

THE Y T L L U X U R Y M A G A Z I N E

Y T L L

L I F E

ISSUE 01

ECO-FRIENDLY
LUXURY
BECAUSE GREEN IS
THE NEW BLACK

SNAKES
ALIVE
THE SERPENT
SLITHERS BACK
INTO VOGUE

TEMBOK BALI
CASUAL LUXE
ARRIVES AT THE
NEWEST SPA VILLAGE

E&O
EXPRESS
RAIL ROMANCE

MAJESTIC
MALACCA
SHOWING
HISTORY THE
WAY FORWARD



contents

36

PASSAGE OF RITES

The culture and traditions of the Balinese people have managed to withstand the relentlessly intense onslaught of tourism and is still thriving on this magical little island in East Indonesia.

20-57 FEATURES

20 RAIL ROMANCE

Rediscover the magic of the journey aboard the charming and elegant Eastern & Orient Express.

26 HISTORY FOR SALE

Malacca's urban heritage is under severe threat. Unless something is done soon, our future will no longer have a past.

42 GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

It's now oh-so-easy to live a fabulous life AND be eco-friendly as well. And no, you don't have to go around hugging trees.

50 THE REBIRTH OF LIVERPOOL

Forget The Beatles and Merseyside football. In 2008, Liverpool will launch the world's biggest year-long arts festival ever as it takes its place as European Art Capital.



COVER

Photography **Christopher A.**
 @ **Ditto Studio**
 Styling **Jennifer Choo**
 Hair & makeup **Taisu**
 Model wears dress and shoes from **Fendi**; sunglasses from **Celine**
 Shot on location at the **Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali**

contents



58



58-87 STYLE

58 WELCOME TO PARADISE

High-end fashion meets down-to-earth spa remedies at the glorious wellness haven that is Tembok Bali.

78 SNAKES ALIVE!

Slithery, sensuous, seductive. The snake slinks back in style.

80 CRUISE CONTROL

This season's Cruise Collections run the gamut from flirty to flamboyant.

84 RETAIL THERAPY

A fetishistic nappa boot, the "French Flirt", a Porsche jacket, butterfly jewellery and a canine-inspired USB... plus what's new in the world of horology.

86 PERSONAL TOUCH

Beauty gets personal with MTM plus Radio Frequency therapy, a bird's nest spa treatment, how to get longer eyelashes, Kanebo cosmetics and exclusive Decléor aromatherapy treatments.

84



contents

REGULARS

- 08 GLORY BOX
- 10 EDITOR'S NOTE
- 12 THE BUZZ
- 120 VIVA LA DIVA!



88-111 LIFESTYLE

- 88 **BUSINESS**
Private banking should do much more for you than just boosting your status.
- 90 **MOTORING**
Climb into a Mercedes-Benz E280 and discover the joys of civilised Continental-style motoring.
- 92 **TECHNOLOGY**
Because getting away from it all is becoming harder and harder these days. Plus the latest luxury gadgets you simply have to get your mittens on.

94 DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

The spectacular Phæno Science Centre, the Andoo Chair, massive speakers, Japanese Modern and two really clever designers to look out for this year.

98 DINING

Enjoy spectacular seafood cuisine at Fisherman's Cove where freshness, scenic views and tasty morsels are always the catch of the day.

104 WINE

Almost extinct everywhere else in the world except Chile, the Carmenère grape is providing the country's winemakers a new secret weapon.



108 ART

Meet the art world's 13-year old autistic Malaysian boy wonder. Plus other exhibitions not to be missed.

110 FILM

How a movie about a typeface is leaving great impressions all over the world, and British movies get a shot in the arm.





Luxury has many faces in our complex and frenetic world today. For some it is the ownership of beautiful possessions... to go to extraordinary places... to be cared for and cosseted in a fashion that makes one feel very, very special. To some it is opulence and indulgence; whilst for others the greatest luxury is time: time to be with those you love, time spent in quiet and meditative thought, time to enjoy the

great gifts that life makes available to us. Luxury is all-encompassing, and no matter what your personal definition may be, it is most often a source of pleasure, pride, and most of all, reward.

To celebrate the many faces of luxury and its attendant lifestyles, we are excited to launch YTL Life - The YTL Luxury Magazine. A publication designed to be an engaging reflection on luxury lifestyles in all their guises from across the globe. Within YTL Life we will cover travel, fashion, trends and more in a manner that is enlightening and uplifting - keeping you in touch with what is happening in the world of luxury.

As a company, the YTL Corporation works on many fronts to provide our customers and guests outstanding opportunities to attain and enjoy a luxury lifestyle. Across the spectrum there are an ever-expanding range of YTL luxury products designed to add value to life. Whether it is relaxation time in one of our world-class hotels or resorts or a luxurious rail journey through South East Asia. Enjoying unique treatments at the Spa Villages or the purchase of a home in one of the luxurious YTL developments being created across the region. Shopping at Starhill Gallery, one of the world's greatest luxury retail spaces, or dining in one of our top-class restaurants - YTL is creating a palette of products that enhance every luxury lifestyle.

Our new magazine, YTL Life, strives to encapsulate the luxurious lifestyle that goes with this mix of offerings and we hope that you are going to enjoy the publication - it is our wish that it will become a quarterly source of escape, discovery and pleasure for you, introducing new opportunities to make the most out of this great life.

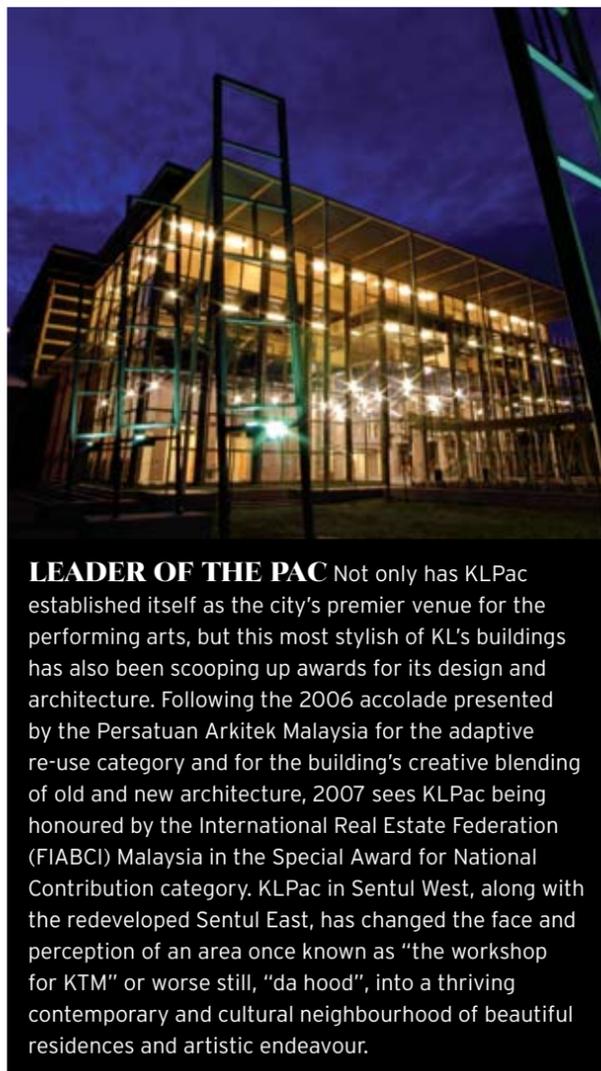


SOMETIMES, LIFE'S LITTLE LUXURIES TURN UP IN THE SIMPLEST OF PLACES

PANGKOR LAUT RESORT PHOTO YTL HOTELS



OF CHARITY, COFFEE AND CULTURE Starhill Gallery's art domain - Muse Floor - is now home to a star-powered enterprise. The Jackie Chan Café opened its doors to much fanfare on October 27, 2007, as a throng of people flocked to one of the city's premier shopping centres to catch a glimpse of the famous kung-fu action hero. But more than that, Jackie is also a philanthropist at heart, as exemplified by the very nature of this new café. Serving a selection of premium coffees, juices, teas and pastries, the café will donate a percentage of its revenue to charity. This means every Ringgit you spend there will contribute to a good cause - primarily that of helping underprivileged children. Recently voted one of Forbes' 'World's Most Generous Celebrities', Chan - who rubs shoulders with the likes of Angelina Jolie and Steven Spielberg on that list - truly gives as good as he gets. If not more.



