

Bistro Deluxe, great food but music struck wrong chord



Stylish Bistro Deluxe near the Scottish Parliament. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Paul Tamburrini is described as being one of Scotland's most exciting chefs and he aims to encourage diners to Bistro Deluxe with a creative menu based around the locality and using seasonal produce.

The contemporary, 80-cover restaurant is situated in the 157-bed Macdonald Holyrood Hotel which has recently undergone a £3m facelift and the restaurant is a partnership between Tamburrini and the hotel group.

Bosses enlisted a leading hospitality designer to create the new bistro.

It certainly has a deluxe, contemporary feel and is easily accessible for disabled people as it is situated to the left of the reception desk in the well-appointed, city centre hotel.

Glass pendant lighting and the subtle use of neutral, monochrome colours and modern furnishings creates a relaxed atmosphere.

Casual seating aids the ambience and the artwork – featuring oversized platters and paintings of cutlery – was a talking point, but I found it difficult to chill due to the music which droned on and on.

Sadly, it took the edge off the experience. Here you have a sophisticated restaurant which cries out for smooth, sophisticated music to mirror the hotel and instead we were assailed by jarring rhythms throughout.

However, let's move on. Tamburrini, who trained with Marco Pierre White at one of London's most renowned Michelin Star restaurants, has also worked in leading establishments north of the Border.

Rogano in Glasgow, Cameron House at Loch Lomond and Restaurant Martin Wishart in Leith are on his CV along with One Devonshire Gardens in Glasgow.

Bistro Deluxe undoubtedly has class and there is choice. Guests can pick from the a la carte menu, including a grill selection, a prix fixe menu or a five-course tasting menu with accompanying wines.

Staff expertly guided us through changes and detailed special dishes.

Fish dominates the starters. Lindisfarne oyster, Orkney sea scallop and seabream are three of the five picks.

There is also a choice of three soups and three salads and six mains – including French farmed rabbit and braised ox cheeks in red wine – plus the grill.

Steaks are, incidentally, marinated in a BBQ dressing and then finished with a Madeira glaze.

Diners are also given a choice of three sauces for the steak and two guests can delight in sharing 600g of Cote de Boeuf.

You pay for sides, £4 each, and the hand-cut chips were, frankly, average despite being eulogised over by staff.

However, let's delve into what we enjoyed. The Orkney sea scallop, topped by delicate sections of tomato and baby capers, plus lemon and brown butter, was beautifully presented.

And my partner's field mushroom veloute, served in a unique ceramic dish with a slow cooked egg and with a side of golden croutons, was packed with flavour. Every spoonful was

savoured.

Gigha halibut is a signature dish and the fish was topped with an array of shellfish. Sadly, the fish sauce – on for the night instead of the usual shaved fennel, black olive and peppers – lacked bite for me.

Pam's sirloin, cooked on a Josper charcoal grill, was melt-in-the-mouth and her tomato, basil and shallot salad excited the taste buds.

There is a feeling of space in the restaurant but we couldn't but overhear other diners eulogising over Tiramisu, mascarpone ice cream and espresso granite – basically iced coffee – and we had to have one.

Fellow diners were right. This was sensational to the eye and the palate and my Key lime "pie", wafer thin meringue and coconut sorbet to soften the sharpness of the Key lime "pie", was also a highlight.

Slick and informative staff aided the experience and bosses at Macdonald Hotels are confident Bistro Deluxe can be firmly established on the city's culinary map.

That's why they brought in special designers, wines curated by Maitre d' Peter Adshead, who has worked at top restaurants including The Pompadour in Edinburgh and Champany Inn near Linlithgow, and Tamburrini who is obsessed with perfection.

Therefore, I found it strange that you couldn't marry attention to detail, right down to the subtle print colours on the menu, and you fail to strike the right note with the music. Possibly, it was just me.