

MIAMOUR

Swedish-born artist Andre Saraiva hasn't skipped a beat in his hop from street graffiti to the super-hip nightlife of New York, Paris and Tokyo. Mark C O'Flaherty speaks to him about his latest venture – Club Amour in Tokyo.



Far left, Club Amour owner Andre Saraiva. Left and above, the interior of the Tokyo venue. Membership is ¥30,000 a year plus an hourly rate for use of one of the four rooms.

Andre Saraiva's top hatted 'Mr A' graffiti motif has strolled stick-legged across walls all over the world. His Black Block store at the Palais de Tokyo and a variety of merchandising deals suggest a parallel with Keith Haring's 1980s career, but Haring merely daubed on the walls of nightclubs, he never ran them. Beyond the velvet rope, Saraiva also has his own hotel, the Hotel Amour in Paris, co-run with Thierry Costes of the Costes empire, and he isn't stopping there.

His latest venture is a super-slick karaoke bar in Tokyo, also named Amour. He's opened it right next door to the Japanese outpost of his groundbreaking Paris club Le Baron. Both branches of Le Baron, as well as their New York cousin the Beatrice Inn, a collaboration with DJ and musician Paul Seigney (brother of actress and perennially cool leftfield 'It girl' Chloe), share the same impossible-to-breach door policies. In Tokyo, things are simply and legitimately 'member's only' while New York and Paris are trickier, with every night billed as a 'private party'. At the Beatrice Inn, you'll be turned away unless your face fits, and there's more of the same at Le Baron but with a quirkier slant. 'A guy that looks like a bum is more likely to get in than a model,' says Saraiva of his Paris club. 'Mostly, models are cheesy and stupid'.

Saraiva – born in Sweden but brought up in Paris – has door policies that have the often arbitrary, intimidating nature of classic 1970s era Studio 54, but then who wants to be somewhere that isn't exclusive? 'Intimate VIP venues are very popular as it's just you with your friends and no one else,' says

Saraiva. 'You can behave how you want and not to have to worry about it'. Once inside Le Baron, things are louche in a classic, slightly dirtied red velvet way, reminiscent of Nells in Manhattan in its heyday, with a knowing sense of irony. The DJ at Le Baron in Paris is more likely to play 'Rabbit' by Chas & Dave than the latest hip white label. And people are, generally, behaving 'exactly as they want'.

The new Tokyo Amour is a more democratic and straightforward affair, as you'd hope from something

The 'D' room is black on black, with a vast leather bed-style platform and circular tables, while his 'B' room features amphitheatre-style tiered leather seating, pale purple carpets and his limited edition champagne coolers for Dom Perignon. Elsewhere, room 'C' is the buzziest in the building, while 'A' is the glitziest, with gold leather day beds, padded walls, champagne flute trees, baroque mirrors grouped together within frames and the kind of trompe l'oeil photo-wallpaper of wine bottles

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that's effectively a posh karaoke bar. Membership is ¥30,000 a year plus an hourly rate for use of one of the four rooms. Once inside, there's the insular exclusivity you'd expect of a karaoke venue, but with a serious designer twist. Design Room 702 and Hiroyuki Matsunaka, which have produced some of the most modern restaurant and boutique interiors in Japan, masterminded the project and brought on board Marc Newson, a close friend of Saraiva's, on two of the spaces. Matsunaka was aiming for an ambience of 'eroticism and danger and the back alleys of Paris'. The collaboration has produced exactly that.

on shelves that goes down a storm back at The Collection, every hipster's favourite interior design boutique in the Marais.

Amour has all the glamour of the velvet rope crossed with Joan Collins' era *Dynasty*. Actually, there's also more than a touch of Collins' 1970s disco trash classics *The Bitch* and *The Stud*, which surely is exactly what you want from the ultimate karaoke bar. Pop the champagne. ■

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