LEADER OF THE PAC Not only has KLPac established itself as the city's premier venue for the performing arts, but this most stylish of KL's buildings has also been scooping up awards for its design and architecture. Following the 2006 accolade presented by the Persatuan Arkitek Malaysia for the adaptive re-use category and for the building's creative blending of old and new architecture, 2007 sees KLPac being honoured by the International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI) Malaysia in the Special Award for National Contribution category. KLPac in Sentul West, along with the redeveloped Sentul East, has changed the face and perception of an area once known as "the workshop for KTM" or worse still, "da hood", into a thriving contemporary and cultural neighbourhood of beautiful residences and artistic endeavour.



EXPRESS DELIVERY YTL's Express Rail Link (ERL) will give users added incentive to use its service as it launches a baggage check-out service at KL Sentral in January 2008. Costing over RM100 million, this high-speed line will emancipate travellers who use the ERL upon arriving in Malaysia of having to lug their bags on board the train. Utilising a tray system capable of handling baggage five times faster than conventional conveyor systems, this service will be the first of its kind in the world and it is hoped it will encourage more people to get off the roads when travelling from KLIA. The ERL is currently in negotiations with MAS to conceive a pre-paid ticketing system for passengers who wish to check out their baggage at KL Sentral.

KLPAC PHOTO KLPAC LUGGAGE PHOTO CORBIS



DESERT BLOOM The prestigious Starhill Gallery will soon spread its wings in foreign lands with Dubai in the Middle East being the first destination lined up. The Starhill Gallery Dubai will be part of the US\$410 million (RM1.4 billion) Starhill Towers & Gallery complex being developed by ETA Star, and will take up to 250,000ft² of retail space amongst state-of-the-art freehold offices and a 5-star hotel. This will all be housed within a twin tower waterfront development in Dubai's Business Bay, in the vicinity of The Burj Dubai, which will then be the world's tallest building. The high-end specialist retail mall will follow the blueprint set by the KL example of housing exclusive luxury brands and aims to set itself apart in Dubai as it has done so in Malaysia's capital. The Dubai project is scheduled for completion in 2010 while expansion plans for London, Shanghai and Moscow are currently being looked into.

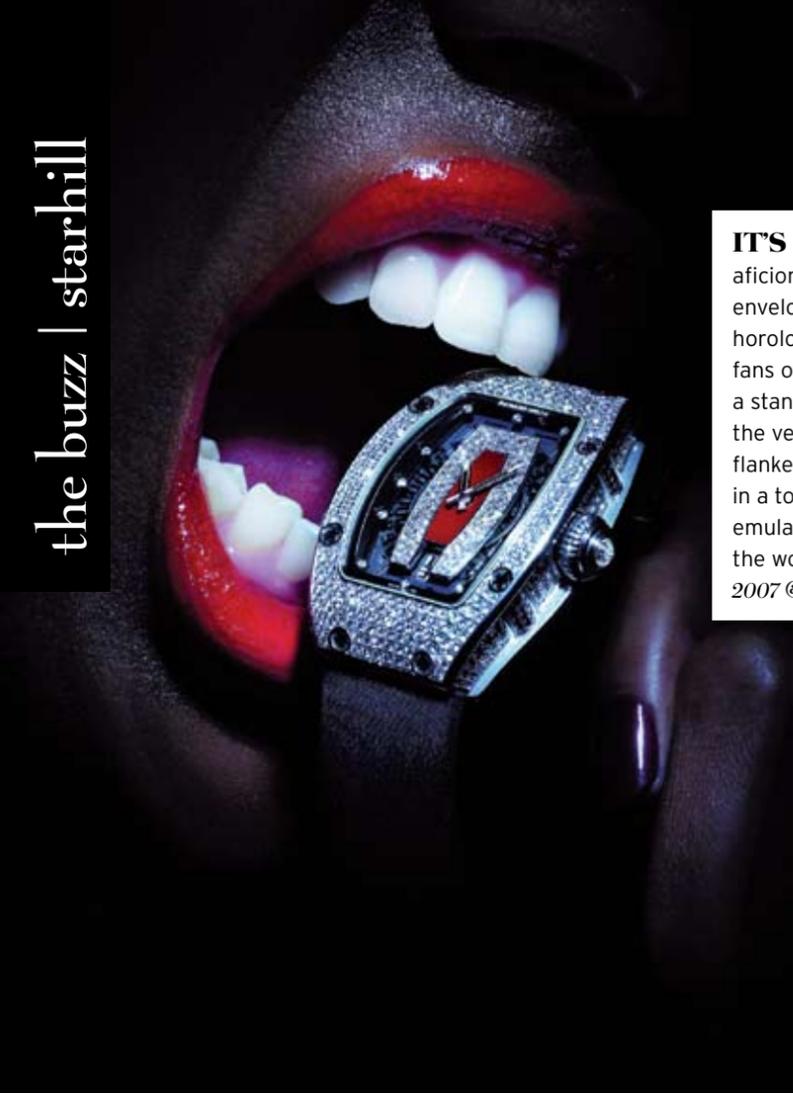
TIGER & FLORA PHOTOS CORBIS



GREEN POWER YTL Power emerged as the table-topper in the 'Clean & Green' ranking in the recent CLSA's Corporate Governance Watch 2007 - a report which highlights attitudes to corporate governance in Asia. The company ranked No. 1 in Malaysia, scoring an impressive 55% overall, with one of its businesses, UK's Wessex Water, being one of the most proactive on this front. On top of that, points were scored for the fact that the group is in the process of obtaining ISO 14001 certification for its power stations in Paka and Pasir Gudang in Malaysia while mechanisms are also being implemented for the management of power-plant gaseous emissions, waste effluent, discharge-cooling water and industrial scheduled waste. Isn't it good to know that the companies that are in the more polluting industries are going green?



THE ROAR OF CHARITY Two charities recently benefited from the benevolence of YTL Corporation when the corporation donated US\$100,000 to each as part of its continuing effort in environmental protection. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Malaysia will channel the funds into its "Save our Tigers! Save our Crest! Save our Lungs!" campaign, specifically to resolve the human-tiger conflict in the Jeli district, Kelantan. Rare, a leading global conservation group based in the US, will match YTL's donation 2:1. It will then use those funds to establish three projects in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, focusing on training local partners to conduct unique social-marketing campaigns that work with local communities in order to educate them on the conservation of biodiversity.



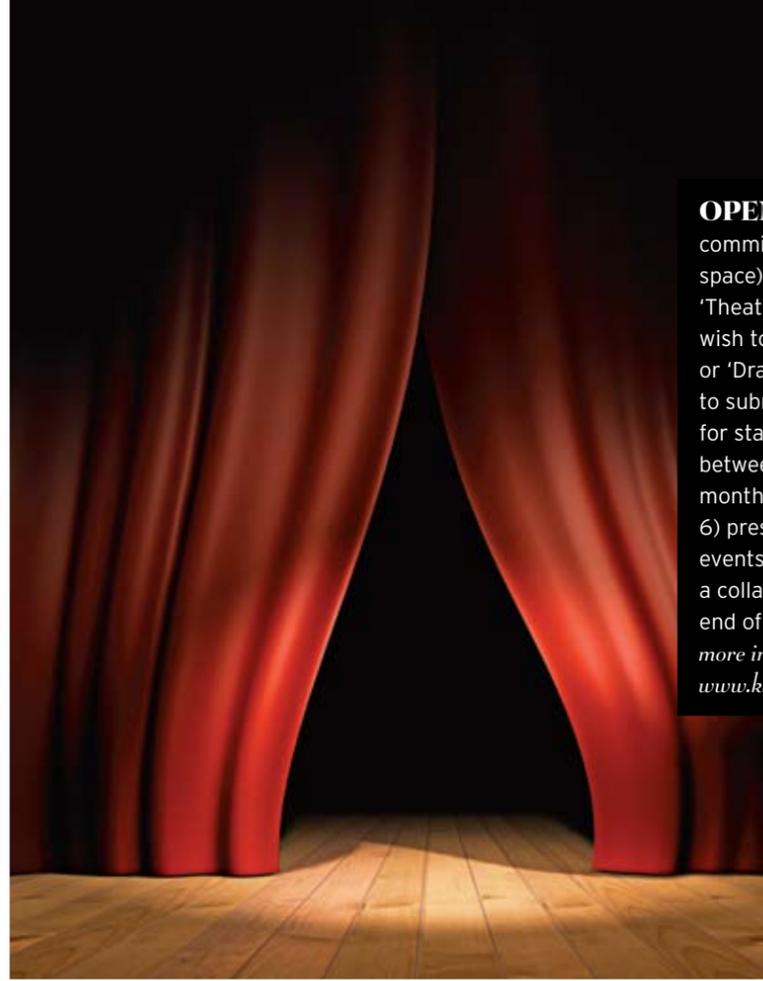
IT'S MILLE TIME! More great news for luxury watch aficionados: Richard Mille, a brand known for pushing the envelope defined by creativity and technology in the world of horology, has opened its first boutique in Kuala Lumpur! Now fans of this remarkable watch brand can shop exclusively at a stand-alone showroom, with an interior design that reflects the very essence of the brand. One of the entrances will be flanked by a 3-dimensional 12mm tempered glass feature set in a tonneau-shape sapphire crystal case and sandblasted to emulate the latest Richard Mille signature watch, the RM 012, the world's first 'tubular network' watch. *Opened in December 2007 @ Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL.*



