Hectic, Learning, Progress, Balance, Direction

It may come as a surprise that, as a preservationist at the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (BCHP) for the past 12 years, Matthew Hu sympathizes with the rampant bricking that has convulsed Beijing's traditional hutong alleyways as of late. He sees that extensive redevelopment as necessary to return the city's heart to some kind of order. "There's no point in making more laws if there's no principle that we can adhere to," Hu says in regards to the enforcement of building permissions.

He does, however, take issue with the process by which that campaign has been administered. For this, he

equates the government's actions to that of an erratic driver who shows little concern for their passenger's comfort; a byproduct of result-driven progress.

The forced closure of Capital M last year is just one example of how Hu's mission has been hampered by factors outside his control. The Qianmen restaurant's disappearance meant the loss not only of a major champion of hutong preservation, but also of the BCHP annual fundraising dinner, which in turn has stalled their more costly projects. "The most shameful thing is that we [the general public] don't have a determination to learn about what our

traditional culture is. If we don't have a generation of people who care and who are practicing traditional Chinese culture then there's no way that we can really revive it," Hu laments.

It isn't all bleak though. A concerted effort to move the municipal government outside of central Beijing, as well as Xi Jinping's emphasis on extracurricular cultural programs in schools, give Hu hope for the coming years: "Those are good prospects for the preservation of old Beijing, and a good reason to expect that the city will be quieter and more devoted to protecting traditional culture in the future."

JOSEPH HARVEY AND CARRIE YU

Owners and Founders, The Bulk House

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley



2018 in 5 words: Clearest Thinking Year to Date

When Joseph Harvey and his partner Carrie Yu opened mainland China's first zero-waste store in the 258 Electronics Market in January, they had no idea that their tenancy would be so short-lived. In fact, it was closed down soon afterward, and the couple were given just 10 days notice to get out. Despite the shock and financial loss, they wasted no time in securing their current Gulou Dongdajie address. "We signed the contract on the Friday night, threw a load of furniture in here, and the next day we said, 'Right, we gotta start paying the rent,' and opened up."

While stressful, Harvey says that

moments like this have pushed the couple to be more nimble and flexible, and motivated them to develop their online shop to give them more stability. Plus, he adds, when done well, online can actually be a greener way of shopping.

"2018 has flown by," Harvey laughs, and it's not hard to see why. The couple were featured in a documentary by Pandaily which has accrued more than 1 million views on Facebook alone, and Yu was nominated for a British Chamber of Commerce award, for "inspiring others to live a green lifestyle." Yet, while Harvey admits that these moments were "very nice," they believe that to

really achieve their goals, they need to ignore distractions, and narrow their focus solely on getting their zero-waste products into the hands of consumers. To the horror of many Beijingers, this strategy goes as far as avoiding WeChat and redirecting business through email.

While far more people are taking positive steps towards fighting climate change, and conservation in general, Harvey warns that the battle is far from over. "Consumer culture is rising at such a pace here ... I'm seeing way more plastic than before." It seems The Bulk House and zero-waste awareness couldn't have come at a better time.

2018 in 5 words: Energy, Consistency, Exploration, Interest, Challenges

//People in China want to see and do more comedy," Jesse Appell proclaims. As founder of the US-China Comedy Center (USCCC), which has been entertaining laughter-lovers in the heart of the Gulou hutongs since 2012, arguably no one has done more to meet that need.

A Fulbright scholar who initially came to China to study *xiangsheng* (the traditional Chinese art of comic crosstalk), Appel stresses that this year has been more about collaboration and communication than ever before. He is especially focused on bridging the language gap between foreigners in Beijing and the Chinese community. "I wish they met more," says Appel, "but

any collaboration is already more than there has been previously."

When asked about his keywords for 2018, Appel leads with consistency and energy. USCCC has been working relentlessly on imprinting its name on the world of comedy in China, and establishing itself as a regular hangout for the local community. "Our bilingual improvisation shows are the cheapest Chinese class," Appel half jokes, referring to the cost for both audience and performers. "You can still do standup or improv without the language skills. It will be difficult but you can do it."

Appel embarks on the new year with hopes for more collaboration, joint ventures, and more people trying

performing arts. "We host free bilingual workshops every week; anyone can drop in. There is pressure in life and everyone is cooped up in their own industry." Yet Appel believes that laughter might be the cure to the capital's blues.

"Beijing can be a crazy place to live and can unbalance people. Ironically, going out and challenging yourself to do something new with art and entertainment is a great way of correcting that balance, as opposed to locking yourself into the same six restaurants you always go to and the same four people you always talk to."



JESSE APPEL

Founder,
US-China Comedy Center
By Tautvile Daugelaite

PHOTO: UNI YOU

MATTHEW ZHAO, JINWEI ZENG

Director Duo

By Meng Luyue



2018 in 5 words: Growth, Accumulation, Search, Surprise, Rebirth

Not only did 2018 bear witness to the historic moment when the domestic box office overtook North America's for the first time ever, therefore officially topping the global film market, but it also saw the release of a range of high-quality Chinese productions. Most notably among those was *Dying to Survive*, the Wen Muye-directed Chinese blockbuster that achieved enough critical acclaim both at home and abroad to have a direct influence on Chinese pharmaceutical reform.

Beijing director duo Matthew Zhao and Jinwei Zeng dub the film, a true story about a drug peddler who makes a fortune selling cheap Indian pharmaceuticals to Chinese patients, as "a smart and entertaining combination of Chinese social commentary and a

Hollywood genre film." They add that its production company, Bad Monkeys (Huai Houzi), an incubator project fostering feature debuts from budding directors, is likely to act as the industry's torchbearer in the years ahead. All of which could be a boon for up-and-comers like themselves.

Having studied film at NYU and received awards for their short films abroad, Zhao and Zeng are currently in post-production for their first feature, *Mo Nv*, an adaptation from a popular Korean comic IP that is eyeing a 2019 theatrical release. The young directors are modest in their goals, stating that they are still learning, and excited about new possibilities that are opening up.

They believe exposure to a different culture has provided them with new perspectives to understanding their

experience as Chinese, and has helped them form their own cinematic language: "Growing up here has given us Eastern sensitivities, while we learned a linear narrative structure at American film school."

One important influence on the duo has been Jin Yong, the recently deceased and hugely popular *wuxia* novelist. Zhao credits him with creating a universe that transcends Chinese geographical and ideological barriers. The director duo lament the author's passing, adding that his work is especially inspiring in today's climate and also acts as a guide for many of China's young directors who are striving to make "narratives that are influenced by Western cinematic tactics in structure, but secure at their Chinese core."

ZOE SHEN

Managing Editor,
Feminist Voices

By Jo Darrington

2018 in 5 words: #MeToo, Decentralization, Enlargement, Oppression

The #MeToo movement brought feminist issues firmly into the spotlight in Beijing in 2018, as with elsewhere across the world. Zoe Shen, managing editor at the gender awareness NGO Feminist Voices, believes its path to China has also decentralized the movement from its Hollywood-centric roots and allowed the voice of the “common people” to be heard.

Despite that, reflecting on this past year is hard for Shen because although the movement has achieved a lot, success has come at a high price. With added scrutiny from the authorities, pressure has also piled on, pushing Feminist Voices’ fight underground. “We lost about 250,000 followers when our Weibo and WeChat was banned,” says Shen, first describing the relief she

felt after International Women’s Day on Mar 8 passed without a hitch, but then the despair of discovering that the group’s social media accounts had been removed.

The climate for activism is becoming more problematic for Shen and her compatriots, but she maintains a hopeful attitude. “We have suffered a lot of pressure because they [the government and the upholders of China’s patriarchal structure] fear the strength of women,” she says, adding, “I believe the women who ‘wake up’ will move forward in the struggle for their rights.”

For the year to come, Shen talks of plans to move to safer ground: “We will no longer focus purely on sexual harassment awareness because despite the work we have put in, it’s

proving too hard to move forward with now. We will instead put our strength towards highlighting other issues.” Shen’s renewed focus will take on a fight she believes has yet to be fully realized, that of reproductive rights, pointing to the worrying example of a recently released government propaganda cartoon depicting an idealized family unit with not one nor two, but three piglets. “This could mean more pressure for women to have more children,” she says, something that would strain the already limited medical resources available to women as well as a step backwards for equal workplace liberties. For now though, the NGO and many organizations like it have a more pressing challenge ahead: simply securing enough funding to stay afloat.

A photograph of Simon Shieh, a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a grey blazer over a light blue shirt. He is sitting at a desk cluttered with books, papers, and art supplies. Behind him is a wall with a large red and white abstract painting and a window with horizontal blinds. The lighting is warm and indoor.

