

"We are the best, we will continue being the best. We'll stay on top, and whoever tries to get close to us we will always move ahead of."

Shemsi "Danielo" Hoti, M1NT

"We're here, we will remain here. We are the best, we will continue being the best. We'll stay on top, and whoever tries to get close to us we will always move ahead of," says Danielo Hoti, M1NT's Managing Director. Those are big words, and from anyone else in Shanghai they might seem like pure bluster. But for M1NT, a club / restaurant that has sat atop Shanghai's nightlife scene like a king since it opened in 2007, those words come across as a statement of mere fact.

M1NT's longevity, not only in its existence but as one of the city's premier places to head to after dark, is a combination of many factors that all combine in a grand customer experience that Shanghai's brightest and most beautiful keep coming back to night after night, year after year. "When we came here people told us, 'You know the big clubs they don't last.' But we had a different way—we knew what we were bringing and we knew our branding." They refused to succumb to the naysayers saying that things were different in China and that success was equated to kowtowing to Mainland traditions like serving whiskey and green tea. M1NT did it their way.

The concept of a shareholder-owned nightclub was a novel one when the first M1NT opened its doors in London in 2004, and it's one of the main reasons behind the success of the brand's flagship venue in Shanghai. "Many people have tried to copy us, but what makes M1NT the best is that we, who come here, are also members and shareholders. Coming here feels like home. It's not just a club—sometimes you want to enjoy our food, sometimes you come for a cocktail and of course sometimes you come for a big night at the club. There are different dimensions you can separate."

The exclusivity and inclusivity all at once is a formula that suits Shanghai society well. There's a special feeling in being one of the select few who has access to every single part of the property and all the services. But at the same time, non-members are essential to the vibrance of the place, bringing their enthusiasm for a great night out. The people who frequent the club and lounge give M1NT an energy that makes the air crackle, and, shareholder or not, all are able to share in the trademark M1NT experience.

That experience receives upgrades and tweaks over the years in an effort to stay fresh. This past Au-



M1NT Managing Director
Danielo Hoti

gust, the club and restaurant received a big facelift as the brand gets ready to celebrate 10 years since the very first M1NT opened. After a nine-year relationship, they also switched their main drinks supplier from the Moët Hennessy Diageo company to Pernod Ricard. Exciting new events will also be unveiled in the run-up to the big anniversary.

M1NT is indeed moving ahead, as Hoti mentioned, and the future looks bright for the brand. They are looking at the possibility of opening another venue, and their expansion into online liquor sales with M1NT Cellars has proved very successful. "We've got a long lease, we have good partners we work with and a good team. We will be here many years," says Hoti. For Shanghai nightlife, that's great to hear.

Find it: 24/F 318 Fuzhou Lu 福州路318号24层, Tel: 6391-2811

Best of Shanghai 2014 * Bars & Clubs

Kaiba

Beer for thinking men

Kaiba carved out a niche for itself in the crowded Shanghai nightlife scene by putting together one of the more expansive and alluring collections of European beers in China before everyone else did. This Belgian bar features beers like Vedett on tap, bottles of Trappist Rochefort and everything in between. There are over 65 imported beers and the happy hour deals are especially attractive with their rare combination of quality and value. Kaiba has attracted a regular crowd of generally older veteran Shanghai expats and beer lovers who come for the high-quality booze and respectable food. The bar's relaxed atmosphere and subdued décor make it ideal for quiet conversation and beer appreciation. If you're looking for a wide selection of imported Belgian beers, then look no further than Kaiba. The very first Kangding Lu location closed down due to leasing issues and moved to Wuding Lu, and the Taikang Terrace and Dingxi Lu branches are still going strong. Try the Delirium Nocturnum or during happy hour get the Vedett Extra Blonde.

Find it: 479 Wuding Lu 武定路479号, Tel: 139-1820-5170;
739 Dingxi Lu 定西路739号, Tel: 6280-5688; Rm. 202, Taikang Terrace,
169 Jianguo Zhong Lu 建国中路169号202室, Tel: 6418-2252

Lola

Clubbing for sophisticates

There is a dearth of clubs with good dance floors and Lola has added a fantastic venue to the short list. This Spanish-backed bar and club offers tapas and excellent cocktails in the early evening—the menu was created by former Mistral chef Joaquin Campos with cocktails by George Nemeč. Late at night the scene gives way to a pounding, European style club vibe. Party scene staple T. Easy is in charge of the music, so expect to hear techno for the more discerning clubber. Lola has already hosted such names as Ellen Allien and Mike Shannon. The interiors are minimalist but stylish, leaving you to focus on their giant LED visual effects that cover one wall and the ceiling. The dance floor size and general layout mean there won't be any giant ragers here, but clubbing will be a more intimate and personal affair. There is also Surpass Court's patio for the crowd seeking an open air respite from the fist-pumping and jumping within to spill out to.

Find it: Bldg 4, 570 Yongjia Lu 永嘉路570号4号楼,
Tel: 138-1692-7970

MINT

Always a big party

This exclusive club close to the Bund homes in on the multipurpose trend that aims to please all of your senses. It comprises a club, bar, deck and restaurant all spread over a few floors. Shanghai's first members-only, shareholder venue, it has since relaxed its restrictions but still takes steps to keep the riff-raff out. It has become the place to go on a weekday night and you can always expect it to be packed with a crowd of Shanghai's beautiful people, both Chinese and foreign. Preening is the order of the day for the Champagne-popping crowd that frequents MINT. Resident DJ Spencer Tarring is a controversial figure on the party scene and lends a touch of pizzazz to the establishment with his party-ready playlist and bombastic personality. The interiors received a big update this year and there is greater access to the beautiful rooftop terrace. A giant shark tank filled with blacktip reef sharks lines the entryway to set the mood for a deadly night. Head there for the 24-story view of the Bund, the complete bar menu and the sleek theater-style kitchen serving Asian-styled cuisine.

Find it: 24/F, 318 Fuzhou Lu 福州路318号高朋大厦24楼,
Tel: 6391-2811

MAO Livehouse Shanghai

Rock central

Backed by the people from Soma Records, this space is the go-to spot for large-scale music shows in Shanghai. While it's considered mid-sized, it's Shanghai's biggest live music venue and has a refurbished, mini-warehouse feel. The layout is optimal for audience enjoyment with a stage that's large enough to be significant, but low enough and close enough from any point in the main hall that all performances have an up-close-and-personal feeling. An upper level balcony runs along the perimeter of the main performance hall, which allows for dedicated listening away from the craziness of a crowd. There is a bar at the very back of the main hall to provide easy access to booze without ever having to take your attention away from the performance, but there are also two adjacent areas that can serve as decompression zones away from the ruckus—a bar area and a loungey area with a couch seat and comfy seating. The venue regularly hosts big names in the international and local music scene and has a sound system that holds up well under the pressure of genius.

Find it: 308 Chongqing Nan Lu 重庆南路308号,
Tel: 6445-0086