

‘Piaf’ is French for ‘little sparrow’ and perfectly captures Simon Livingstone’s small, sweet and unpretentious restaurant.

A Little Birdy



Simon Livingstone is well known around the Brisbane hospitality scene. After the success of his two ‘hole-in-the-wall’ cafés, both called Espresso Garage, he decided to get back to his first love – restaurateuring. “I started the ‘Garages’ because they are a cost-effective way to do something by yourself when you are younger, while still being a part of the hospitality industry” says Simon. “I have always loved coffee and I think as long as you can do simple things well, you will always do all right. So I started the ‘Garages’ and they did really well, but I always wanted to get back into a restaurant. Restaurants have a lot more dimensions with food, wine, alcohol and all the other things to go with these basic ingredients, including the staff. I wanted to get back to having a restaurant because I feel most comfortable in that environment. That’s why I started Piaf.”

Simon chose Tell to create his new brand. “A friend of mine put me on to Tell. It is hard to find designers who are young, doing contemporary work – and at the same time flexible and approachable. Tell are very flexible and forward thinking, so they suited my needs perfectly.”

Tell Graphic Designer, Gary Schmidt, describes his inspiration behind the brand: “Simon had a definite vision of what he wanted Piaf to be: essentially a traditional bistro you’d find in a rural French village updated for Brisbane today. We followed suit with the brand, using understated bespoke type and a crest in modern black and white.”

“I think it really makes a difference having professional graphic design done, especially for a new venture,” says Simon. “I notice people walking into Piaf and see the little graphic details in the place. There are some outlines and stencils of birds around the restaurant and other eye-catching graphics. People pick up on these details and you can see them talking about them and pointing

to them as they leave the restaurant. I could not have thought of that sort of stuff myself and it’s a nice attraction – it makes the place different and really personal. I don’t think you can get through to customers without having things professionally done nowadays.”

“Gary and I worked well together throughout the branding process,” says Simon. “He was very approachable and open to suggestions. Tell’s office is a nice and intimate space where you just feel welcome. It is not intimidating at all. The menu design was also done by Tell, which worked out fantastically. It is nice, succinct and small. It is like the restaurant itself. That’s why the Piaf brand is so good – it all fits together.” ☺

TIP
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Work it out

“Know what you want, and try to convey what you want and then hopefully the designer can read between the lines and make up the rest,” says Simon. “You have to be able to get on with the person you are working with and trust them. You have to work to a timeframe. They have got to be professional enough to do that and that is why we chose Tell. It worked well for us.”



“The best part of working in hospitality is probably the flexibility of lifestyle,” says Simon. “You are slightly out of synch with the business world. You start before them or after them. It is just a great energetic environment where usually everything goes all right, but anything could change at any time. It is important to get things right. It creates a certain amount of excitement about doing the job properly and being able to pull it off when it is busy. I started working in hospitality at an early age and once the excitement gets into your blood it is hard to stop really!”

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