SIMON SHIEH

Director, InkBeat Arts;
Editor-in-Chief,
Spittoon Literary Magazine
By Bill Weydig

2018 in 5 words: WeChat Poetry, Handmaid's Tale, Power

2018 was a seismic year for literature and the arts in Beijing, and with its award-winning literary quarterly, new comics publication, and related Spittunes live music performances, the Spittoon art collective has certainly registered on the local cultural Richter scale. According to Editor-in-Chief Simon Shieh, the past 12 months have been something of a watershed for the organization: "[Our] Spittunes events, which involve collaborations between poets and musicians, help people connect with poetry in new and exciting ways ... I'm also proud of *Spittoon Literary Magazine's* fourth issue, which marks an important shift to publishing only contemporary Chinese writers in translation."

In particular, Shieh cites the impact of Spittoon founder and director Matthew Byrne: "[He's] worked tirelessly since 2015 to build community around literature and art in China." He also credits the international editorial collective NüVoices and Jing Yuan, founder of the Writing Mothers Project, for their significant contributions to China's literary landscape.

As director of Inkbeat Arts, a social enterprise dedicated to empowering youth interested in the arts, Shieh also runs creative workshops for high school students. "Anyone who has forgotten the power of writing and art to heal and help make sense of the world should pick up a copy of the *InkBeat Youth Journal*," he says. "I feel privileged

to witness how these practices have helped teenagers through difficult times."

In 2019, he predicts nonfiction and comics/graphic novels gaining popularity, noting that both forms are smartphone-friendly. "Something about a story being 'true' makes it so much more compelling" he says of nonfiction, whereas "comics are an obvious hit," referencing *CUE*, Spittoon's latest publication, which branches out to storytelling via a comic format.

These are just a few of the highlights that have seen Beijing's literary scene reach new heights; with passionate figures like Shieh expanding their purview, we can expect to hear even more from the Spittoon collective.

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

FOOD & DRINK

WINTER WARMERS // SHANGHAI INCOMING! // EL BARRIO // YUNNAN PROV GOV



THE CUT DOES CHRISTMAS IN STYLE

Taking over InfraRouge's lofty location in Taikooli North, Shanghai-hailing The Cut now get to look down on the prime retail real estate below. The change also means that guests are greeted not with the steady 4/4 beat of techno, but the smell of robust fare instead. This festive season, Dec 24-31, the kitchen pulls out all the stops with mains like M3 Australian Wagyu medallion served with forest mushrooms and truffle gravy (pictured above) and roasted half Boston lobster with tarragon béarnaise, alongside starters, dessert, a welcome cocktail, and a glass of wine all for RMB 598. The Cut, L3-L5, Taikoo Li North, N8, Chaoyang District, Beijing (6468 1979)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CUT

NIBBLES AND SIPS

Popular expat supermarket **Jenny Lou's** marked 25 years in business this fall, with a celebration at their newest location, Jenny Lou's Green, in Liangmaqiao's World Profit Center. Jenny Lou's Green is a new concept that integrates a café, bakery, and healthy made-to-order food alongside their usual array of imported goods. Look for the launch in the near future of Jenny Lou's other new concepts, such as Jenny Lou's Express and Jenny Lou's Lifestyle, aimed at expanding their reach to more communities.

More than two decades after opening their first restaurant in Beijing, the team behind **Annie's** has thrown the doors open on another venue. **Ponte**, meaning bridge in Italian, sees the group branch out into fine-dining territory with a deli stocked with everything good Italian pantry should have and a more elegant ambiance and a mix of vintage chic that the team says, "will make you feel like [you are] on a movie set." Having been fed throughout the years on Annie's affordable comfort food, we're looking to see what this new venture has in store.

Bistrot B at Rosewood Beijing has launched a new menu focusing on four different elements: homemade charcuterie, fresh seafood, steaks, and fresh pasta. Perhaps in response to the cessation of their popular Sunday brunch, head chef Jarrod Verbiak has definitely given the new menu his all. Bistrot B has always been known for its charcuterie and this menu is no different, with the seasonally-changing pâté selection a particular treat.

Hulu have also released a new lunch set that certainly looks geared towards warm winter days. For RMB 118 you get an appetizer, main course, dessert, drink, and coffee or tea. So far, so standard but what sets this lunch apart from some others is the sheer amount of choice – at least five dishes to choose from for the appetizer and main course, the likes of which include seared salmon, Bolognese, pork neck, and steak tartare.

Finally, good news for cocktail enthusiasts: **Botany**, run by master mixologist Frankie Zhou, has quietly reopened on the ground floor of Yonglee Plaza, taking up a bigger, 35-seat space and a small patio. As with their previous upstairs haunt, the menu includes signature cocktails for RMB 80-120 and classics for RMB 60-90. There's also a selection of beer and wine should you want go light on the juice.



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Dried persimmons 柿饼

The Chinese name for this treat literally means “persimmon pancake,” thanks to their flat shape. To make them, the persimmons are peeled and then left to dry out in the sun on wooden racks.

WINTER WARMERS

BEIJING SNACKS TO WARM YOU FROM THE INSIDE OUT


By Robynne Tindall

Food styling by Jamie Penaloza

Candied hawthorn 糖葫芦

With their festive red color, it's no wonder candied hawthorns are a popular winter snack. The slight tartness of the fruit contrasts with the teeth-sticking sugar coating.

With such a distinct difference between the summer and winter weather in Beijing, it's perhaps no surprise that the seasonal snacks differ as well. While summer is all about ice creams and Beibingyang orange soda, winter brings heartier treats like hand-warming roasted sweet potatoes and throat-soothing pear soup. These are a few of our favorites.



Snow pear soup 梨汤

Beijing winters are not only cold but also punishingly dry. This sweet soup is packed with ingredients thought to ease dry throats, like snow pears and silver ear fungus.

Lvdagun 驴打滚

The name of this sweet literally means "rolling donkey" and comes from the final coating of crushed roasted soy beans it gets before serving, like a donkey that has been rolling around in the dust.

Roast chestnuts 糖炒栗子

Despite the name, chestnuts in China actually go through a process more like stir-frying than roasting, where they are tossed in a wok with sugar and heated pebbles over an open flame.

Roasted sweet potatoes 烤白薯

While the number of itinerant vendors selling roasted sweet potatoes on the streets of Beijing has declined dramatically, when there is one nearby you'll be able to smell the sweet-smoky scent of their wares immediately.



SHANGHAI Incoming!

A GUIDE TO SOUTHERN F&B BIGWIGS WHO HAVE SET THEIR SIGHTS ON BEIJING

By Kyle Mullin

In recent months a slew of Shanghaiers have made their way up to China's capital so as to open new F&B ventures or branches of their own preexisting brands. For local foodies who grumble about Beijing's lack of options and quality when compared to the Pearl of the Orient's more storied Western dining scene, this trend has certainly whet their appetites. Feast on all the delicious details below.

Seesaw Coffee

With more than a dozen branches in its native Shanghai, this popular coffee chain has made the leap to Beijing with a location in Wangfujing's WF Central Mall. It has impressed Beijing bean fiends with its shiny modern decor and rare coffee options like the alluringly acidic Jamaican Blue Mountain (RMB 58 per glass).

Daily 10am-10pm. 322B, 3/F, WF Central, 269 Wangfujing Jie, Dongcheng District (6526 2330)

东城区王府井大街269号王府中环东座三楼322B

Arch Bar

Arch Bar's nookish ambiance and difficult-to-find Zhangzizhong Lu address both help to evoke the bohemian spirit of Beijing's hutongs. Yet a splash of swanky Shanghai pizzazz is also thrown in the mix thanks to bartender Gan Zeqiang. Having honed his craft at renowned Shanghai bar Union Trading, Gan's pedigree is evident not only in the quality and creativity of the drinks at Arch, but also the prices. Prime example: the RMB 125 Somewhere in Time, made with truffle oil fat-washed bourbon and cognac.

Daily 7pm-2am. 3 Zhangzizhong Lu, Ping'an Jie, Dongcheng District (6333 6188)

东城区张自忠路3号段祺瑞执政府内

Red Rose

Matthew Ona's contributions to Shanghai's dining scene are noteworthy for their quality and their range. From the spiffy Nanjing Road terrace haunt The Shook! to semi-upscale bistro Roof 325 or the down-home fare like chicken, waffles, and pastrami sandwiches at the now-closed Truck Stop Grill, he seems to have all bases covered. This year, the Culinary Institute of America-trained chef readied his first menu in Beijing at revamped Red Rose (an old-time Sanlitun Xinjiang restaurant bloomed anew as a gastropub). It hews closer to Truck Stop than Roof 325, with those beloved pastrami sandwiches, mac 'n' cheese, and brick oven pizzas.