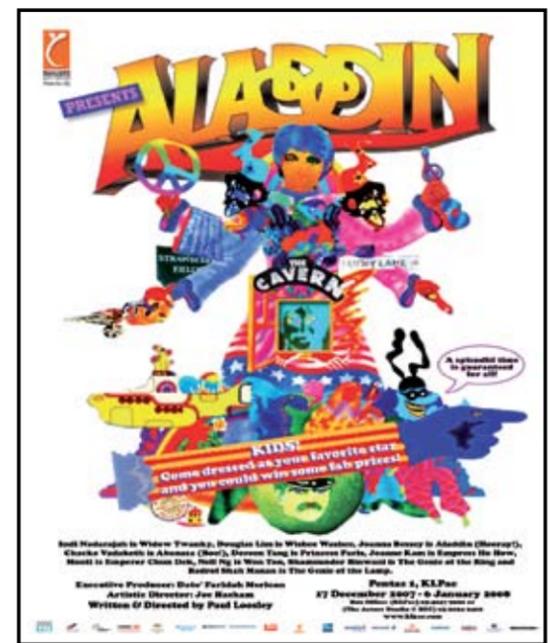
ABSOLUTELY FABI-LOUS More luxury Italian fashion arrives in KL in the form of Fabi - a classic brand dating back to 1965 which produces some of the finest leather goods, in particular, shoes (for men and women), handbags and accessories. What began as a family business under the guiding hand of the two Fabi brothers, Enrico and Elisio, is now in the hands of a new generation and gaining accolades for the high-quality goods it produces through its Barracuda, Mare, Teck and Old Sail lines. Today it combines age-old craftsmanship with modern technology and is thrusting itself into the forefront of footwear fashion. *Opened in December 2007 @ Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL.*



KHRONOS FEVER Conceptualised with the individualistic horologist in mind, Khronos-Unique Horlogerie will be a multi-brand watch boutique that brings together various unique watch brands under one roof. Aiming to be the place for enthusiasts in search of something different - from new brands to watches produced by independent watchmakers - each piece from the various brands under the Khronos banner will bear a distinctive identity world's away from mass produced timepieces. It will be the first retail venue in Asia to showcase these rare watches and is the first such store under holding company Luxury Concepts. *Opened November 2007 @ Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL.*



OPEN DRAMA KLPac is furthering its commitment to provide a creative avenue (and space) for new talent in the performing arts with 'Theatre Platform'. In 2008, actors and writers who wish to showcase their work in the fields of 'Theatre' or 'Drama' in a 'real' environment are encouraged to submit their unpublished/unperformed pieces for staging consideration. This project will run for between 6-12 months and will work as follows: each month will see a number of participants (maximum 6) presenting their work; at the end of each of these events, one will be singled out with a view of staging a collaboration under the guidance of KLPac at the end of the year. *From January 7, 2008 @ KLPac; for more information +603-4047 9000, +603-2094 9400 or www.klpac.com.my*



PANTO ROCK! Think of all the crazy stuff that goes into a witches' brew and you won't be far off from the ingredients that make up Aladdin, the latest British-style panto coming our way this Yuletide season. Featuring an array of Malaysian talent ranging from Comedy Court's Indi Nadarajah to Queen of the Lewd, Rude & Crude Joanne Kam Poh Poh. Expect riotous audience participation, men dressed as women, girls dressed as boys, suspicious underwear, a Swinging 60s theme and fun-for-all and all-for-fun in this psychedelic, schizophrenic and frenetic production that should have you wetting your pants in laughter. *Dec 17, 2007 to Jan 6, 2008 @ KLPac, +603-4047 9000, +603-2094 9400 or www.klpac.com.my*



DON'T MISS : KLPAC'S 1st OPEN DAY A community-oriented event, this Open Day will feature mini-performances all around the venue including the outside lawn and deck areas. There will be music, dance, physical theatre, drama, a photo/art exhibition and film screenings from a host of yet unconfirmed local theatre practitioners and those involved in the arts. Best of all, it's free, and families are encouraged to come and spend a day out enjoying the arts. There will also be plenty of activities for children and teenagers. *January 27, 2008 @ KLPac, from 10am to 2pm.*

STAGE PHOTO CORBIS



WALK THE LINE

The Great Wall of China provided the most exotic of runways for luxury fashion house **Fendi**. At sunset on October 19, 2007, in a Western nod towards Eastern superstitions, 88 models - 44 from China and 44 from the rest of the world - turned one of the wonders of the world into a giant 85m catwalk for the unveiling of the label's Spring/Summer 08 collection. Celebrities Zhang Zi Yi, Kate Bosworth, Thandie Newton, and Fendi designers **Karl Lagerfeld** and **Silvia Fendi** were historic witnesses, and later sipped Moët & Chandon at the after-party while lounging on Fendi Casa.



STONED & ENCHANTED

The inspiration was Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the stage, JW Marriot's Grand Ballroom. Fine jewellers **Van Cleef & Arpels** celebrated the opening of its first boutique in Malaysia at the **Starhill Gallery** with a gala dinner on August 29, 2007. Amongst a galaxy of high-profile guests, the true star of the evening - the Van Cleef & Arpels 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' collection - sparkled on the bodies of models during the evening's showcase, displaying a combination of beauty, purity, delicacy and femininity. The enchantment of the evening was accented by live music performed by a coloratura soprano and a mezzo-soprano.





NEW NUBEO

Another Swiss watch arrives in Malaysia in the shape of **Nubeo**, a range of unique timepieces inspired by the structure of natural organisms. Held on September 7, 2007, the launch involved beautiful young bodies around a swimming pool, thus echoing the brand's call to "Unleash Your Creativity" along with its approach of infusing fresh, modern ideas with traditional technical concepts. The showpiece was the exclusive Doppel Chronograph (limited edition 150 pieces) which featured the brand's distinctive rubber covered stainless steel bezel and which was launched at the 2007 Basel Fair. In Malaysia, the three Nubeo ranges - Black Jellyfish (which underlines Nubeo's basic philosophy of starting from Nature's simplest shapes), Medusse and Kermaik-36 - are only available at **Cortina Watch @ Starhill Gallery**.



GOLDEN ART

Fifty years of Malaysia. Six artists. One work of art. These numbers added up to a milestone event in Malaysian art history when **Yusof Ghani, Eric Quah, Jack Ting, Yusri Sulaiman, Raduan Man and Fauzul Yusri** came together and, in true Malaysian fashion, formed one unique, harmonious vision on canvas. Held at the atrium of **Starhill Gallery** on September 8, 2007, the six put on a 'live art show', choreographing movements and art techniques in live motion on 6x3 feet canvases while accompanied by music. These six pieces were then later formed into one single gigantic artwork. This momentous event marked the beginning of Starhill's three-week long Art Festival (ending Sept 30) which also saw the showcasing of numerous local artists on the Muse floor - the Gallery's sanctuary for art lovers. The event was inaugurated by YTL Group Managing Director, Tan Sri Dr Francis Yeoh CBE, as part of the corporation's effort to "give back to society in terms of enriching the human experience with the little joys of life, including the appreciation of the Arts."





