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A weekly listing in the **CityLife RESTAURANT GUIDE**

ALADDIN CHINESE
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An enhanced listing on the **manchesteronline.co.uk restaurant guide**

This can include menu, photographs, email & weblink. Special offers can also be advertised.

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Bars

IN a converted school house just off Deansgate lies the third in the Eclectic hotels' small collection, offering 30 bedrooms, a baroque bar, private dining rooms and a heated roof terrace with hot tub.

Great John Street, however, don't advertise themselves as a drinking joint for the sake of their (often famous) hotel guests, but that doesn't stop their sumptuous premises making a fine post-work stop off.

Before its million-plus renovation, the old school house was Granada's social club. From the roof garden

that's why there's a large selection of Bushmills whiskies, alongside single malts like Macallan, Tanqueray gin and the bling brandy Hennessy on a little silver plinth. Holsten and JW Smooth are on draught, there are fine occasion wines and assorted posh champagnes such as Cristal and Krug.

Service, however, is slow. We dropped in at about half six, probably their busiest time, but there was just the one, albeit polite, chap juggling a cocktail shaker, card payment machine and furrowed brow.

Fifteen long minutes after ordering, our



you can see the rear wall of the Coronation Street set and St John's Garden.

As a result of this concealed location, the hotel feels genuinely away-from-it-all. The interior design adds to this vibe, with large gilt furniture, crystal, and ornate light pieces making the main bar room resemble a rich old auntie's store cupboard.

For drinkers, the choice is mostly upmarket spirits. One of the owners, Eamonn O' Loughlin, is Irish and perhaps

champagne punch and bottle of beer arrived. Cheeringly, in a departure from the usual peachy flavours of champagne cocktails, this one was all honeyed rum tones, with chunky orange pieces adding a real sparkle to the taste.

Overall: great drinks, decadent surrounds, but don't bother if you're in a hurry.

» **Great John Street Hotel, Great John Street, 0161 831 3211. Bar open daily from 11am-11pm. Ruth Allan**



Cocktail of the week

Mr & Mrs Smith (Serves two)

Using a champagne flute combine 50ml Remy Martin, 25ml Cointreau, 50ml Fresh Orange Juice, 150ml Champagne. Shake the Remy, Cointreau and orange juice in a mixing glass with ice. Pour into two champagne flutes and top up with champagne. Garnish with a twist of lemon zest. Great John Street bartender Basal Badral says: "We had a special offer on for couples, which was called Mr and Mrs Smith and a couple booked in who were called Mr and Mrs Smith. The drink was inspired by them and the film. It's really classy with classic ingredients, which work perfectly together."



» **HIS OWN MAN** Jason Manford tells Steph how he rebuffed Piers Morgan's 'fatty' jibes and snubbed Charlotte Church

Jason unleashes his end of the Piers show

AFTER last week's CityLife Comedian Of The Year final I met up with Manc comedian and youngest-ever winner of the competition, Whalley Range's Jason Manford. It's a name you will know if you are into comedy and, if not, one you will be hearing a lot more of soon.

Jason was just 17 when he captured the title in 1999 – following in the footsteps of Kay, Spike and Aherne. Since then, life being a comic has been good, very good for Jason.

He has received a Perrier nomination, performed in China, Singapore and Dubai, branched out into radio, writing, presenting, acting, turned down a gig on the Charlotte Church Show and landed a part in Shameless, playing a security guard who gets into an unusual situation with a dog.

So, I asked him over pumpkin risotto and steak in Grill On The Alley, how can any man turn down the Welsh minx, Ms Church? "I did the pilot for the show and the gig was to come on the show and slate celebrities, but that wasn't what I wanted my first major TV appearance to be. I didn't want to be known as Charlotte's s**t sidekick. Plus I can't sit there and rubbish someone for having a bit of cellulite."

Nor will Jason succumb to the typical comedy lifestyle of drinking and debauchery. He doesn't drink at all and would

Table Talk

WITH **STEPH ELMORE FROM CHANNEL M**



rather go home and think about his laminate flooring after a night gigging. This he puts down to his Irish Catholic upbringing and seeing others choose the path of drink – "I'm rebelling!"

Most comics have a rule – Don't call me before 12. Yet Jason promptly met me at noon for lunch, despite being wound up by the 4 x 4 parked outside the Grill that had taken up two spaces. "If it had been a smart car, it would have been all right!" he chuckled.

If you hail from the north, have the accent and are funny you will inevitably be compared with Peter Kay and that does happen to Jason, yet, in his own words, "If I was a pound behind him, I wouldn't mind!"

Still only 25, his first big break was classic showbiz. He was working as a glass collector at The Buzz club, in Chorlton, when he was made to fill in for 10 minutes on stage when one of the acts didn't show up. After that he was hooked. Is there

something slightly warped about someone who wants to bare all in front of drunken audiences – and tell jokes?

"There is something egotistical about it – when I see someone out there saying 'Oh, he's not for me', that will be the only person I can think of on the way home. One schizophrenic side says 'I am the funniest person in the room' and the other says 'I hope I am funny?'"

Jason has also just played to one of his toughest audiences, literally. "I've just been entertaining the troops in The Falklands. That was weird, I've never been heckled by a trained killer!"

And trained killers aren't all Jason has come up against recently. While filming Channel 4's 8 Out Of 10 Cats panel show, he had a head-to-head with Piers Morgan. "He was so anti-northern and kept calling me fatty! I told him: look there's half a stone between me and you."

One further rule – never heckle a comedian. As Manford retorted to the ex-Mirror editor: "It's hard being funny isn't it?"

Being funny is one craft Manford has definitely mastered.

» **Grill On The Alley, 5 Ridgefield, city centre (0161 833 3465, blackhouse restauranrs.com). Jason Manford's Urban Legend tour comes to Darwen library theatre next Friday. For tickets go to ticketmaster.co.uk**