Daily 11.30am-2.30pm and 5.30pm-2am. Inside 7 Xingfu Yicun (opposite Workers' Stadium North Gate), Chaoyang District (6415 5741)

工人体育场北门对面幸福一村7巷内



El Barrio

Arguably the most well-known name on this list, chef Eduardo Vargas helped launch the menu at this colorful new Nali Patio Latin restaurant owned by the Bottega team. Having built his rep with popular Peruvian Shanghai haunts like Azul Tapas Lounge and Colca, Vargas' El Barrio menu is of the Mexican bent, elevating seemingly simple tacos with curveball fillings like chargrilled wagyu flank steak. Sure, a new chef will journey all the way from Mexico to take the reins after the soft opening, but Vargas' renowned Midas touch made El Barrio golden from the get-go.

Daily 5.30pm-2am. 2/F, Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District (6416 1716)

朝阳区朝阳区三里屯北路81号那里花园2楼

Boxing Cat

This Shanghai craft beer heavyweight hit hard with its new Beijing location, opened in September. Aside from irresistible brews like the zesty El Presidente Mexican lager and the Thrilla in Manila sour, we're perhaps more impressed by Liquid Laundry and Cobra Lilly chef Simon Sunwoo's sumptuous flatbreads and other casual eats.

Sun-Thu 11.30am-1am, Fri-Sat 11.30am-2am. Rm 109, Jinshang Shouceng, 20 Xinyuanli Xili, Chaoyang District (6461 6737)

朝阳区新源里西里20号楼金尚首层109



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

EL BARRIO

THE BOTTEGA TEAM SET THEIR SIGHTS ON MEXICAN COMFORT FOOD

Daily 5.30pm-2am. 2/F, Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Beilu, Chaoyang District (6416 1716)

朝阳区三里屯北路81号那里花园2楼

Rising above an otherwise tepid 2018 Beijing dining scene, the Bottega team has added a little heat to the capital's few south-of-the-border options with their new culinary endeavor, El Barrio. Far removed from the hearty Neapolitan pizzas that put Bottega on the map, this new Mexican endeavor is a sprawling three-tiered space that occupies the entire west side of Nali Patio. Two terraces – one that lies in wait for tequila-fueled summer parties, the other an outdoor dining area fashioned with Mexican baroque and ornamental arches – surround the bustling main dining hall.

Inside, colorful tiles and tasteful street art flourishes give the venue a modern touch while the semi-open kitchen shows off what El Barrio's all about: homestyle Mexican grub served with care. Designed by Shanghai-based Peruvian celebrity chef Eduardo Vargas, the opening menu is a smattering of starters (go for the Iberico chorizo nachos) and plates to share as well as half a dozen tacos. Of those, the chargrilled Wagyu flank variety are the priciest but a standout, the beef tender and juicy, complemented by a pico de gallo (the use of mildly spicy guajillo chilies doesn't go unnoticed) and chunks of queso fresco cheese. The lamb birria eschews its usual stew form but is equally

succulent, the meat of the lamb shank resting on a bed of blended white beans and falling off the bone in a way that sees it devoured in no time. Unfortunately, the desserts don't quite match up to the mains and the chocolate Kahlua flan proves too sweet to satisfy, a sentiment seemingly shared by most, given the numerous half-eaten plates dotted around.

As with Q Mex's Taqueria – probably El Barrio's closest competition – the drinks menu is carefully composed, with an extensive imported tequila section. The piquant Paloma, mixed with blue agave tequila, pink grapefruit, and lime makes for a suitably refreshing accomplice to most anything you'll eat, whereas the Aztec Chocolate Negroni oozes both booze and rich cocoa notes on account of a sprinkling of chocolate chips that crunch between the teeth.

These smart details have not gone unnoticed, and if you head to El Barrio on any day of the week you'll find it teeming with Chinese and foreigners diners letting loose and on the hunt for an authentic taste of Mexico. In all, El Barrio's success serves as a testament to Bottega's growing capital in the city and we look forward to seeing its inviting terrace light up come spring. *Tom Arnstein*



PHOTO COURTESY OF EL BARRIO



PACHAPAPI

PACHAKUTIQ SETTLES IN THE THRIVING XINYUANLI

Daily 11.30am-2pm, 6-11pm (kitchen). Rm 105, 1/F, Jinshang, 20 Xinyuanlixi, Chaoyang District (6461 8968)

朝阳区新源里西20号金尚写字楼1层105室

The globe-trotting Jinshang complex on Xinyuanli that houses Bottega, Q Mex Taqueria, and Boxing Cat Brewery has just got even more international with the addition of Peruvian restaurant Pachapapi. Its previous incarnation, pop-up concept Pachakutiq moved between several locations in Beijing, but the venture has now settled down in Jinshang with a new name and a vastly expanded menu.

Pachapapi wears its Peruvian heart on its sleeve, with decor inspired by Peruvian pop culture and screens showing food documentaries that offer a taste of the meal to come. An eye-catching display of band and festival posters, brought back from Peru by the owner, adds to the restaurant's festive atmosphere, as does the growing roster of live music on weekends. Equally festive are the Pisco sours (RMB 68-78), available plain or with a variety of seasonal fruits (we rate the passion fruit version). You'll want to sample them all but be warned; they pack more of a punch than their fruity flavor would suggest. Those in search of a longer drink may want to try the Chilcano (RMB 68-78), a popular Peruvian tippie of Pisco topped off with ginger beer. Both are sure to get you up and dancing when the music comes on.

The food menu at Pachapapi reflects Peru's uniquely multicultural cuisine, which stems not only from the country's diverse flora and fauna but also from its history of immigration and foreign influence. For example, a selection of sushi rolls and nigiri reflects the Japanese influence on Peruvian cuisine, a style of cooking known as Nikkei. The signature Pacha roll (RMB 80) features shrimp and avocado topped with a heaping mound of squid ceviche, an interesting twist on a familiar dish. Crunchy quinoa adds textural contrast and a distinctively Andean ingredient. Elsewhere on the menu, *lomo saltado* (RMB 98), a stir fry of beef, onions, and tomatoes served with hand-cut French fries, derives from the Chifa tradition, a fusion of Cantonese and Peruvian cuisines. All the dishes come in substantial portions, meaning it's best to approach the menu as a group.

Of course, it would be remiss to review a Peruvian restaurant without mentioning their ceviche. Pachapapi's classic ceviche (RMB 112) is a stellar rendition, providing just the right balance of acidity and spice. The staff tell us they blended the juice of several different types of citrus to get exactly the right level of sourness. *Robynne Tindall*

YUN TENG RESTAURANT

YUNNAN DINING THAT COULD BE ANYWHERE UNDER THE CLOUDS

Daily 11am-10pm. 7 Donghuashi Beili Dongqu, Chongwen District (6711 3322 ext 7105)

云腾宾馆食府：崇文区东花市北里东区7号

Yunnan is often feted for its breathtaking natural beauty, its laid-back living, and its cultural diversity, boasting the most minorities of any Chinese province, but you'd never know that from a visit to the southern province's stuffy official government restaurant. Instead, diners are greeted with a lofty, and admittedly impressive, atrium with booths dotted around a central, mosaicked stage, which itself is outdone by a massive, spiraling chandelier. Ersatz oak-sized trunks and plastic ivy stretch to the dazzling LED display on the ceiling, which is strong enough to create a disco ball effect on the food 30 feet below. The traditional Yunnan experience this is not.

Instead, the thoroughly gaudy setting, sheer number of dishes available (albeit via a photo menu sans English), and affable service all give it more of a business-friendly vibe than the more rustic experience found at any one of Beijing's plentiful Yunnan restaurants. All the usual beloved dishes are here: fried goat's cheese (RMB 46), beef and mint (RMB 52), and "grandma's" mashed potato (RMB 32). The cheese is a little chewier than we prefer, while the added effort that has gone into rolling the

sprigs of mint in the marbled beef is a nice touch. In the end, though difficult to mess up, it's the mashed potato with its characteristically moreish and chunky-yet-smooth consistency that stands out, ensuring that you won't leave the table hungry.

The true draw to choosing Yunnan Prov Gov over your regular haunt, however, is the huge selection of mushroom-based dishes, the various fungi flown in seasonally from the southern province and cooked superbly. The mixed wild mushroom soup (RMB 98) is almost too big, the caps and stalks and rich and silky broth proving a bountiful feast unto itself. In preparation for the looming apocalypse, we also try the fried locusts (RMB 28), which true to their description are both "brittle and fragrant," each thorax giving a satisfying pop between the teeth. We finish with the red bean paste wrapped in deep-fried cheese (RMB 48), a chewy, sweet, and slightly fermented combination that we haven't found too readily in Beijing, but whose flavor we can't honestly say will draw us back – much like our Yunnan Prov Gov experience overall. *Tom Arnstein*



PHOTO: TOM ARNSTEIN

SOOTHING STEWS



As temperatures in Beijing drop well below zero, our diet calls for abandoning salads in favor of hearty soups and stews. Thankfully, from spicy Korean hot pot to traditional French ragout, Beijing restaurants have plenty of slow-cooked options to satisfy winter appetites.