RAIL ROMANCE

FORGET ABOUT THE
DESTINATION. PUT THE
MAGIC BACK INTO THE
JOURNEY WHEN YOU COME
ABOARD THE CHARMING
AND ELEGANT EASTERN &
ORIENT EXPRESS

BY JOHNNY MCGEORGE

EVER SINCE THE SKIES CLAIMED THE MOST CONVENIENT ROUTE AROUND THE GLOBE, the main event of travelling has tended to lean towards arriving at the destination rather than celebrating the journey. Gone are the days of exploration and reflection, of perpetual transit through sprawling vistas and warm breezes. What we have now are bustling airports, duty-free and movies on demand. Today, the journey can sometimes be no more than an impersonal means to an end, an inconvenience almost; getting to where we want to go as quickly as possible has deprived it of its magic.

In the days of my youth, I explored various pockets of the world in alternative long-haul transits. By 'alternative' I mean 'budget'. Or better still, free. Be it three days atop a cargo truck from a Peruvian mountain to the Bolivian jungle or a week washing

As the glorious 24-carriage E&O Express pulls in with the grace of an old-time locomotive, my palms are clammy from pangs of excitement. From one of the carriages steps a man in an immaculately turned-out uniform; he brings his palms together to greet me with a tenderness that somehow only the Thais can muster.

The man is Woody, my round-the-clock compartment steward for the next 50-odd hours, who relieves me of my luggage and leads me through the narrow marquetted corridor into the train. I am immediately awed - and humbled - by the ambience that evokes an air of formal opulence from an era time has almost forgotten.

My 'home' for the next two nights is in a Pullman compartment (there's also a choice of Presidential

TODAY, THE JOURNEY CAN SOMETIMES BE NO MORE THAN AN IMPERSONAL MEANS TO AN END, AN INCONVENIENCE ALMOST

dishes on an oil tanker bound for Morocco, looking back, it was always the adventure of the journey that pushed my buttons; the destination was ultimately just a bonus.

Since those heady days of wanderlust, fate (and a really good career) has been kind to me, and scented face towels, champagne and airport Golden Lounges have become my regular travel companions. First class may be a world away from the roof of a rickety truck laden with rugged adventurers, but would you believe me if I said something vital is missing from my travels? Could it be that I have lost my lust for wanderlust?

ALL ABOARD And so I find myself on the platform of the spooky old Kuala Lumpur railway station, as I await the arrival of the highly-reputed Eastern & Oriental Express - my ticket to the re-ignition of my worn passion and, hopefully, the derailment of my disillusionment (if you'll pardon my choice of phrases for a moment).

An astute choice, if I may add. For how can a languid 3-day train journey to Bangkok, Thailand - including exotic island stopovers and famed cuisine - not do the trick? Did I also mention that the whole trip was going to be in the lap of luxury?

or State suites), a teak-panelled room of the most decorative Baroque order. At first glance, flush walls and gold trimmings adorning signature green and cream decor deceive one into thinking that there really should be more than meets the eye. Plush sofa. Check. Foldaway writing desk with ornate table lamp. Check. Bookshelf with fruit basket, Evian drinking water and reading material. Check, check and check. But where's my luggage? And what about the basic amenities?

There is a knock at the door. It is Woody - beaming as before - and ready to demonstrate once again what impeccable service the E&O Express provides. "Allow me to show you around," he says, as if acutely aware of my confusion. Pressing a wall panel reveals a wardrobe which in turn reveals my suitcase. Another panel pops open and I find behind it a hall of mirrors that transforms into an en suite bathroom replete with Bvlgari gels, creams and all manner of grooming aids. Yet another panel unveils my bed for the night with a choice of either sleeping on the top or lower bunk. Suffice to say, I'm suitably impressed.

SLOW FOOD Dinner aboard the E&O Express is a fancy affair. After a quick pre-dinner turn in my 'stealth' bathroom, I emerge somewhat dapper and



All aboard the E&O

wobble my way to the Piano Bar for a pre-dinner gin and tonic. The bar is resplendent with pale ash panelling, engraved mirrors and silk embroidery accentuated by subtle lighting. It is also filled with guests dressed in their Sunday Best, or in this case, Thursday Night Best: couples in tuxedos and ball gowns, an old war veteran with a beret and medals and a stunning Nigerian lady whose vibrant regalia is topped by her magnificent but impossibly elaborate 'Gele' headdress.

As a lone traveller, I have been assigned a systematic seating schedule by the kind folks at E&O: I will dine with different guests in each of the 3 dining carriages for all of the coming meals. Upon reaching the Singapura dining car, I have trouble believing I am actually on a train! With every last detail buffed, varnished and strewn with decorative silks and linens, the interior is reminiscent of colonial splendour expertly fused with accents of Asian flair and inimitable craftsmanship.

At my table this evening is a pair of voluptuous young Europeans in sparkly dresses. Before I can



The Piano Bar

PHOTOS: JOHNNY MCGEORGE

even catch my breath, wine and water glasses are filled and the conversation starts flowing. I listen intently as the two try to convince me that they are merchant bankers “backpacking” across Asia. This then leads us inevitably to a philosophical debate about “finding a delicate balance between journey and destination”.

After we raise a toast to that, our starter of pan-fried scallops in lemon and vanilla dressing arrives, and conversation promptly ceases. This first course is immediate confirmation of the reputed culinary genius of the E&O Express. I've had many a fancy meal in many a fancy place, but E&O's haute cuisine is, quite simply, unrivalled. And this high-quality is consistently kept up throughout the coming days.

Everybody else appears to be in agreement; conversations have been replaced by murmurs of mmms and ahhs, and not a single guest is left unimpressed by the flow of delectable and aesthetically pleasing dishes and fine wines.

Four courses and two bottles of wine later, guests are ushered back into the Piano Bar. People continue drinking and start singing along with the lively piano-playing. Soon enough, though, a communal tiredness washes over everyone. Maybe it is the motion of the train, maybe the tittle, but one by one we make our way back to our abodes hoping that our dreams tonight will live up to what we have experienced so far today.

GONNA PARTY LIKE IT'S 1939 My plan is to wake up at 6am in order to catch the sunrise over Perak's Bukit Merah Lake from the observation carriage. The quiet beauty of the scene puts me in fine fettle for the day's excursion to Penang, Malaysia's Pearl of The Orient. Having alighted at Butterworth and made the ferry crossing to the island, we enjoy a trishaw tour en masse through the city's quaint Chinese and Indian quarters.

Upon return, I spend the next few hours alone in my compartment, reflecting on the journey so far. As dense jungle gives way to sprawling rice paddies hemmed in by mystical limestone formations, I am overcome by a sense of serenity and intense satisfaction. This journey has proven to be redeeming in and of itself, the exact tonic I was seeking.

In the late afternoon, we make passage across to Thailand without having to lift a finger - a rare treat for any Asian border crossing, as I've come to understand. Come evening, and the Piano Bar is once again the place to be, only this time it is filled with passengers already acquainted and, in the plush surroundings, it looks like they are ready to party like it's 1939. And because the E&O Express is essentially Thai, before dinner tonight, we are treated to an enchanting Thai cultural performance.

Dinner sees me sitting with a working-class English couple. Their story is inspiring: they are making a tour of the world's finest eateries that they saw on a BBC television programme. They have yet to be disappointed here, for tonight the seafood and lemongrass risotto is particularly stunning.

It's funny. It would seem that even a high-class cavalcade can shed their social protocol in the presence of fine food and bubbly and the dinner din is rich in enthusiasm and elevated decibels. We linger with a selection of dangerous desserts and flowing wine until, one by one, the dining car empties and the Piano Bar refills.

The revelry is in full swing, with a young honeymooning couple belting out songs from Baccharach to the Beatles. Graceful older ladies dance with debonair elderly gentlemen and even the demure train staff are roped into the festivities. Perhaps it's the snug dimensions of the carriages, or maybe the alcohol, but the bar has become a convivial place to be in, regardless of age, ethnicity or social standing. It is 2.30am before everyone



The Pullman suite

PHOTO: JOHNNY MCGEORGE

finally staggers back to their carriages and calls it a night.

The following day, there is a scheduled stop at the famous River Kwai in Kanchanaburi. Hopping onto a barge, we float down the famous waters while an elderly English gent relays a detailed and informative lesson on the poignant history of the railway and bridge. It is a stark contrast to the tone and mood of the evening prior but a fun and valuable experience nonetheless.

