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Traditional dining with a retro twist

Our arrival to room was initially, as predicted, a little daunting and overwhelming. The uber-trendy restaurant is frequently talked about as a must go, which immediately conjures up images of super sleek, pretentious diners who know their cutlery without hesitation, accompanied by highly knowledgeable waiting staff who thrive off the perplexed looks of the inexperienced diners.

This wasn't the case however. On arrival, the two doormen signified the beginning of a perfectly unique and enjoyable dining adventure. After checking the coats in, a large spiral staircase led us to an area where heavily conversing groups were sat sipping on exotic looking cocktails. At this point, we wandered slightly aimlessly and a little humbly into a magnificent bar and restaurant area that was complete with striking décor and pumping tunes from a DJ box. We hedged a safe bet and made our way over to the nearest desk where we very briefly waited before being greeted and shown to the safety of our table.

It was at this point our dining anxieties suddenly disappeared and were replaced by feelings of excitement as to what the restaurant might be able to offer its newest customers. The seating offers a central booths system, surrounded by a scattering of tables, catering to a total of 120 guests. The most enviable tables are those that are placed around the edge of the restaurant overlooking King Street. Fortunately we were two of the chosen few when it came to the seating plan and so were able to sit and admire the striking surroundings from afar.

Everything about the restaurant is about combining old with new. From the awe-inspiring décor that combines funky, gigantic lampshades with wooden panelling from the 1870s when the building was used as The Reform Club – a haunt for liberal politicians – to the menu, which offers a traditional surf and turf but with a modern take of scallop and pork instead of lobster and steak.

Once settled with a refreshingly fruity bottle of Trapiche Melodias Sauvignon Blanc from Argentina (£20), we opted to taste a little of everything from the starter menu, which included a contemporary English breakfast of ham and eggs (£6), and Welsh rarebit in the form of goat's cheese and beetroot (£5.50). When it came to the main course we opted for the highly recommended pork and apple dish (£14.50) and the shepherd's pie (£16.50). The pork which was served with apricot sage, soon filled a void in the hunger stakes, and the shepherd's pie obviously not in its normal form, melted in the mouth.

Next up was dessert, an area I find myself most critical thanks to my expertise and vast experience... As with the starters we were presented with a platter of what I can only describe as miniature delights. An array of sweet bites were on offer, from Turkish delight flavoured jelly to Granny Smith sorbet (£5), but what are most memorable to me are, without trying to be obviously biased, the chocolate torte (£5.50), which moonlights under the name of Milk Tray; and the hot chocolate fondue with fruit kebabs (£5.50 or £10 to share).



With all empty plates cleared away from the table, I caught sight of the time whilst sipping on one of Room's famous champagne cocktails (£7). To our surprise we had managed to wile away over three hours of our Saturday evening and dedicate it solely to Room, something quite unheard of in most restaurants. Where an hour-and-half counts as a meal out elsewhere, Room doesn't just constitute as a meal, it's an entire evening out with food, drinks and music. Every part of our dining adventure here had an element of surprise with it, all except the heavy Manchester rain that greeted us on our departure from the restaurant, that is.

The words: Jenni Shuttleworth