Lamb Shank Navarin, Café Flo, RMB 142

A good stew can take a cheap cut of meat and transform it into something special. Navarin is a traditional French stew of lamb or mutton, which Café Flo makes using a bone-in lamb shank for flavor and visual impact. The shank is braised in a red wine sauce with seasonal vegetables, and the puff pastry topping adds a touch of theater (as well as a necessary textural contrast).

Dapanji, Baron Rozi Restaurant Xinjiang Cuisine, RMB 75

The *dapanji* at Baron Rozi certainly lives up to its name (literally “big plate chicken”), with even the smaller portion proving difficult for three people to finish. Said to have been invented in Xinjiang in the nineties by a migrant from Sichuan, *dapanji* combines chicken, potatoes, and peppers in a tomato-based sauce seasoned with chili and Sichuan pepper. What really makes this a hearty winter-friendly dish, however, is the hand-pulled noodles hiding underneath the chicken and soaking up all the sauce.

Budae Jjigae, Han Jimmy, RMB 138

This Korean fusion stew was created just after the Korean War using surplus supplies from US army bases such as spam, hot dogs, and processed cheese, hence the name, which translates to “army base stew.” The combination of fatty meats and noodles simmering in a bright red broth flavored with kimchi and *gochujang* makes it a great December dish. Funky Korean restaurant Han Jimmy in Shimao Gongsan serves a solid rendition and saves you the trip to Wangfujing or Wudaokou.



CRAVINGS

SCRATCHING THE ITCH FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY, QUALITY DINING

Daily 10am-11pm. 1/F, Park Avenue Lifestyle Plaza (50m west of Park Avenue south gate), Chaoyang District (5719 2684)

朝阳区公园大道生活广场喷泉北侧

It's hard to define a good neighborhood restaurant, but it's usually the kind of place that has something for everyone. During a recent return visit to Cravings, which opened near Chaoyang Park around a year ago, the wide spectrum of guests enjoying Wednesday night dinner certainly suggests that they have that aspect covered.

Cravings positions itself as family-friendly (yes, there's a children's play area), but don't let that put you off if you don't have kids in tow. The food is resolutely adult, as is the drinks list, which includes a very competitively priced French house wine (RMB 168 per bottle/RMB 40 per glass). The restaurant has always espoused a globetrotting culinary style, one that can't easily be summed up by one or two cuisines, and the same can be said of the recently revamped menu. For example, a salad of new potatoes and broad beans (RMB 68) brings to mind Japanese cuisine thanks to a finishing sprinkle of bonito flakes and a rich mayonnaise flavored with *mentaiko* (salted pollock roe), although the latter also evokes the flavors of Spanish

patatas bravas.

The new menu has stronger pan-Asian influences than previous offerings. The star dish on the dinner menu is a deconstructed riff on grilled fish, or *kaoyu* (RMB 198). In traditional *kaoyu*, a whole fish is drenched in spicy oil and then served in a metal chafing dish, but for Cravings' creative version the fish is filleted and grilled over charcoal before being served over smoked hay. However, the real treat here is the spicy "secret sauce," which is mixed table-side (secret or not, it's reminiscent of a Cantonese-style chili oil). Another dish from the dinner menu, chicken lollipops with Sichuan pepper (RMB 58), demonstrates a deft hand with seasoning, the Sichuan pepper presenting as a pleasantly citrusy back note rather than an overwhelming hit of numbing spice.

Cravings is also open for brunch and lunch, the latter featuring some good deals on noodle and rice dishes, making it a great spot for any time of the day. *Robynne Tindall*



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAVINGS

PERTH // CITY REORGANIZATION // BEIJING SKI RESORTS AND SLOPES // CAPITAL RANT



DEC 8 – THE HUTONG CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Year after year, this alleyway bazaar continues to be one of Beijing's favorite ways to ring in the holiday season. Held on the roof of The Hutong cultural center near Beixinqiao subway station, you'll find festive treats like mulled wine as well as local artisans and makers selling jewelry, paintings, and other Beijing-related wares that make for perfect stocking stuffers, and more. Free. 11am-4pm. The Hutong

GET OUT

PERTH

AUSTRALIA'S WILD WEST FOODIE CAPITAL

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley

Almost 8,000km south of Beijing, Perth, capital of Western Australia, might not seem like an obvious vacation spot. Yet with its 265 days of sunshine per year, pristine beaches, and easy access to one of the world's greatest wine regions, it's definitely worth the trip.



PHOTOS: TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Getting There and Around

There are currently no direct flights between Beijing and Perth, but there are regular services via Hong Kong and Guangzhou starting from around RMB 2,500. Perth and Beijing are in the same time zone, so you won't waste any of your precious vacation time recovering from jetlag. Stay somewhere close to the center, and rent a car because public transport is patchy.

What to do

Explore the city center. After years of apathetic civic planning, Perth now has a thriving shopping, dining, cocktail, and entertainment scene. Wander from Northbridge down to the new Elizabeth Quay on the banks of the Swan River, and enjoy a flat white or cappuccino on a waterfront terrace.

Go for a swim. Scarborough Beach gets decent surf breaks, while Cottesloe Beach can't be missed for a family-friendly and picturesque dip. Just keep an eye out for sharks, who have been known to sniff around here.

Catch the ferry over to Rottnest Island for the day, and take a selfie with the island's famous quokka, the so-called "world's happiest animal." This tiny car-free island is also blessed with breathtaking beaches and a cute town center.

Chill in Fremantle, or 'Freo' as the locals call it, a hippie-dippie port city crammed with art galleries, restaurants, live music venues, and green spaces. For a fascinating insight into Western Australia's colonial past, pay a visit to the old Fremantle Jail which was initially used to house convicts (who were also kind enough to build it), and was in continuous use right up until 1991.

What to eat and drink

Centuries of immigration has given the Western Australian culinary scene a very diverse character. The official cuisine is "fusion," and the flavor and ingredient

combinations can be startlingly varied, with Wagyu steaks, bok-choy, and kumera all happily occupying the same plate. Fresh produce reigns supreme, and so does fresh seafood. Sitting right on the coast, Perth is awash (ahem) with king prawns, oysters, fish, lobsters, crabs, and crayfish. There's nothing better than eating hot fish 'n' chips wrapped up in newspaper while sitting on the beach.

For a cheap lunch to go, pop into any bakery and order a meat pie. Traditionally made with minced beef and gravy, and lots of tomato sauce (ketchup), these hand-held snacks come in a wide variety of fillings such as kangaroo (yes, you can eat them), steak and mushroom, curried chicken, and tofu.

When it comes to dessert, don't pass on the pavlova. A



THE ADORABLE QUOKKA AKA "THE WORLD'S HAPPIEST ANIMAL"

light and airy meringue base covered in whipped cream and slices of fresh strawberry and kiwi, it's Australia's favorite sweet, although New Zealand also lays claim to having invented it.

Just to the south of Perth, the Margaret River Region produces approximately 20 percent of Australia's fine wine, so you're perfectly positioned to enjoy it. Be warned: for the uninitiated, Aussie wines (Shiraz in particular) can really pack a punch.

OUT ON THE STREET

THE BRICKENING ENCROACHES DEEPER INTO RESIDENTIAL AREAS

By Jeremiah Jenne

While “The Bricking” has so far mostly affected commercial properties, including wiping out many well-known and beloved food and beverage institutions, the next phase in Beijing’s ongoing urban rejuvenation will start to affect residents of areas designated as historical and cultural conservation zones. These areas are mostly located within the Second Ring Road north of the Forbidden City.

Relocating city residents is also a key part of the city’s plan for historic conservation. The areas zoned for conservation contain approximately 95,000 households with 285,000 persons making for a population density of about 27,500 people per square kilometer, close to that of Mumbai.

According to the plan, “Population dispersal is one of the objects of the conservation program as well as the crux for implementing the conservation program.” Land designated for residential purposes is set to shrink by about 15 percent. That’s a serious reduction, but nothing compared to the plan’s recommendation to reduce the amount of land for industrial and other uses in the conservation zone by nearly two-thirds. Hence the bricking of your favorite bespoke vermouth bar.

