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Edited by Rob Orchard

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Eat Out

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Italian kitchen maestro returns to Dubai to revamp Emirates Towers

Upon leaving Dubai, many expats feel the icy pangs of regret. A brief spell paying taxes in cities miles from the beach confirms their nostalgic longing and they come zooming back within the year. Gianluigi Gerosa is one such returnee. Having played ankey role in setting up the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Burj Al Arab and Emirates Towers, he packed his pans and abandoned the city for pastures new. Twelve months later, however, Emirates Towers wanted their Executive Chef back and Gianluigi was only too happy to oblige. 'I am very pleased to return,' he says. 'Dubai has some of the highest food standards in the world at the moment, it's a wonderful place to work. You can compare it without any problem to Singapore, Hong Kong or Tokyo.'

Aside from a spell at the Mirabelle in London, Gianluigi's career seems to have been confined to exotic locations: he's wielded spatulas and toted tongs in Indonesia, Thailand, Bali and Sardinia. He also had a six

month sojourn in Costa Rica, where he installed a system for aging beef and learnt to play the bongos. This country-hopping allowed him to develop a more nuanced cooking style, European in origin but with Asian influences. It also gave him the opportunity to cook for an international assortment of celebrities. Though initially reticent about his brushes with the rich and famous - 'Every guest is a celebrity,' he claims. Yeah, right - he eventually relents and reels off some names. 'I cooked for Margaret Thatcher and Elizabeth Taylor,' he says 'and George Bush senior, Henry Kissinger and the Dalai Lama. I also cooked for Raymond Blanc, and he gave me hell because he didn't like my olive oil.'

Having been scolded by superchefs and entertained a decent cross-section of the political far-right, Gianluigi is now focussing his efforts on food at the Towers. His first step has been to hire a load of new chefs, bakers,

and assistants. 'We are rebuilding the brigade,' he says, 'By the end of August we will be ready for a really big push forward.' Following a lightning period of guest consultation and tastings, the menus have already changed at the Agency, Noodle House and Al Nafoorah. August also sees a new chef arrive at Mosaico fresh from a two star Michelin restaurant in France, charged with completely revamping and modernising the restaurant. The biggest news, however, is the conversion of the ever-popular Oh! Cajun into a modern steakhouse called the Rib Room, set to open very soon.

Gianluigi returns to a very different Dubai from the one he left - the opening of the Grand Hyatt and the Shangri La and the improvements in other hotels have raised the culinary stakes sky-high and competition is incredibly tough. The determined Italian remains unphased, however. 'I am more than man enough,' he says, 'we have the quality. We are ready. Bring it on...'

TimeOut

Dubai

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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Bur Dubai's bars uncovered

BLOKES' BEAUTY

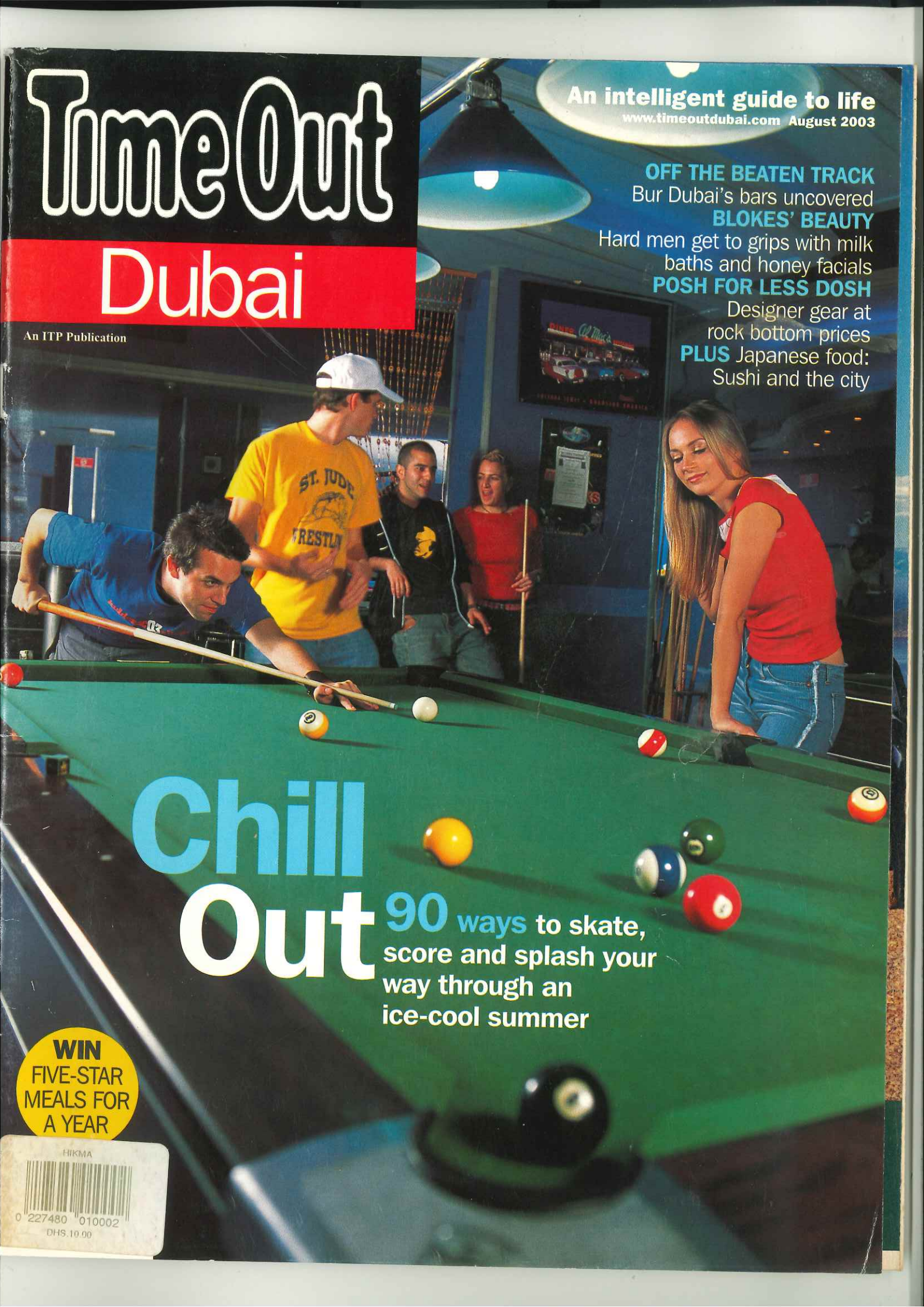
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