

## M IS FOR MUSIC | Q&A WITH MUSIC CONCIERGE ROB WOOD

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SHOREDITCH'S NEW HOTEL M BY MONTCALM HAS GOT ROB WOOD'S MUSIC CONCIERGE ON BOARD TO CREATE ITS SOUND VIBE. JUST WHAT IS THAT WE ASK...



**How do you even start trying to create a hotel's signature sound?**

We are dedicated to achieving outstanding results with expertly curated music concepts and carefully conceived atmospheres at our clients' destinations. Our bespoke approach means we place great emphasis on an initial consultancy phase to get under the skin of each project to give us an in-depth understanding of the concept. That often means visiting the property to understand its design, spaces, and audience. From Bhutan to Hong Kong and Kenya to Doha. We leave no stone unturned! For a new build project like M By Montcalm we worked closely with the General Manager who had a great vision and the restaurant team ahead of opening to understand the experience they are looking to create.

**We know Shoreditch is hip, but how do you avoid becoming a music cliché?**

Go into an independent record shop, perhaps Rough Trade East on Brick Lane. Walk up to counter. Say, 'Please give me exactly what everyone else is not buying'. All the best DJs do exactly that. That's a fact.

Where should the quiet areas be? You can't have music everywhere...

It depends on the hotel and what it is trying to achieve. At M By Montcalm they need to convey the energy and vitality of Silicon Roundabout so that vibrancy comes into the music design. Where as with our work in Dormy House in the Cotswolds, we are very much looking to create an escape with gentle understated music concepts that work with its pastoral setting. Guest rooms obviously need to be quiet unless its resident has anything but sleep on their mind! We do sometimes advise hotels to have no music in some areas. I remember an amazing tree-top setting at COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali where you eat breakfast over looking a jungle valley. I advised them that the sound of the monkeys and birds was all the music you needed in that restaurant!

**Isn't music sometimes a distraction if you're trying to work or sit down and eat a damn good meal?**

A great restaurant is made up of many elements including lighting, uniforms, staff personality, interior design, sound, music and indeed good food. Get one of those elements wrong and you can ruin the experience. When everything comes together to create a great restaurant experience, a lot of the magic will come from the natural sound of the hustle and bustle of service and the customers having a great time, when glasses are clinking and waiters are buzzing around. But even there at the start and end of service when only a few covers are present you need carefully curated music to set the tone, remove any awkwardness, and get the night off to a fantastic start.

**If I name some artists' names when I'm out east, whose names should I drop?**

You could say, 'I'm really digging the new Matthew E White album. His white boy R&B is dope. He's so the new Plantlife!'

**Which brands are easy to create playlists for? And which are harder?**

To get the signature sound of a brand dead right takes a lot of time, skill and attention to detail, so none are easy as such. But we have lots of experience so some we instinctively know how to create. For instance a brand that wants to evoke glamour, or one which needs to be ahead of the curve. Because we work globally we are often presented with the challenge of finding the perfect music for a local audience. For instance we have just finished a project with The Temple House in Chengdu mainland China (sister hotel to Hong Kong's Upper House) where its unique architecture and local culturally references played a part in our playlist design.

**what about the beach bar at a Como Hotel?**

Tape Five's *A Cool Cat In Town*. It conjures up Claridge's unique timeless glamour. And The Dynamics' *Miss You* for the beach bar at Parrot Cay by COMO in Turks & Caicos. Keith Richards hangs out there so hopefully he'd appreciate this great cover.

**What's going to be the summer song this year?**

Andreya Triana's new album could be a biggy.

**Go on, give us a quick *County & Town House* playlist...**

Here's a little music for your readers with summer mornings in mind...

Nils Frahm - Four Hands

Peter Dinklage - Colours Of The Night

Patrick Watson - Places You Will Go

Marika Hackman - Ophelia

Jon Hopkins - I Remember (Nils Frahm Remix)

Giorgio Moroder - The Myth

Mara Carlyle - I Blame You Not

Stuart McCallum - Dr Doctor

Almunia - New Moon

**What music did you grow up listening to?**

Stones, Dylan, The Clash, Bowie, New Order, The Smiths, Miles Davis, Kraftwerk, Burning Spear.

**Five albums that everyone should own....**

See answer above... 'London Calling', 'Hunky Dory', 'Computer World', 'The Queen Is Dead', 'Ascenseur Pour L'échafaud'. I could go on....

**Are your friends always asking you for playlists? What's the one song that's guaranteed to get that party started?**

I have a lot of wonderful music geeks as friends. I'm in two music clubs with some of them in fact. We get together, eat, drink beer, play extraordinary records on a large sound system, drink more beer, dance... in that order. Before the impromptu dancing starts we present each track and talk about why it's special. Unsurprisingly it's tends to be a man thing. Although wives have been known to join in when they return from their night out.

**Track to get the party started?**

Anything by James Brown. That man was one big party in a pair of big trousers. It's scientifically impossible to overdose on James Brown. Fact.

*Rob Wood is Creative Director & Founder of [Music Concierge](#).*