

# DRINK

饮迷

中国主流酒吧行业杂志 China's leading bar industry magazine.

**MAGA**  
**ZINE** 杂志  
**NEWS** 新闻  
**VIDEO** 视频  
**JOBS** 招聘

## UltraViolet by Paul Pairet

22/5/2012 By Dan

PRINT

EMAIL

COMMENTS (1)

Last Friday night I was one of ten people being served at “Table 0000” of UltraViolet by Paul Pairet. You can read that both ways: UltraViolet is indeed a restaurant concept (and much more) conceived by French chef Paul Pairet, but the table was also being waited on by him too, as he strode out with the other waiters, including host Fabien Verdier, sous chef (and head of research) Greg Robinson, and even musical director Amar Kabouche, to deliver plates, collect plates and occasionally shout out ingredients, dance a Greek jig, or whoop “Ole” from back next to his stove. There is undoubted seriousness to the execution on many levels, but the next bit of fun is never far round the corner.

For those of you in the industry who don't know what all this is about, UltraViolet is a project I have heard about for at least two years, but which has been beset by multiple delays – some of them unpredictable (such as the building's roof being removed by the first contractor), but some you imagine the result of Pairet's perfectionism. For those of you who have heard about it, you will know that Pairet is the man behind Mr and Mrs Bund (and before that made famous in Shanghai at Jade on 36), and that UltraViolet is his life's work, an idea he says has been bubbling away for 15 years, but which finally he has been able to deliver.

The simple concept is that each night 10 diners can book a place at a single table, for ¥2,000 each. You can book as a lone guest, or as a two, or as three, or even take the whole table, maximum 10 guests. Booking is done online, in a similar fashion as an airline, where you can see which seats are available and reserve your own. The idea is to make it transparent – no “who you know” politics here. The guests with reservations then meet at Mr and Mrs Bund where they get on a bus and are taken to UltraViolet’s location. It’s not that they want the restaurant to remain secret, but they want the 10 guests to start the experience together, and they want the experience to start before you enter the room.

Experience is a word you are going to hear a lot in discussions of this place. Certainly it’s not just fine dining, although with 20 courses for the classic tasting menu (we had Menu A, they will add further menus after a few months) the food is naturally central to the, er, experience. The drinks are also carefully thought about, and paired already with the dishes, so there are no decisions to be made by the guests. You can look at a winelist if you want to order something special, and more expensive, but the only catch is that you then have to share your bottle with the rest of the table, whether they are your friends or not. But beyond f&b, there is a whole lot more. When you arrive you enter an ante-chamber, with ultraViolet light, metal grills, and the low sound of a heart beating (provided through a K-Array sound system). It’s anticipatory, unnerving. You then go through a sliding door into a large white room, bathed in more ultraViolet, with a large table sitting in the centre. One of the chairs on the far side swings round and the evening begins.

What follows is Serge Gainsbourg singing with Brigitte Bardot, the cheekiness of the Beatles, the kaleidoscopic colours of a fish tank, a misty wood in winter, or a particularly hilarious parody of the Jaws films, involving little killer tomatoes. Images surround you, projected onto the white walls, with a soundtrack to match. Certain elements of sound are controlled just to affect the individual, with beams of sound pointing down over your head. Aromas are released into the room, synchronised with certain dishes. But the whole is more than the sum of these multi-sensory parts. The direction is such that you given surrealism, followed by kitsch, and then moments of calm and, dare I say it, personal reflection, followed up again by more games, adjusting your mood as the menu develops. Pairet was famous for introducing Shanghai to molecular gastronomy at Jade on 36, and certainly the first half of the menu pulls out lots of tricks (and no less delicious for their trickery). But after the first “intermission” (with a smoking room off to the side) you return to find the table set up more like a grand dinner party, with far more simplified presentation in the dishes, such as lamb chops and then a Grade 7 Australian wagyu beef. These dishes are no less impressive in terms of cooking, but Pairet puts on an audio background of Shanghai restaurant chatter during this chapter, signposting this as perhaps the most conventional stage of the evening, but also one that gives your senses time to adjust and recover, and therefore be primed again for further fun come the desserts. At four hours total running time, this kind of consideration is what makes the show a success.

I can’t go into all the details here, but here are a few titbits – especially where they concern the drinks. Early on you get a 5am Saint beer from Brewdog paired with small morcels of “fish and no chips”, which is a piece of fish deep-fried in a batter that also contains a large caper, which you then pick up by the caper’s stalk. Later an encapsulated bouillabaisse is paired with a little serving of Ricard mixed with orgeat syrup. A velvety 2003 Chateau L’Eglise Bordeaux came out with the beef, just after an extroverted, fruit-forward red from Spain’s La Mancha with the lamb. And for the salad (made solid with liquid nitrogen, before being pummelled to shreds by the host) served with melted Camembert, a crisp but rich cider from Normandy in France. And after all the eating is over, if you choose, the team will open up your very own miniature club (through from the smoking room) where you can continue your evening with a refreshing glass of champagne and cocktails (behind the bar making the drinks is none other than DRiNK office regular Rum). This “club” is set to open in a couple of weeks time.

I could write another thousand words talking through the dishes, but that’s not really the point. With this concept, they need to be eaten in their context to be appreciated fully. And that’s why I think UltraViolet has a great deal to inspire our industry. Not just by its creativity and pioneering spirit, but as a demonstration of what happens when you get a complete alignment between concept and execution. That is one of the most common failings, and indeed the hardest thing to get right in this trade, especially the more sophisticated and complex your concept becomes. But here the idea stretches further than any restaurant I’ve ever walked into, and the delivery has been made perfect.

PS Apologies to the chef and to our readers for the mobile phone photo quality.. but I hope it gives you an idea.

PPS Special thanks to Marc Vincent, President of Sennheiser China, who included myself and Theo Watt as guests on “Table 0000”, the first ever table to be served the whole menu at UltraViolet – Marc won this honour through a charity auction. And thanks of course to Paul Pairet and his team for a very special evening. To understand more, visit [uvbypp.cc](http://uvbypp.cc).

---