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The Official ST Dupont Guide to London's Premium Cigar Venues

VOLUME THREE

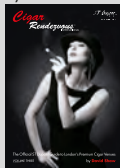
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by **David Shaw**

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Volume 3

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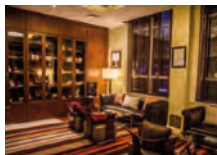
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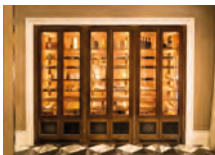
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## **"In Search of Shangri-La" (the art of selecting a Cigar)**

*by Kacper Hamilton*

**"If we have not found the heaven within we have not found the heaven without" James Hilton, Lost Horizon**

Selecting the right cigar should be considered a personal choice grounded in taste, experience and intuition. As each year goes by, my selection is becoming more obsessive and meticulous. I used to leave the house with two cigars, one for myself and another for a friend, whereas now I take around 10-12!

Choosing a cigar should involve all of one's senses while taking into account also environment, companions, temperature, gastronomy, time and the related activity, be it talking or reading. Smoking a Puro should be an immersive activity, not something done simply to pass the time.

When I open my humidor, I am at first mesmerised by the beautiful smell and the aesthetics; it is 'Shangri-La' in a box. Although I love Cuban Havanas, I try to keep my selection as wide as possible. This is a matter of personal taste; a passionate smoker would have his own habits and attraction to certain brands and regions. Each cigar has its own strength, size and shape. The three main sizes are Coronas, Panetelas and Lonsdale; personally, I prefer the Robusto, slightly shorter than the Corona yet larger in gauge. However, the size of a cigar does not indicate its strength, which is instead determined by the tobacco filler and the wrapper. Large-gauge cigars tend to burn at a cooler temperature than thin ones, hence they can offer a smoother taste.

The strength of a cigar is generally indicated by its colour: the darker the cigar, the stronger the taste. Before being boxed

and shipped, cigars are categorised into various shades, ranging from black to brown to green: Oscuro, Maduro, Maduro Colorado, Colorado, Colorado Claro, Claro and Clarísimo.

When talking of cigars one must indicate the brand, the type and finally the coloration. Size is measured by length and the ring gauge. For example, a Partagas Serie-D No. 4 is 4.8" in length with a ring gauge of 50.

Sincere consideration and respect is necessary for this sacred ritual. There is no better feeling than a well-selected cigar and its perfect smoking – it is hypnotic!

One final note, I personally keep the bands of all the cigars I have smoked into a large vintage Montecristo ceramic pot; each label encapsulates a precious memory...

To quote Davidoff, 'A wisely chosen cigar, to me, is like a weapon against certain of life's torments; in some mysterious way, a little blue smoke chases them away'.

### **Editor's Notes**

1. Apart from being a true cigar aficionado, Kacper also happens to be one the finest glass artists in Europe: he has a remarkable portfolio of quite scintillating limited editions both practical and aesthetic. Visit his website and you will see what I mean!

2. For the curious... a 'Puro' is a cigar that was made entirely from the tobaccos of one county, it is the Spanish term for cigar meaning 'pure'. Cigar manufacturers who make Puros consider it a great honour to be able to achieve such a level of sufficiency, as it gives them more control over the consistency and quality of the finished product.



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