



Image: Alan Whicker in the Atlantis suite

## LE MONDE: EDINBURGH'S NEW LUXURY HOTEL

**As the concept of luxury moves on, this exciting new hotel is offering something a bit different, 'the world under one roof', complete with a dash of Alan Whicker. It may not be the biggest or most expensive hotel but by offering a genuinely unique experience, Le Monde is certainly a good example of 'affordable luxury'.**

Situated in the heart of the New Town on Edinburgh's upmarket George Street, Le Monde is the city's only boutique hotel, bar, brasserie and nightclub. Le Monde's hotel suites are named after 18 of the world's most inspiring cities: New York, Los Angeles, Cairo, Reykjavik, Miami, Havana, Tokyo, Milan, Paris, Dublin, Sydney, Rio, Marrakech, Beijing, St. Petersburg, London, Barcelona and (for a touch of fantasy) Atlantis. While no two rooms are the same, each has been given equal attention to detail.

The man behind this £12 million development is Billy Lowe, owner of Saltire Taverns, a hospitality company operating at the premium end of the Scottish licensed trade. 'At Le Monde, we want our guests to enjoy a unique and unforgettable experience,' he says. 'In every suite they visit, we want them to feel excited and surprised by what they find inside. Each room is completely individual and we hope that our guests will want to come back again to enjoy a different city experience every time.'

The global influence is not confined to the accommodation suites. Guests have a choice of three stylish bars, Milan, Vienna and Paris. And for late-night revellers who wish to have fun into the early hours, the sleek Shanghai club can be found in the basement. 'There is no other place like Le Monde in Edinburgh or anywhere else in the UK and I am extremely proud of what we have created here,' says Lowe. And so he should be. The chic, contemporary look and feel of Le Monde earned it the Scottish Hotel Design Award 2006.

While the emphasis is firmly on style and a high-quality customer experience, Lowe has been conscious not to pitch Le Monde as an elitist destination. 'We are not charging a membership fee. We want our guests to feel exhilarated, surprised and stimulated by what they find inside, but most of all we want them to have fun.' With suite prices starting from £200 a night, Le Monde is certainly accessible to a much wider audience than resort hotels at the ultra-luxury end of the market.

### A familiar face... and voice

When it came to choosing a personality to launch the venue back in March 2006, only one man would do for Billy Lowe: the consummate global traveller, Alan Whicker. 'The venue is inspired by my travels around the globe and, while it has a stylish, sophisticated look, it's all about fun and entertainment. I couldn't think of anyone else in the world that could embody that better than Alan Whicker. His background made him the perfect ambassador for Le Monde.'

During his long and distinguished career as a journalist and broadcaster, Alan Whicker has visited almost every country in the world. Since the late 1950s, when the long-running *Whicker's World* documentary series was first screened, the bespectacled, moustachioed and immaculately turned out Whicker has probed and dissected the often secretive and unobserved private worlds of the rich and famous.

Whicker's work has taken him around the world, from fabulously appointed cruise ships and the Orient Express to cocktail parties, health spas and gentlemen's clubs. He has reduced his workload in recent years, but did find the time to make a rare excursion into the world of advertising, fronting a highly successful campaign for the on-line travel agent, Travelocity.



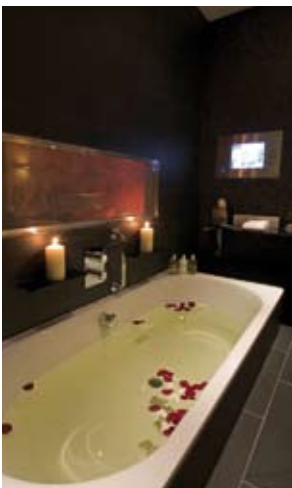
“ ‘If I’d have known about Le Monde before now, it would have saved me 60 years of travelling!’ ”

Alan Whicker



In May 2006, Whicker collected a Lifetime Achievement Award at the OAG Airline of the Year Awards (the 'Oscars' of the travel industry), in recognition of his unique contribution to the global travel trade. So what did this most distinguished of globetrotters make of Le Monde during his opening night visit? 'If I'd have known about Le Monde before now, it would have saved me 60 years of travelling! They have captured the very essence of some of the most beautiful cities in the world in each of the bars and in the design of the hotel suites.' A ringing endorsement if ever there was one.

And Alan Whicker has left a lasting impression on Le Monde, by recording a series of voiceovers for the hotel's lifts, welcoming visitors and announcing each floor in turn. 'I'm asked to do a lot of voiceovers,' says Whicker, 'but I only do ones that work for me, like travel-related ones. It's a new adventure for me, and I'm not sure my vocabulary is up to it!'



**The world at its feet?**

Other than being treated to the presence of Alan Whicker, guests at the opening night of Le Monde also enjoyed performances by acts from many of the cities that inspired the hotel's suites: Geisha stiltwalkers from Tokyo, Moulin Rouge-style cabaret from Paris, and a snake charmer in the Marrakesh Room.

After quickly establishing an excellent reputation, Le Monde has reported a very successful first year and takings since opening have exceeded expectations. With a pricing model that could easily lend itself to a roll-out in the high streets of major cities in the UK and beyond, might we see more Le Monde hotels appearing over the coming years? Don't write it off.

In the world of hotels and resorts, Le Monde constitutes a small but perfectly formed example, not at the same level as Gleneagles and other top-end destinations, but one with unique appeal. Sustaining that appeal in order to keep the initial success over the longer term is now the objective.



LDR Research

Images courtesy of Le Monde hotel