Back in the train on the last leg to Bangkok, there is a palpable sense of sadness lingering in the air as the journey nears its end. Echoing my thoughts are conversations about how travel these days is not



Scenic view from the E&O Express

Walking the concourse, I bid fond farewells to my new-found friends and a warming sense of achievement engulfs me. My faith has been restored,

AS DENSE JUNGLE GIVES WAY TO SPRAWLING RICE PADDIES, I AM OVERCOME BY A SENSE OF SERENITY AND INTENSE SATISFACTION

as much fun as it once was, and how the adventure experienced aboard this train has been a more than worthwhile investment.

Pulling into Bangkok, there is still an air of quiet repose. Wandering back to my suite, I find Woody - still smiling - hauling out my luggage. Patting me on the back he wishes me good luck for the rest of my journey. The journey, however, I think to myself, is over. The prospect of wandering around the streets of urban Bangkok suddenly seems lonely and spiritless.

my passion rekindled, my wanderlust perhaps even back with a vengeance. The extravagance, splendour and mystique of the Eastern & Oriental Express really must be experienced first hand to be believed - as much as the idea of being stuck two nights on a train may seem unappealing at first.

The journey is as charming, bewitching and enigmatic as the beauty of Asia itself. And in its wake I feel complete, my inner cravings fulfilled. My only regret is that I have a flight to catch the very next day. ■

NEW E&O DESTINATIONS



PHOTO: JOHNNY MCGEORGE PADDY FIELD PHOTO E&O EXPRESS

The original route of the E&O Express began in Singapore, ran through Peninsula Malaysia and wound up in Bangkok. A further two destinations have recently been included. The first is Chiang Mai, in the stunning northern highlands of Thailand and the second is a crossing into Vientiane, the capital of neighbouring Laos. Both destinations serve to make the E&O experience that much more rewarding with an opportunity to witness more stunning Thai culture and to provide access to the largely unknown beauty of Laotian scenery, culture and the unquestionable warmth of her people.

For further details (schedules, itineraries and prices), visit www.orient-express.com



HISTORY FOR SALE

CAN MALAYSIA'S MOST HISTORICAL CITY WIN ITS BID FOR INCLUSION IN UNESCO'S LIST OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES? AS MALACCA BULLETS INTO THE FUTURE, QUESTIONS REMAIN AS TO WHETHER IT'S LEAVING ITS PAST TOO FAR BEHIND

BY LENA NG WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO LIM HUCK CHIN & FERNANDO JORGE

This 1562 granite gravestone from Portuguese Malacca is the oldest Catholic tombstone in the country and, along with seven others, was used by the Dutch to pave Christ Church

S

STEP FOR A MOMENT OUT OF THE burning midday sun and into the shadows of history, where you may linger if you wish. Often shaded by bamboo blinds, the five-foot way of the Malaccan traditional shophouse is only one aspect of the city's history and is a popular starting point for exploring a uniquely built heritage.

The five-foot way was created in shophouses during the British colonial era to follow a ruling for sheltered pedestrian walkways that would unify the street front while allowing traders a place to display their wares. As width of building frontage was the earliest basis for tax, a long and narrow plan evolved to house large families with separate service areas to the rear. Courtyards were a design element from China that allowed natural light and ventilation into the internal sequence of spaces. Assimilation of different cultures in more prosperous homes is evident in decorative features such as carved screens, elaborate neo-classical plasterwork or imported glazed tiles.

Like Georgetown in Penang, Malacca was established through its commercial centre. The areas formed by Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Jalan Hang Jebat, now known as Jonker Walk, are highlights in any visit to the city, not least for the rows of Peranakan town houses. Behind the ornately decorated façades once owned by wealthy Straits Chinese merchants, tiled courtyards and private quarters extend back as far as 50 metres. Some of these homes date back to the time of Dutch occupation and formed the basis of the shophouse typology found throughout Singapore and Malaysia.

THE FUTURE IS PAST Just as shop houses have evolved using construction techniques and materials from Chinese, Malay and European traditions, so has Malacca evolved over the centuries. It is the only place in Malaysia to have been ruled by three Western colonial powers, each of whom have left their unique contribution to the urban fabric.

Now, however, the most pressing threat to the city comes not from without - the usual suspects of war or weather - but from within: the process of modernisation. In Malaysia, a headlong rush towards development has meant that the preservation of our urban heritage has never been a priority, and that historic areas often make way for new developments. But the conservation of heritage buildings is important for any country to understand its cultural past.

The World Heritage Fund (WHF) was created after two world wars and after the boom of post-war development. UNESCO published its "Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage" in 1972 and listed its first 12 World Heritage sites six years later. The latest list includes 851 properties with a cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. Christian Manhart of the WHF explains that getting on the list is not merely about prestige. "We want the countries we put on the list to commit to conservation. We have a rolling programme: each site is checked every six years."

For listed countries that have to maintain their sites, this can be a colossal undertaking that includes restoration and management. But inclusion on the list also increases PR and brings about more tourism and funding, making success for each monument on the list dependent on a delicate balance. Angkor Wat in Cambodia is one of the marvels of Asian civilization for its remarkable temple structures dating to the 14th century, and also for its survival through extensive wars. The nearby town of Siem Riep has seen a massive growth since the late 90s when it became a tourist hub and source of major income. Reckless development now encroaches on the heritage zone surrounding the temple areas.

A LOST VOICE Malaysia's own World Heritage sites are unique for their pristine condition and include Gunung Mulu National Park and Kinabalu Park. These are considered sites of natural heritage as they are home to rare or endangered animals and plants - a living testament to the exceptional biodiversity that once covered the whole continent.

The country also has a wealth of cultural heritage, including historic buildings and town sites and archaeological sites. In recognition of this, both Malacca and Penang submitted applications to be listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in September 2007. While applications had been submitted and deferred in earlier attempts, this year's application was sent back to the States for further clarification. Perhaps it is an act of hubris to list a site as being of world-class heritage when local policies have only helped time to degrade historic areas of these cities through demolition or poorly chosen development.

Where Malacca has sought to meet its projected commercial ambitions, land reclamation projects and modern structures have changed a great deal of the cityscape. In his excellent book on

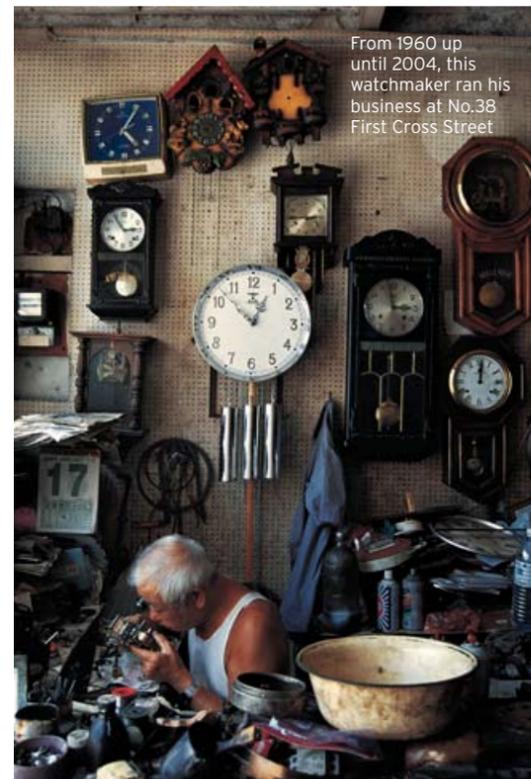


PHOTO CORBIS

Airwells, such as this one, provide light and ventilation to the deep interiors typical of Malaccan Nyonya houses



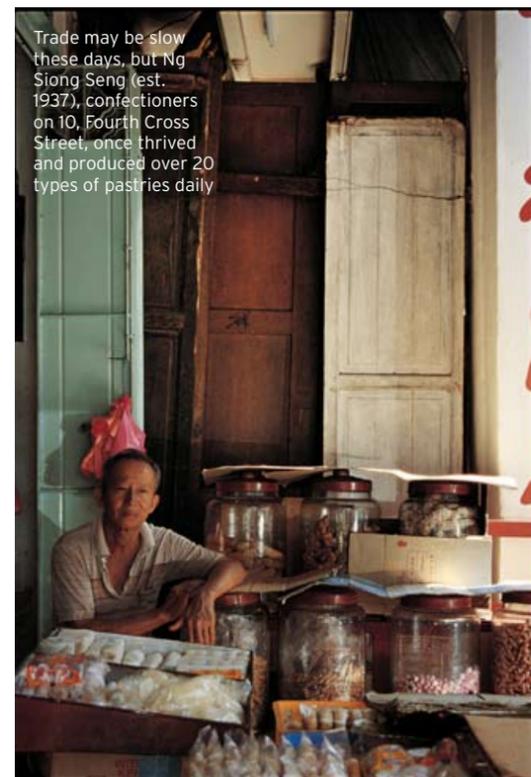
This goldsmith, founded in the early 1900s, was a Malacca landmark until 2000 when commercial pressure closed the business



