

Restaurant review – Monday Night Supper Club

☒ “The taxi dropped them outside the beautiful and rather imposing entrance. It was cold and fresh and Edinburgh looked its grandest. Sparkling lights shone from inside and revealed easy people, dressed and looking comfortable. Well dressed and happy, chatting, drinking laughing at each other’s jokes. They all looked like they were meant to be there.

They walked up the short stairs and pushed through the door. “Hello, can I help you Sir?” They were taken through the calm room and shown to their seats. They both smiled and took their jackets off. “Can I take these for you sir? Have a seat and get comfortable.” They did and laughed at the room. Grand just didn’t do it justice.

The polished granite pillars, the oak panelling the subdued lighting all made it feel quiet dream like. The music wasn’t too loud, the chat was subdued so they sat back and took it all in. How many stories had started here. How many ‘hacks’ had rushed in those doors with the latest scoops and how many editors had told the reporter to calm down and check their facts, before laughing and throwing them out. But how many real scoops had made their way into the world here. They were in the grandest entrance of the grand daddy of Scottish newspapers.....”

What’s this you’re asking, not another hard worn, overworked Edinburgh detective trawling through countless crime scenes, forcing back his cynicism to bring to justice some crack crazed psychopath. No its just me, reviewing the Scotsman Hotel’s Monday Supper Club. It was just how it made me feel. The place made me feel grand and I was ready to enjoy the experience.



It's certainly opulent, the best of Victorian corporate architecture, designed to show the gravitas of the company which had its base there, The Scotsman Newspaper. The voice of Edinburgh and Scotland, a newspaper grounded in the days when what you read had actually happened. They meant it when they said:- "Nemo Me Impune Laccessit".

Designed in 1899 by James B Dunn the building is now the coolest of cool boutique hotels and somehow they've managed to retain the beautiful craftsmanship, the elegant detailing that the Victorians always got right without compromising functionality and practicability. So ten out of ten for the setting. Would the meal live up to its surroundings?

The service was lovely, always there when you needed a refill but never fawning or too claustrophobic. Every dish was explained, wines were suggested, ideas were given, nothing was a problem and no request was greeted with anything other than pleasure. I was enjoying this. The menu looked great, quite surprising for a budget supper club, but nothing so far had made me doubt that they could deliver.

So I decided to make it hard for them, for a starter I ordered the Seared Isle of Skye Scallops, Chestnut & Artichoke Puree, Blood Orange and Baby Turnip. Twenty years of living AND eating on the Shetland Islands has made me very fussy about all seafood and so far I hadn't tasted anything that I couldn't have done myself, straight from the dragnets. My wife and dining companion chose the Cauliflower Veloute, Smoked Duck and Pesto.

Both, when they arrived, were a visual treat, stunning colours, immaculate layout and a great mix of aromas. My scallops didn't disappoint. The flavours worked, the vibrancy of the orange bursting through and balancing the tang of the scallop that had been seared to perfection. There is nothing

worse than overdone seafood but this, as my Islander wife states:- "...had barely had its a*** skelped!" I passed on the wine, sticking to water so I wouldn't ruin the flavour.

My wife's choice delivered a beautiful and balanced presentation, light and easy on the tongue. It was looking great so far. I actually started to get nervous, I wanted it to carry on. The surroundings had set me up to feel valued and I wanted the meal to keep up.

Phew! The main arrived, again with a lovely presentation, full of colour and smells. My Rare Breed Rump of Pork, Orzo and Stilton Risotto, Granny Smith Apple and Crackling was light and moist, roasted just enough to let the flavour come through but dark enough to let the apple contrast. The crackling was light too, lovely and crunchy but still full of pork flavour.

The room, the service and now the food had made me feel relaxed. How many times had I been to a new restaurant, been made to feel as though I didn't fit in and then had been presented with a plate that would have been better hung on a gallery wall and not eaten. Food that makes you feel comfortable, this was great.

My wife had gone for the Rosti Potato with Red Wine, Poached Duck Egg, Wild Mushrooms and Shallots and she was delighted. As well as exemplary tastes she was treated to an array of textures. The spinach was light and fresh, the potatoes were roasted just enough to be firm and full flavoured and the egg was poached to perfection. It was still looking good. Could they deliver the full set to a standard that even the Scotsman's hardest news reporter would have been happy with?

✘ I knew they couldn't keep it up. I had ordered Crepe Suzette, Grand Marnier with Honeycomb Ice Cream and my wife had ordered Hot Dark Chocolate Mousse with Toasted Marshmallow Ice Cream and Crunchy Milk Rocks. It wasn't that they were bad; it was just that they didn't have the fantastic lightness

and poise of the mains. They were okay... I'm not going to say more as I was still enjoying my experience, and because of that I can forgive them.

My image of a supper club is of smoking-jacketed gents, lounging in Chesterfield chairs waiting to be called through to the dining room to partake of chop, ham and boiled potatoes. I like the Victorians' ability to get things just right, through experimenting, endeavour and taking a chance and here I was in the 21st Century being comfortable. I had enjoyed the right things, enjoyed the endeavour and chances the kitchen had taken and I enjoyed my meal.

Go and get comfortable. Monday night supper club offers a great menu at £25 per head.