Part of the scheme to reduce the population of Beijing’s urban core is to “rejuvenate” the area by tearing down structures which do not conform to the city’s vision of historic conservation. City planners have divided over 10,000 courtyard residences in the proposed zones into five categories based on population density and “the current

condition of the buildings, their traditional style, and their historical and cultural value.”

According to the plan, nearly 40 percent of courtyard residences in the zone have a population density exceeding seven people per square meter, and it calls for “reducing the residential population density ... in order to improve living conditions.”

The plan also implies how this might be accomplished. Many of the most densely packed residential courtyards are warrens of newly built structures built over decades. Sometimes these structures were built to give residents more room. Often, these newly built rooms are sublet to economic migrants and others as relatively inexpensive – although spartan – accommodation while their landlords move to more comfortable apartments in the outskirts of the city. Last year, the city took aim at this practice by threatening courtyard leaseholders that this practice could jeopardize their lease.

The conservation plan also specifically targets “poor quality dilapidated housing” and newly constructed buildings deemed incompatible with the historic character of their neighborhoods, leaving open the question of what constitutes “newly constructed” and who has final authority over the historic character of existing structures.

The plan also proposes traffic restrictions based on the size of hutongs, the expansion of green spaces, and rather specific guidelines regarding the renovation and reconstruction of buildings according to “historic characteristics.”



There is also the question of quality. So far, much of the “rejuvenation” of Beijing’s urban core has focused less on restoration or preservation than on constructing reimagined spaces, which can be attractive and functional but which often depart significantly from the actual historic character of the neighborhood.

Many of the methods and materials used in the construction process appear to be haphazard and temporary fixes. For example, while the plan and the accompanying “Technical Guidelines for the Maintenance and Protection of Old Housing” call for wall renovations to be done with traditional gray bricks laid in the traditional manner, most of the “brickwork” being carried out in Dongcheng consists simply of gray tiles slapped onto exterior walls to give the illusion of bricks. The initial effect is an aesthetic upgrade, but walking through the hutongs east of Jiadaokou you’ll find numerous tiles – some installed as recently as this spring – already falling off of walls and in need of repair. If the goal is to preserve the historic character of the city’s center, it might make sense to use materials which would last years rather than months.

Rosie Levine, who researched Beijing’s architectural heritage while studying for her master’s degree at Peking University, argues that the guidelines ultimately reduce the city’s aesthetic diversity by making buildings and by extension, neighborhoods look increasingly similar.

“For example, if you are in a traditional courtyard house,

[the plan] sets the requirements for color, appearance and even mandates that those red and green window grates need to be in place,” says Levine. “Although this plan allegedly calls for preservation of industrial architecture and non-traditional architecture styles, in practice it is a pretty narrow definition of what ‘historical’ looks like.”

Levine points out that the plan has important benefits as well, particularly in regards to substandard housing. “A lot of the illegal structures built in the hutongs were initially constructed as temporary housing. Many of these structures were built after the 1976 Tangshan earthquake and were never intended to be used as long as they were. Because of that, many of these structures were risks to public safety – shoddily built, poorly maintained, and encroaching into the roads and other public space. From a public health and safety standpoint, there is an argument that it is the role of the city to regulate illegal structures.”

“Whether the regulation needed to be as harsh as it was,” adds Levine, “resulting in the displacement of residents and local businesses, is a different question.”

STRAP ON YER SKIS!

THE BEST SLOPES IN GREATER BEIJING

By Kyle Mullin



Instead of only catering to the well-to-do, Beijing's ski resort owners are now racing to make winter sports mainstream with as much momentum as an Olympian hurtling down a slope. But what did you expect after Beijing's successful 2022 Winter Olympic bid? We can't complain though, as the chance to ski and board in Beijing has never been better, with numerous resorts popping up to cater to your every snowy need.

Genting Resort Secret Garden

Long before Beijing was considered a winter sports hub, much less the host of the winter Olympics, Genting Secret Garden lured skiers of all stripes from in and around the capital. It has continued to do so with a diverse terrain made up of two beginner slopes, 15 intermediate slopes, 12 advanced slopes, six wild slopes, and two terrain parks. On top of that, Secret Garden has newer additions

like a slalom (in which skiers weave between poles) and an Olympic slopestyle area. Snowboarders will also enjoy the Olympic sized halfpipe.

Open until Feb 24, 2019. Tickets start at RMB 609 for a day pass (entry and equipment) (031 3569 8865, www.secretgardenresorts.com)

How to get there:

· **By shuttle:** Shuttles leave every morning from Guomao Station (7am departure), Huixinxijie Nankou Station

(7.45am), and Jiandemen Station (8am). Shuttles also leave the resort at 4pm and make the same stops on the way back.

· **By car:** At Jianxiangqiao take the G6 Expressway to the Chongli South Exit and keep going until you reach Genting Resort Secret Garden.

· **By bus:** At Beijiao station go to Jianxiangqiao, transfer at Chongli District station, then change again to Genting Resort Secret Garden.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RESORTS



Chongli Fulong

One of the newer resorts on this list, having only opened in 2016, this 750,000sqm resort boasts a snow park, night skiing, and an art and musical snow ground. The ski area itself comes packed with 37 slopes at varying levels of difficulty.

Open until Mar 1, 2019. Ticket prices vary from RMB 350-1,280 depending on whether you rent ski equipment, ski at night, and so on (031 3569 0025).

How to get there:

· By car: From the Chongli North toll, turn left and drive 1,000m (3-4 hours)

Nanshan

Probably the best-known and popular skiing option in the greater Beijing area, Nanshan boasts 25 trails and a top-notch snowboarding park as well as posh amenities like their Shirton Inn log cabin and a Norwegian-style villa.

Open until Mar 10, 2019. Prices start at RMB 295 for the entire day (entry and equipment) on weekends and national holidays (8909 1909).

How to get there:

· By car: Take the Jingcheng Expressway

to the 16 Miyun Downtown Exit (exit after the expressway). Go straight and follow the signs to Nanshan Ski Village.

· **By shuttle bus:** Buses depart at 8.30am from three stops: Sanyuan Bridge, Shaoyaoju subway station, and Wudaokou subway station (Wed-Sun RMB 45 return, Mon-Tue RMB 25 return, book in advance on 8909 1909).

· **By bus:** Take bus 980 at Dongzhimen and get off at West Bridge (every five minutes, RMB 14), and then go to Nanshan Ski Vacation Village by taxi (approximately RMB 25).

Thaiwoo Ski Resort

Aside from its 18km of ski trails and 500m of vertical drops, this resort also has a large terrain park for visitors looking to enjoy off-piste skiing. It's also no slouch in the amenities department, boasting five top-of-the-line hotels.

Open until Mar 31, 2019. Prices start at RMB 492 for a weekend day pass (entry and equipment) (400 627 2525).

How to get there:

· **By high-speed train:** The Beijing-Zhangjialou train can be taken at Beijing North Railway Station to the entrance of Thaiwoo Ski Resort (Chongli, Zhangjiakou). Approximately 50 minutes.

Other local slopes

Cuiyunshan Ski Resort (6400 9569, www.bjdeming.com), Wanlong Ski Resort (031 3478 5111/8888), Duolemeidi (400 080 1810), Jundushan (6072 5888, www.bjski.com.cn), Vanke Shijinglong Ski Resort, Wanlong (031 3478 5111, www.wlski.com), Yuyang (8485 6362, www.yuyangski.com.cn).



TEA FOR WHO?

ON THE HUNT FOR THE ELUSIVE CUPPA IN THE CAPITAL

By Jeremiah Jenne


I live near Wudaoying Hutong, which is home to approximately 315 places to get a well-made coffee, plus a Costa. You know Costa Coffee, right? It's what happens when people wonder if it's possible to get a blander, more overpriced and processed cup of coffee than Starbucks, and Britain answers with "Right! We're on this!"

While Costa Coffee often fails at serving its namesake product, the one thing those Brits do know how to do is make a cup of tea. Or at least, they seem to know how to develop proven corporate training methods which can instill best practices across cultures

for the delivery of a consistently served tea-based product.

I'm serious. In all of Beijing, Costa is one of the few places that actually know how to serve tea. For one, they use actual teapots, thereby allowing you to control the steeping time. Most of the time in cafés, a bit of loose leaf tea is dumped into a large glass or cup and then doused in tepid water. There's no steeping and pouring. There's no attempt to match water temperature with the variety of tea. It's just 'here's your tea and off you go.'