From 1960 up until 2004, this watchmaker ran his business at No.38 First Cross Street



The Tay Miang Guan liquor shop on Kampung Pantai Road, set up in 1918, is one of the few businesses still surviving today



Trade may be slow these days, but Ng Siong Seng (est. 1937), confectioners on 10, Fourth Cross Street, once thrived and produced over 20 types of pastries daily



A typical residence built during Malacca's rubber boom at 182, Tranquerah Road

the vanishing architecture and culture of the city, Malacca: Voices from the Street, Lim Huck Chin notes that a fundamental understanding of heritage conservation is still acutely lacking, and that the complexities of the city's cultural heritage are wildly misunderstood. "Despite the visible and widespread damage, as well as the city's World Heritage listing aspirations, Malacca remains lackadaisical about the need to properly conserve its heritage," he says.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING The city's history began with a hunting trip in the 14th century when Parameswara, a Sumatran prince, stopped at a river-mouth and named the site after the tree under which he was resting. The settlement flourished into a trading hub until his death in 1424. Indian, Arab, Chinese and Javanese merchants were amongst those who came from around the region with the products of several continents. The small port was an ideal base - one that eventually drew the Portuguese to invade in 1511.

Thus began a long period of foreign administration in Malacca - a legacy that changed Malaysia's history and also the city itself, with numerous buildings that showcased the architectural heritage of the colonists. The Portuguese laid out the city streets and converted Malacca into a Christian bastion with churches and forts. With the arrival of the Dutch in 1641, parts of the port were destroyed but eventually rebuilt with a distinctive Dutch colonial style. The British East India Company developed Malacca further after 1824.

Early colonial buildings that have been well preserved include the striking red-coloured

Stadthuys and Christ Church. In the historic centre, Chinese architectural styles are more apparent although much of this is being threatened by urban development. Many private properties have been renovated to serve different functions to their original designs; others have been lost completely to time or economic forces. In many places, only their historic façades remain for boutique hotels, bars or shops. One of the best-preserved buildings in Malacca is at 48-50 Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, once (and still) known as Heeren Street. This is now the Baba-Nyonya Heritage House that showcases a traditional Peranakan townhouse that was once typical of many in the area. Its highly ornate style is one that combines Chinese, Palladian and Baroque design elements.

HOPE SURPASSES For the recent UNESCO bid, the sites specified for inclusion were the 18th Century historic centre of the city itself, the area of St. Paul's Hill or Bukit Malacca, which was the royal abode and seat of power during the 15th and 16th century, Kampung Belanda, Heeren Street, Jonker Street and, of course, the Malacca River, which was the lifeline along which the city was built. There are many global precedents from which Malacca can learn in order to show off its historic urban landmarks as part of a vibrant city.

European cities have well-preserved urban precincts dominated by ancient buildings that attract tourists throughout the year and Granada in Spain is an excellent example of the preservation of old and new. Buildings representing the cultural legacy from the eight centuries of Moorish occupation in the Iberian peninsula have been preserved as major tourist destinations. The architectural masterpiece

ALL PHOTOS © LIM HUCK CHIN & FERNANDO JORGE, 2005

PHOTO © LIM HUCK CHIN & FERNANDO JORGE, 2005



An early-20th century five-foot way at Mill Road, a feature introduced by the British to unify street fronts

10-30% in tourism, so there is a future in preserving the past. In recent years as well, culture has been an important marketing asset to attract travellers with special interests in heritage and arts.

Organisations such as the Heritage Trust of Malaysia prioritise authenticity in heritage conservation, as inappropriate restoration or the artificial creation of 'heritage' attractions will dilute the cultural and social value of a site. Jonker Street, for example, is lined with some of Malacca's oldest buildings, the most venerable of which date to as far back as the 17th century. Present-day Jonker Street, though, is a tourist trap. Ornamental street lights, commercial signage and souvenir stalls – these superficial alterations have somewhat obscured the original beauty and historical significance of the area.

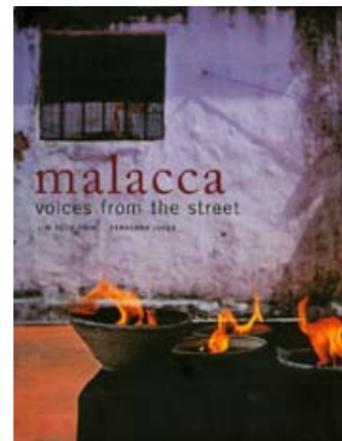
It is now also known as 'antique street', where you can find bargains and browse amongst tourist shops. Artefacts can be found from different eras: Chinese porcelain, brassware and old coins, some dating as far back as 300 years and others with less exalted pedigrees – originating as they do from the nearest reproduction workshops. The street becomes a pedestrian mall on weekends, transforming into Jonker Walk as traders sell food, arts and crafts, souvenirs, ornamental jewellery and more.

In the humid night air, surrounded by the glow of artificial lighting and bustling crowds, it becomes clear that everyone here is looking for a bargain. Trade is still an important part of daily life in Malacca as it was during the 14th century, with the only difference being that it is now history that is being traded. ■

of the Alhambra has extensive gardens, and rooms lavishly decorated with tiles and exquisitely carved Islamic plasterwork – all of which has required restoration after years of neglect.

In fact, cities throughout the world are discovering that heritage developments have the potential to fulfil two conflicting aims: they can boost the economy (by attracting tourism) and they can improve their residents' quality of life. Locations around the world that gained UNESCO status as World Heritage Sites show an estimated increase of

MALACCA: VOICES FROM THE STREET



The evocative photographs you see in this article first appeared in *Malacca: Voices from the Street* (2005), a 368-page labour of love documenting the history and the people of Malacca, and the impending loss of their heritage, culture and homes. The culmination of a collaborative effort between two architects, Malaysian Lim Huck Chin and Portuguese Fernando Jorge, what began in 1999 turned out to be a 5-year journey that took them to almost every street in old Malacca to listen to stories from the 'man-in-the-street', and to Singapore, The Hague, London and Lisbon in order to scour through

archival records and any official documents on Malacca they could get their hands on. The result? This stunning book that is pure poetry, both in words and images, and more importantly, one which offers a detailed and informed perspective on the city's social and cultural history, and the perils which threaten to erase it today. The two authors have been active in preservation work in their respective countries for many years, and were part of a team which restored a Dutch-period Malaccan shophouse (8 Hereen Street) for use as a heritage resource centre prior to the publication of this book.

PHOTO: LIM HUCK CHIN & FERNANDO JORGE, 2005



PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

THE MAJESTIC HOTEL IS MALACCA'S LATEST AND FINEST EXAMPLE OF HOW HERITAGE AND MODERNITY CAN MAKE IDEAL BEDFELLOWS.

The preservation of heritage sites has to be conducted in a careful and deliberate manner; on the one hand, the sites cannot be left to decay but, on the other hand, over-zealous restoration might deprive them of their original character and charm. Retaining a building's function will therefore allow us to relive the glories of the past in a modern context. The maintenance of structural integrity, of materials, and of decorative elements distinctive to its particular period is also part of a sensitive adaptation of historic structures.

One such notable example is the new Majestic Hotel – which sits on the banks of the Malacca River, directly across from the traditional wooden homes of Kampung Morton. The hotel is an integral part of Malacca's colourful history, dating back to the 1800s; the mansion is an elegant Neo-classical structure with the stature and authenticity of its age. The recent renovation and restoration of the hotel building by YTL Hotels has recreated a grand Malaccan home from another time and has made a loyal attempt to retain as much of its original character as before.

The hotel offers an experience that combines luxury, tradition and modernity – three vital components in ensuring the survival of any city's cultural heritage and buildings against the

onslaught of a fast-moving commercial world. Escape from the bustle of the streets into a tiled courtyard cooled by a central fountain and surrounded by well-manicured trees. Walk into an expansive area and be welcomed by the vivid sight of original Peranakan tiling.