To be fair, the British worked long and hard to get their tea straight. There was the establishment of the British East



India Company, several disastrous meetings with Chinese emperors, a war with the Americans following a particularly boisterous Tea Party in Boston Harbor, and then another war with China to protect the balance of payments for all the tea being shipped to Blighty as well as protecting Queen Victoria's good name as the Pablo Escobar of Opium. Eventually, the Brits hunkered down and said, "Sod it. Let's just steal the stuff, mate," and sent Robert Fortune – imagine Indiana Jones if he'd been a gardener rather than an archaeologist – to sneak around China in disguise collecting the tea plants, staff, and knowledge to kickstart a tea industry in India.

But still, this is China. Why is it so hard to find a good cup of tea? Sure, you can always go down to Maliandao, the great tea warehouses in southwestern Beijing, the epicenter of all things *cha* in the capital. But a visit to Maliandao with its

floor after floor of the fragrant leaf can be an overwhelming experience. Where is the tea equivalent of Metal Hands?

And no, the multi-billion RMB phenomenon of bubble tea, cheese tea, Hey Tea, and anything else that resembles a dessert more than a proper cup of tea, doesn't count.

According to Martin Papp, the owner of Papp's teas which sells loose-leaf tea to consumers and businesses, the bubble tea phenomenon is all about the sweetness. "So far the only model that has worked is sweet teas. Cheese cream teas, bubble teas. Meaning original high-quality teas without sugar doesn't capture the mainstream consumer's preference."

Does that mean for a tea café to work, you have to make the tea into a cookie?

Fortunately, there are a few exceptions to the rule of bad tea in Beijing. Papp suggested I check out "Teasure," a mall-based chain of tea cafés which, I have to admit, do a decent cup of oolong or pu'er. The vibe is very Starbucks-lite, and on a weekday afternoon at the APM Mall on Wangfujing, I observed that the coffee giant was selling at least two cups of coffee for every tea served at Teasure, but it's nice to know that the Chinese national beverage isn't being completely ignored.

Perhaps I'm missing the point entirely. Could it be that tea just isn't suited to the coffee-café model? Sherry Zhang, a tea expert at The Hutong who leads tours of Maliandao, doesn't believe that there is a problem with Beijing's tea culture at all.

"I don't think Beijing lacks high-end teahouses," says Zhang. "On the contrary, they demonstrate elegance, seriousness, and an aesthetic, and they have a lot of high-grade tea, tea sets, and professional tea rooms. Tea art performances are relatively closed private spaces and are not necessarily open to the public. Many Chinese businessmen negotiate business at these high-end business teahouses which may be in an office building or a business center."

Martin Papp suggests that this kind of tea house may also be more popular in other parts of China. "There are several tea cafés doing some cool stuff in China," he says. "Just not so much in Beijing. There is a lot of activity in Hangzhou, Xiamen, Shenzhen, and Shanghai. Especially Hangzhou."

Zhang also believes that the reason Beijing lacks good tea venues is not because people don't care about their tea but rather that tea is so encoded in the culture that selling it in a café seems redundant. "In Beijing, it is easy to buy your favorite tea, and almost every family has some basic tea utensils, if you have a little bit of money and you can buy your favorite tea and you already have nice tea things at home why are you willing to choose the outside tea house?"

In the meantime, my quest for the perfect cup of tea in Beijing continues.

Suggestions welcome.

Introducing the people who matter

MEET

SNAPLINE // BEIJING JAZZ // KEITH MOTSI // NANCY JENKINSON BROWN



DEC 21 - LEGOWELT

He may be Dutch-born but Legowelt is decidedly international when it comes to his musical inspirations. Indeed, over his two-and-a-half decade career, the esteemed DJ and producer has nurtured a sound that has been described as “a hybrid form of slam jack combined with deep Chicago house, romantic ghetto technofunk, and EuroHorror Soundtrack.” These left-field and eclectic influences give his tracks a uniquely expansive sound and an arsenal of records that is sure to wow Dada’s late-night melomaniac set at this highly anticipated Beijing appearance. Ticket price TBA. Doors open at 9pm. Dada

PHOTO: IFONLYUK.COM



PIZZA KINGS

GUNG HO BECOME FIRST EVER THREE-TIME PIZZA CUP CHAMPIONS



Slices were eaten, belts were loosened, and a familiar face was propelled once again to the top of the pizza pile via your votes. After six weeks of grueling competition, Gung Ho was crowned this year's Pizza Champion, making them the first ever venue to have won three times – no mean feat considering that the competition is six years young.

Commiserations and second place went to La Pizza who demonstrated a strong showing in this year's race, attaining a result that saw them trump their best previous standing of fifth place.

Winners Gung Ho went all-in this year, launching a strategic voting campaign that was buoyed by a strong presence at the Pizza Fest back in October, where they showcased new, innovative toppings, and kept kids and adults alike rapt with interactive games.

With this win, the New Zealand-hailing restaurant have regained their crown from 2014 and 2015, putting them back on top and proving that their innovative formula is still working.

Gung Ho owner Jade Gray said they had been preparing for the cup for a full year, adding, "It means a lot for our team to win this following a month of PR, exposure, and representing

our values so as to show we're fully committed to Beijing."

That has also meant a focus on constant evolution and a menu that has scored big with vegetarians and vegans as well as adherents to the more niche keto, paleo, and gluten-free diets. Meat eaters, however, have long espoused Gung Ho's mouthwatering Beijing-by-way-of-Xinjiang lamb *chuan'r* pizza.

Perhaps most importantly in a world increasingly ravaged by the effects of climate change and plastic waste, Gung Ho has long been champions of the environment. Their determination to be both eco-friendly and friendly on the palate culminated in the restaurant receiving B Corp status at the end of 2016, making Gung Ho the third ever company in China to do so. Since then, they have continued to hold their annual Earth Day event as well as organize walks to the Great Wall for trash pick-ups.

These factors make Gung Ho a worthy three-time champion of our Pizza Cup and reflect their ongoing motivation to provide an experience that is healthy, tasty, and guilt-free. That effort certainly hasn't been lost on the great Beijing public.



TRANSCONTINENTAL POST-PUNK

**SNAPLINE FRONTMAN CHEN XI ON HIS BAND'S LONG-DISTANCE
RECORDING RELATIONSHIP**

By Kyle Mullin

Snapline's return to the stage this past August was special, and not just because it marked the end of a three-year performance hiatus. The Beijing post-punk band's set was also notable for the presence of vocalist Chen Xi, who had traveled all the way back from his new home in Washington State to play some shows and record a new album with the band.

Like any long-distance relationship, the transcontinental arrangement has been tough for Chen Xi and his bandmates, guitarist Li Qing and bassist Li Weisi. However, Chen Xi tells *the Beijinger* that Snapline remain determined to keep making music together. Their new album, *Shou Hua*, is due out on Nov 30 via Maybe Mars.

PHOTO: KA XIAOXI

Why are you now based in Seattle?

To be more precise – I live in a suburb of the greater Seattle area. That's simply because I work for Microsoft, and Microsoft is based in Redmond, WA, a small town not far from Seattle. I decided to move to the US mainly because I think it's a better place to raise my kids.

How has that move challenged your band?

The challenge for the band is we're not located physically near each other anymore. Our creative process depends heavily on practices, where we play together and try different things. So, since I moved it's been very challenging, especially writing new songs.

We managed to write a couple of songs last summer when I was back, for the recording of the new album. There's a song that I wrote the lyrics for in the US, and they wrote the instrumental in Beijing. We didn't know what it would be like, but it happens to be a very beautiful song. However, this might be just a rare case and we need to figure out how to shift the collaboration process for new material.

How did you decide to choose "Tent" as your lead single, a perhaps less conventional choice given its minimal lyrics.

It's not the first time for Snapline to have few words in a song. We have "Holy Comments" [from 2010's *Party is Over, Pornostar*] – it has even fewer words than this song.

I don't really intend to challenge listeners. For Snapline, from the very beginning, we've held to the principle that we make the music for ourselves, without caring about listeners. We feel super grateful that there's a group of people that love our music. We really, really appreciate that. But we don't really care about the listeners while writing the songs. It's more about self-approval.

Tell us more about the new album.

The recording process was very good to me. We recorded it in a great studio called GOK [Sound, in Tokyo]. I really enjoyed the two weeks where I took the subway to the studio every day, needing to do a line transfer in Shinjuku Station – just like commuting to work!

From my perspective, with this album, we tried very hard to make it sound raw – from the writing to arrangements and recording techniques. It's thoroughly Snapline.

What's next for Snapline?

Snapline will explore how to collaborate from a distance and start working on new material. And myself I do have new ideas for [side project] Late Troubles, but it's still too early to say anything.





AT 25, JAZZ GROWS UP FAST IN BEIJING

THE CAPITAL'S JAZZ SCENE WAS BORN LATE BUT IS FLOURISHING FAST

By Patrick Flanary

"Play 'City of Stars!'" a smiling Chinese man hollers from the back of The Bricks, the Sanlitun jazz club resembling Seb's from the film *La La Land*.

The request reflects Beijing's growing fascination with American jazz, as China approaches the 100th anniversary of the music genre's arrival in Shanghai.

Meanwhile, here in the capital, jazz took much longer to find a permanent home – about seven decades to be more precise.

The underpinnings of this delay begin in the 1930s, when Western music was actively suppressed by the Japanese occupation, and later banned during the Cultural Revolution. As China began to open up in the 1980s, it was easier for domestic and international musicians to perform and for consumers to buy foreign albums, but a true scene did not materialize in Beijing until 1993, when the city hosted its first jazz festival. This meant that the same time as grunge and hip-hop were dominating the American music charts, many Beijingers were discovering jazz for the first time.

A year later, renowned sax-player Liu Yuan opened the city's first jazz club, the CD Café, which he ran right up until opening the East Shore on Houhai Lake in 2006, and which is still in operation to this day.

Shortly after moving from Italy to study kung fu, a stolen wallet forced pianist Moreno Donadel to hustle bar owners in Sanlitun for a gig. That was 20 years ago; Donadel has played for Beijing audiences ever since. "For them, jazz music was modern music," he recalls. "They were open to receive, more open compared to Western audiences."

Many musicians were so inspired by these new sounds that they left Beijing to study jazz abroad, returning home confident and committed to the fundamentals of structure and improvisation.

"I think that's probably when they started to feel freer, and not embarrassed to express themselves," says Jess Meider, an American singer who has performed here since 1998.

Today, jazz is performed all over the city, from the oldest surviving rooms (the East Shore Live Jazz Café and Jianghu Bar) to the charmingly dingy, tucked-away hutong bars (Modernista and DDC). And, within just the last two years, four ultra-chic jazz spots have also opened: Blue Note Beijing, inside the former American embassy; The Bricks and Good Bait, in Sanlitun; and Tango by Ala House, in the CBD. These new clubs suggest a growing affluence in Beijing, with a taste (and the wallet) for fine dining and bottle service.

Local jazz is also returning to the type of luxury venue that welcomed players to 1920s Shanghai: hotels. Since October, Centro at Kerry Hotel has hosted the Smooth Operators, a five-piece expat group performing modern jazz takes on standards, including George Gershwin's "Summertime", and more contemporary hits, by the likes of Adele and OutKast.

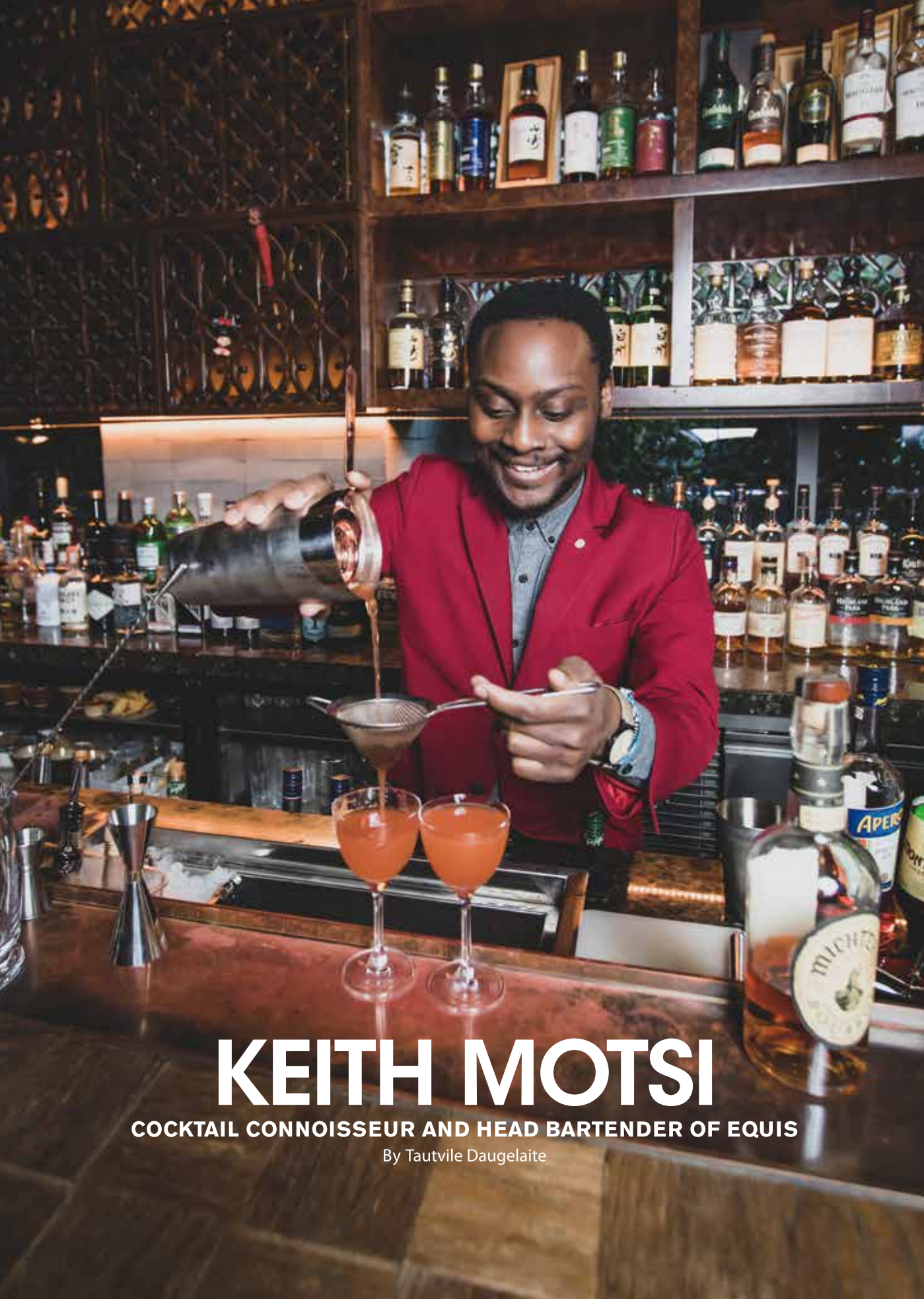
"Jazz is not about the genre," says London-based singer Ashton Forde, before a recent set. "It's about the style, it's about the feel, and finding an interesting way to preserve and interpret the familiar."

Chinese musicians are now starting to outnumber the American, British, and European players here who first introduced them to jazz. Bands have evolved into international hybrids of local talent and foreign virtuosity. "In Beijing, I have found great players and a growing understanding of the music," says Colombian drummer Victor Bastidas, who arrived in 2017 and regularly performs with Chinese combos.

As it turns out, many expat musicians say they prefer playing Beijing to places like New York City, given the availability of work here.

"Without Beijing," Meider says, "I wouldn't have been on so many stages making all the mistakes that you have to make to become a better performer."

"It saved my life when jazz came to Beijing," Donadel adds. "And that was what made me stay here – to see what would happen tomorrow."



KEITH MOTSI

COCKTAIL CONNOISSEUR AND HEAD BARTENDER OF EQUIS

By Tautvile Daugelaite

If you don't have passion, don't even get into the industry," states Keith Motsi as we sit in the cozy and dimly-lit private lounge at Equis in the Four Seasons. Light jazz plays softly in the background and the bar team readies for the evening's bustle. Prior Motsi's arrival at the bar, the space had stood empty and incomplete for years. Now, after just over a year of business, Motsi is putting it, and himself, on the map, garnering multiple nominations for both Bartender and Hotel Bar of the Year awards in this year's *DRiNK Magazine's* Bar Awards, the latter of which he and his team secured. As his crew buzzed around the bar, we spoke to Motsi about his passion for making drinks, and drinking them.

What do you have on the go right now?

We are starting to work on an event called "Taste of Artistry," and one of the ideas we have is a gin vapor room. So instead of drinking, you're inhaling it. We will have gin botanicals everywhere, kind of like a gin rainforest, meaning that it goes straight into your bloodstream so you get drunk quicker. Originally that was my only responsibility, but having come back from holiday I also suddenly have a two-sided A4 sheet filled with tasks. But it's all fun and games; I go home and dream about cocktails. If you work in an unpredictable industry, you never know what will come next.

Where do you like to go for a night out in Beijing?

The curious thing about Beijing is that people don't venture too far out. I often get the "Oh, you guys are too far up north." I walked from Sanlitun today, it's a 10-minute walk. Five by cab. The city has many more places now than it did when I first came here. I can literally have a night out in Nali Patio. Starting with a pizza in Bottega, I'll then go see a few guys in Pickering's, then Black Moth, and end up dancing at La Social. I just like to go see other bartenders really, share ideas. Beijing's bartending community is also getting closer now and the ideas are spreading.