Rooms have been rejuvenated and refurbished but an aura of old world charm still hangs delicately in the air. Sumptuously appointed, each room has a four-poster bed, warm wooden flooring and is finished in rich silks.

YTL's famed Spa Village occupies the first two floors. The Group is one of the most awarded spa brands in the world, and a spa experience at any of their 5 Spa Villages is an experience to be savoured. Each Spa Village draws inspiration from their location, making the Spa Village Malacca the only one in the world that offers a Peranakan treatment that's not to be missed.

Most importantly, though, the Majestic Malacca is a prime example of the way forward if we are truly serious about preserving the fabric of our history.

The Majestic Hotel, Malacca, opens its doors on January 15, 2008; call +603-2783 1000 or visit www.majesticmalacca.com

ARTIST RENDERINGS: YTL HOTELS



PHOTO CORBIS

PASSAGE OF RITES

THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO THE MYSTICAL ISLAND OF BALI THAN SAND, SURF AND SHOPPING. IN THIS ANCIENT LAND THAT COULD HAVE SO EASILY BEEN FOREVER TARNISHED BY THE TRAP OF TOURISM, THE BALINESE PEOPLE HAVE NOT YET BEEN FORCED TO CLING ONTO THEIR CULTURE. INSTEAD, TRADITIONS ARE STILL THRIVING IN A PLACE WHERE DAILY OFFERINGS ARE MADE AND MOCK KIDNAPPINGS ARE STAGED

BY A. KARIM KHAN

M

ODERNISATION, it has been argued, usually heralds the death of culture. The passage of time has seen the rise and fall of countless civilisations and, with their passing, another piece of history consigned to distant memory.

This phenomenon has been well-documented by scholars over the years and, more recently, in the pages of popular fiction; Neil Gaiman's Hugo Award-winning novel, *American Gods*, for example, addresses such concerns. In it, Gaiman narrates the present day fate of gods of ancient mythology such as Odin, Bast and Cthulhu, whose powers have waned on American shores after the death of their worshippers over the course of time. Stranded without believers, the mantle of these gods has since been usurped by new ones such as the internet, electronic media and modern transportation.

Though amusing, it nevertheless addresses this very issue of how ancient beliefs, religion and superstition have been left reeling in the wake of modernisation.

heritage is kept alive only by the respirator that is the nightly tourist shows. Its temples, meanwhile, are visited only by hordes of Nikon-toting tourists.

That, at least, was the grim scenario hinted at by Mexican painter Miguel Covarrubias in his seminal 1937 book, *Island of Bali*. In the book, he expressed his anxiety over what he foresaw as the impending extinction of Bali's rich tapestry of culture, proclaiming that the island was "doomed to disappear under the merciless onslaught of modern commercialism and standardisation."

However, 70 years later, Covarrubias' prophecy, thankfully, has yet to be fulfilled in its entirety. Granted, the serene hills of Ubud, once dotted only with rice terraces, are now home to hundreds of small shops; while the ancient and awe-inspiring 5th century Besakih 'mother temple' at the foot of the island's highest and most revered peak, Gunung Agung, hosts hordes of wide-eyed tour groups on a daily basis.

Yet, amidst the hungry commercial rush of Kuta, each morning at daybreak, young Balinese women place small baskets of 'canang sari' - floral and rice offerings - to the gods at every doorstep. On



IN A PLACE WHERE TRADITION, RELIGION AND FAMILY COME BEFORE BUSINESS, IT IS EVIDENT CULTURE IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Third World countries, where the richness of their cultures has by and large been diluted in the name of progress.

Thus, by all accounts, the Indonesian island of Bali should be no different. The 5,000-plus km² island has long been the jewel in Indonesia's tourism crown and remains one of the country's wealthiest regions. Dubbed "paradise on earth", it has been steadily drawing in tourists since the 1930s but it only truly boomed in the 60s and 70s after being 're-discovered' by hippies and surfers.

Today, thrill-seekers congregate along the ultra-typical tourist trap Kuta Beach, packing its bars, cafes, and nightclubs while shoppers trawl the retail haven that is the Ubud district. In the face of such overwhelming commercialisation, it is only fair to presume that whatever is left of Bali's cultural

the holy day of Nyepi, the entire island grinds to a halt in a solemn display of devotion. On lesser feast days, some are devoted to such quaint chores as blessing wood, metal and other materials while processions of brightly-clad women and men in their Hindu whites take to the streets. In a place where most people will tell you that 'adat' (tradition) and religion come first in the scale of priorities, followed by family and, only then, business, it is evident that culture is still very much alive.

What sets Bali apart from the rest of Muslim-majority Indonesia is that some 93% of the island's population is of Hindu Dharma faith: a heady mix of art and ritual, which is less preoccupied with scripture, belief and law but which puts more emphasis on local and ancestral spirits. I Wayan Yudha, 59, a Hindu, is among the many locals who earn a living from the tourist trade. Operating from



(Previous page and on this page) Every morning at daybreak, young Balinese women place floral and rice offerings in small woven baskets called 'canang sari' as offerings to the gods

a ramshackle stall outside the Pura Ponjok Batu temple, he rents out sashes, sarongs and udang headgear to visitors entering the temple. He does not charge a fixed price for the items and only asks that people contribute any amount they feel is appropriate. Like most Balinese, he chuckles at the notion that the island's culture and tradition are gradually being driven to extinction at the hands of progress. The reality, he claims, is quite the opposite. "The tourists bring us business but there is more to life than that. Tradition and religion are too relevant to our daily lives for them to disappear completely."

However, the islanders' determination to preserve their way of life has been severely tested on many occasions. In 1993, for instance, a developer

in the end, the developers had to abide by the bhisama religious ruling which requires that such establishments operate within a 2km buffer zone.

The Balinese people strongly believe that their ways will continue to prosper no matter how much their surroundings are transformed by the tide of modernisation. To fully fathom this conviction, an outsider must first realise the extent to which tradition holds sway over the people. Throughout their lives, the Balinese's every rite of passage - pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, adulthood and death - is dictated by ritual.

A Balinese's first introduction to this way of life begins as a baby, when its feet are not permitted



Tanah Lot, one of Bali's most sacred temples is said to resemble a large boat at sea during high water

unveiled plans to build a resort and golf course at the Tanah Lot temple, one of the Balinese people's most sacred grounds. Built on a small promontory accessible only at low tide, the temple takes on the appearance of a large boat at sea during high water. Locals expressed horror that they would be able to see the complex from the temple, which is regarded as among the holiest in Bali.

What followed was a virtually unprecedented display of disenchantment when Hindu priests organised mass protests. A compromise was eventually worked out and although the resort was constructed

to touch the ground for the first six months of its life. The Balinese regard children as celestial beings descended from godly realms and so to tread the earth before those six months are up is akin to revoking the child's divine status.

There is also no code of behaviour separating children from adults: they are treated as equals. Taboo subjects in Western culture such as birth, sex and death, are often openly discussed and presented ceremoniously as sacred passages of life. Consequently, a sense of self-sufficiency is developed early in life. Children are allowed to roam

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Bali's most important temple, the Besakih 'Mother Temple', located at the foot of Gunung Agung



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHERA. @ DITTO STUDIO



Mourners carry colourful parasols during a funeral procession, one of the most important ceremonies in Balinese culture

wherever they wish as soon as they are able to walk, and roam they certainly do, often with other like-spirited children. It isn't unusual to see groups of Balinese children gambolling around the countryside free of any adult supervision. Such is the level of freedom accorded to them.

One other rite of passage which every Balinese must undergo is the Mesangih or tooth-filing ceremony, which takes place upon their reaching adulthood. According to their beliefs, the act of filing the six front teeth in the upper jaw until they are flat will rid

order to enable them to progress to the afterworld.

In his book, Covarrubias wrote, "Strange as it seems, it is in their cremation ceremonies that the Balinese have their greatest fun." To the Balinese, a cremation, called Pengabenan, is an occasion for gaiety and not mourning as it represents the accomplishment of their most sacred duty: liberating the souls for reincarnation. However, only the wealthy are able to conduct a cremation shortly after a family member's death. There is usually a hiatus between death and cremation for the average Balinese.