Do you experiment when ordering drinks, or stick to your favorites?

I'll try a classic one, to see how the place is. Sometimes even ordering a gin and tonic is a great check; just seeing what ice they use can be a good indicator. If it's nice, I'll try something else. I love experimenting, but it just depends on where you are. That's how you learn.

When did you have your first drink?

One time, I bought a big bottle of cider from a corner store. Everyone growing up in England would buy those. We would tell our parents we were going for a sleepover and then meet in the park and drink. I didn't understand

how getting drunk worked back then. I thought that it was an instant effect – you had a sip and you were drunk. So we had a drink and nothing was happening and we decided to drink some more. I got home later that day, you know, and it hit me all at once and I was sitting in the bath, just suffering. My mum told me not to pretend I was sober because there was no point. Then all the cider I had came up. That was pretty much my first time drinking.

When did you get hooked on cocktails?

One of my first jobs for some pocket money was collecting glasses in a bar. That place was making strawberry daiquiris and I tried them. Strawberries are one of few good things [Britain] grows, and I thought, "this is heaven." I must have had about 10 of those. I was a little bit of a smartass – I spent days learning the drinks menu, so I knew it better than some of the bartenders, and they would ask me for the recipes once in a while.

Do you oversee the bar, or stand behind it and make drinks yourself?

If you go to Gordon Ramsay's restaurant in Shanghai you won't find him in the kitchen. Same here. I have that confidence, that's why we do the training. Of course, I love jumping on, but sometimes it's better to watch from the other side because when you are on, you can't see the full picture.

Name two drinks: one that you like to make, and one that you like to drink.

I like drinking everything [*laughs*]. I enjoy making the Paper Plane: Amaro, bourbon, Aperol, and citrus. It's a beautiful aperitivo-style drink. I usually do it like a welcome drink, freshens up your palate. There is also something amazing about making a martini. It's only two or three ingredients, but you can mess it up before even starting if your glass is warm.

OLD CHINA HAND



NANCY JENKINSON BROWN

JAZZ SINGER AND RADIO HOST

By Kyle Mullin

There are lively interviewees, and then there's Nancy Jenkinson Brown. The British expat has the air of a golden age jazz musician, with her regal tone of voice and whip-smart repartee. Keeping her on track throughout our Q&A about her career in the capital, singing pop and jazz standards in practically every music venue possible over the past 10 years, and co-hosting the popular talk radio show Touch Beijing on FM 92.5, is by no means an easy feat. But like any gifted jazz performer, her conversational segues make for some enthralling improv and funny anecdotes. Below the chanteuse unravels the surreal tale of her time in Beijing.

Let's start with some backstory.

Would you like me to be succinct? Or witty and debonair?

Which do you prefer?

Well, let me put it this way. It all started when I met a guy in a bar, and then he came to one of my gigs. It's the start of every dream story, really. In Beijing, you quite often meet a lot of people who weren't intending to come to China. It certainly wasn't on my radar. And when it comes to starting on the radio, how does anyone start? Why, singing "Mamma Mia" while wearing pink sequins and white boots, of course. That should be the answer right there, and let's leave the rest up to the imagination!

Well, now you've got me very curious.

Of course. I met a guy in a bar in London, I was having a fantastic time there. I used to work at RADA (the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art), a well-known school for actors [emphasizes the last syllable with faux snootiness]. I worked on the admin side of things there. Hang on, I'm not being succinct like I promised at all!

Don't worry about it!

So I met a guy in a bar. I was having a great time and loved life in London, working at RADA by day and as a singer by night, or at least kind of. I'd given up music for various reasons, too many reasons to get into here, though part of it was musicians were annoying me no end! Oh, don't write that. Actually go ahead and write it, I don't mind.

Anyway, at the bar on this night, I had just started gigging again, and this guy I met saw my show, and we got to talking afterward. As it turns out, he was a fixer looking for musicians

to come play at hotels in China. And that's how I wound up here.

What was it like to be thrust into Beijing's hotel cover band scene?

It's a good gig, but it makes you really want to get out and see the town. That's because you work six nights a week, so when you do have time you really make the most of it. I started to get out there and mingle and decided I'd hang around a bit, check out the scene more, and it was during that time that this random radio thing happened.

The random radio thing being the show you co-hosted until the end of this past summer?

Why yes! You see, when I first came to Beijing it was 2007, and the city was very different then. but I don't like to complain. Of course, it's changed! That's what a burgeoning economy does. And it leads to random occurrences and opportunities!

And that brings me to how I got the radio gig. I'd been a singer at a hotel bar and was getting into the local music scene in my spare time. At one point a friend of a friend asked me if I would sing for this Chinese New Year show. Before I knew it, I ended up in pink sequins and white boots on TV singing "Mamma Mia" for this extravaganza. It went well, apparently, because then I started working for them and then had my own radio show. So there you go. After all, how else does one get a big break in radio?

I started as a guest co-host on some talk radio shows, co-hosted Touch until the end of this past summer, and now intermittently host, due to my outside pursuits. And it's been an absolute blast.

Do you get to use some of the same skillsets as a singer and a radio host?

Yes, they feed into each other. I've learned a lot about talking to people. Being a singer is different than being an instrumentalist because you have the mike and you're a figurehead, so you have to bring your audience in. And you can't be false. That's true on the radio too, even if you have a persona it can't be something that's not part of you. People need to believe it and feel who you really are.

DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW TO SHAKE A HAND?

By Artur Witkowski

Have you ever wondered why Contact Improv (CI) dancers are morally superior to yourself? Well, for starters, have you ever touched one? Have you ever marveled at the end of a handshake, as they dance two fingers across your palm and then fluidly pull back their hand to fix unruly bangs? Friend, did you even notice that their fingers are more receptive than yours? When you imagine the subtleness of a pianist's or painter's hands in comparison to your chubby little thumbs scrolling down, manipulating – and being manipulated – by your cracked screen, do you not feel a tinge of shame at the person you've become? Well, don't worry. The good news is you needn't be as ashamed as you think.

Just ask Bojean, a famous Harvard-educated, really-hot, Asian-American humanist who has been CI-positive for over 10 years. What is CI? CI is the exploration of one's body using the fundamentals of sharing weight, touch, and movement awareness.

To learn more, we met at a noodle place no one goes to during the day, where a drowsy waiter brought her a salad she didn't order. Bojean wasn't wearing any makeup, and all male waiters stared at her when they thought she didn't notice, dreaming of buying her stuff and making her happy.

What is the hardest thing about living with the social stigma of being CI-positive?

"There's a misconception that because you are touching people it's going to be sexual, or it's going to be negative in some way, or crossing some kind of boundary. We are creating a space where people can return to themselves, to their own internal experiences and the honesty of the relationship, the honesty of dance. As a humanist who works in a body-oriented way, my colleagues have been very supportive of integrating the body with the mind. Actually, I think there is a general conception that among people in a civilized society there shouldn't be too much physical touch. We are physical creatures. The first comfort we get from the world comes

in the form of touch, our mothers, for example. And we need to recognize how essential touch is to our humanity."

I went quiet for a while, desperate not to say anything stupid. Bojean bit her lower lip and rubbed the back of her neck with increasing sensuality in my mind's eye. She was painful and enlightening to be around, but that's how it is with goddesses sometimes.

"How is CI transmitted?"

"You cannot contract CI through language. It's something that everyone experiences a different way. When they realize that it's a form of expression, people really take to it when you realize you can interact this way, you are more aware of your own body, more aware of other people's bodies, and the spaces you inhabit. You feel a different physical understanding of yourself. CI expands the language of touch because normally we associate touch only with sex, it's very limited. Touch is a very expansive language that has to do with bodily beings. We need to relax our concepts of what touch is and be willing to explore what touch can be. Creative touch."

Buying her things and making her happy was all I could imagine, watching her jaw rise and fall as she said all those pretty words. After she paid for her own part of whatever she ordered and promptly left, it occurred to me that, well, these CI guys stunt pretty damn hard. Hard, like Capone and Kim Jong-un in the same Tesla, about to be launched into outer space, listening to early Daft Punk. How to describe it? My body felt like it was lying down, supported by a warm galaxy-shaped nest, white feathers lining the dance floor. Do I even know how to shake a hand?

This month's Stunt Kit:

1. WeChat: rozzledozzle24 (philosopher queen/benevolent dictator of Beijing CI)
2. WeChat: FeathersProject (ever found yourself in a galaxy-shaped, feather-covered nest?)
3. Superior handshakes

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