IT IS BELIEVED POSSESSING UNEVEN TEETH OR LONGER CANINES IS AKIN TO BEING AN ANIMAL, THE LOWEST OF GOD'S CREATIONS

the person of his or her Sad Ripu (six weaknesses of the flesh), namely lust, greed, anger, drunkenness, confusion and jealousy. Upon the ceremony's completion, they will then be able to join the ranks of the adults and, consequently, gain the right to marry.

It is also believed that possessing uneven teeth or longer canines is akin to being an animal, the lowest of God's creations. And if a person is unable to afford a tooth-filing ritual during his or her lifetime, it will be carried out upon one's death, before cremation, in

Private ceremonies are costly, so the bodies of the recently deceased are usually buried in the cemetery until such a time when a group cremation can be performed. In that period, it is believed that the soul lies in an agitated state, longing for release.

On the day of the cremation, the body is housed in a paper and bamboo tower and paraded to the temple. En route, the tower-bearers will twirl the tower around many times before proceeding. This, according to their beliefs, is to confuse the spirit so

PHOTO CORBIS

it won't be able to return to cause mischief. Upon arrival, the body is then transferred to an animal-shaped sarcophagus before being set ablaze. The ashes are later cast off into the sea or a stream - the way it has been done for centuries past and probably for the next few.

But surely the most fun of all Balinese ceremonies must be the wedding day. Most other cultures have only one solitary ceremonial template for marriage but the Balinese have two, the most popular being Ngerorod, which also happens to be the less expensive of the two. Some, though, have theorised that the popularity of the Ngerorod - which requires play-acting, often comical, on the part of the groom, bride and their families - is also partly due to its appeal to the Balinese's love of theatre.

In the Ngerorod, a spectacular kidnapping is staged in which, traditionally, friends of the suitor capture the bride in the fields, on the road or down by the river. Theatrics are paramount here: she is expected to bite and kick her abductors in mock self-defence. These days, however, it has become more 'stylish' for the bride to be whisked away in a hired sedan and, more often than not, she goes willingly, not much different from, say, an elopement. The couple then 'hide' in a friend's house.

Meanwhile, the bride's 'infuriated' father sounds the alarm, demanding to know of his daughter's fate. A search party is formed; it goes forth to rescue the damsel; but it invariably returns with - as tradition would dictate - empty hands. At the same time, the couple consummates the marriage before the special offerings, known as Sesayut Tabuh Rah. The offerings alone, under customary law, make the marriage binding. Upon the newlyweds return, the family of the groom then pays a visit to the bride's family, bearing gifts along with a desire to reconcile her parents to the union. The result is that all ends well with a formal ceremony.

The future, to the Balinese, may seem to have arrived unannounced. The land of their ancestors is rapidly changing: it has been tampered with, and trampled on by the endless waves of visitors who bring money - and destruction - every day of the year. And yet, it is heartening to note that while lesser versions of paradise have wilted in the face of progress, the Balinese's unwavering devotion to preserving a sense of continuity of their culture and traditions has seen them prevail. One suspects that Covarrubias will have to wait a long time yet before his prophecy is fulfilled. ■

PHOTO CHRISTOPHER A. @ DITTO STUDIO

WHAT IS HINDU DHARMA?



Balinese Hindusim, formally known as Agama Hindu Dharma, made its appearance on Balinese shores after the remnants of the mighty Majapahit Empire shifted to Bali during the 16th century as Muslim kingdoms in other parts gained influence.

It is regarded as the youngest and least numerous denomination of Hinduism, described as being closer to Saivism than other major Hindu sects. What makes it different from other denominations is that many themes of Balinese mythology, which existed before the religion was introduced to Bali, have been adapted and worked into the faith.

It lacks mainstream Hinduism's emphasis on rebirth cycles and reincarnation but instead focuses more on a variety of local and ancestral spirits. Great importance is placed on dramatic and visually-stimulating acts of ritual propitiation of said spirits at the numerous 'pura' or temple sites dotted across the villages and countryside.

Each Balinese belongs to a temple either by descent, residence or mystical revelations of affiliation but each temple can also be associated with material items or locales such as the family house compound or even paddy fields.

The most important feature of Balinese Hinduism, though, is its emphasis on the rites of passage - birth, puberty, adulthood, marriage and especially death. These provide the Balinese people the means to express their ideas on community, status and, ultimately, the afterlife.



PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

LIVING A LIFE OF LUXURY SHOULD BE AT OUR EXPENSE, NOT MOTHER NATURE'S. YTL LIFE DISCOVERS HOW YOU CAN LIVE THE HIGH LIFE WITHOUT COMMITTING HIGH CRIMES AGAINST THIS PLACE WE CALL HOME

BY SAM YEN

L

ATELY, the world's headlines have taken an almost apocalyptic tone, predicting countless calamities as the environment comes under continued pressure from human activities. It's depressing enough to make one choke on one's morning toast and marmalade. The idea that human excesses have caused

untold damage on the planet isn't a new one; but its effects have vaulted the issue to such prominence that it fosters a perpetual sense of guilt, even as one zooms off on an exotic holiday. Two opposing forces are at play here: the planet and prosperity.

This is where the human capacity for invention comes into play. No longer does being an environmentalist involve linking arms around trees and eking out an un-fabulous existence in a self-sufficient commune. Enough entrepreneurial spirits have stepped up to the task of ensuring that maintaining a modern, luxurious lifestyle and bearing green credentials are not mutually independent. And as this rolling stone continues to gather moss, being an environmentalist from the comfort of a downtown penthouse becomes easier and easier. Living green is simpler than you think; all you need is effort.

WEAR IS THE LOVE? Fashion seems to be the least likely industry to champion environmentalism. A business obsessed with glitz, glamour, gasconade and two entire wardrobes changes a year can hardly be altruistic, can it? But even as Anna Wintour solicits boos for wearing real fur, fashion, it seems, is developing a conscience.

Kicking the eco-fashion movement off is Ali Hewson, better known as Mrs. Bono, who launched an all-organic clothes line called Edun with designer Rogan Gregory in 2005. Making the runways of New York Fashion Week, Edun's philosophy is to turn fashionistas into conscientious shoppers, selling stylish chemises, jeans and dresses made from organically-grown cottons that forego rapacious harvesting, polluting pesticides and noxious chemical fertilisers. Furthermore, Edun is fair-trade clothing, sourcing its fabrics from organic Third World farms which pay fair wages to their humanely-treated workers. Pennies paid to Edun and the increasing number of fair-trade labels, including Ciel (Sarah Ratty), Lara Miller, Katharine Hamnett and Souchi, go to sustaining local communities, ensuring that a dress is not just a fashion statement, but a statement of hope.

And when designers like the bombastic Diane von Furstenberg and the suave Oscar de la Renta send collections to the first Seattle Green Fashion Week, and green-only fashion shows like Paris' Ethical Fashion show and Los Angeles' EcoNouveau start popping up, it becomes obvious that this trend is now quickly becoming a full-fledged movement.

Arguably the most recognisable face of the green-fashion movement is the vehemently principled Stella McCartney. McCartney has skewed fashion's sartorial focus by creating must-haves made from organic cotton, bamboo and hemp fabrics. Her recent all-green line for US retailer Barneys earned the classy distinction of not "looking organic, in any shape or form". In fact, McCartney takes her raison d'être several steps further by selling cruelty-free vegan boots and handbags, made from bio-degradable plant micro-fibres, as well as jumping on the organic beauty product bandwagon through her Care line.

Price of a Stella McCartney all-organic cotton dress? RM1,200. Feeling fabulous while saving the earth? Priceless.

IT'S WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE THAT COUNTS

Taking a moment to ponder the amount of pesticides, preservatives and artificial flavourings present in modern off-the-shelf produce is enough to scare one into eating green: by serving vegetables grown sans chemicals, meat that is allowed to live freely (not battery-packed and pumped full of steroids) and recipes designed to celebrate - not cremate - good food.

In the US, the movement has given birth to stores such as Organic Valley, the country's largest organic frozen-food maker, and Newman's Own Organics (founded by actor Paul Newman's daughter, Nell) which offer an entire range of natural, additive-free products from eggs and orange juice to cheese and beef. The latest converts? Napa Valley's oldest winery, Charles Krug, has turned its vineyards organic, while French President Nicolas Sarkozy is attempting to convince France's famously fastidious farmers and wineries to go green.

Eco-friendly produce even gets the British Royal nod of approval. Prince Charles gets down and dirty with organic food through his Duchy Originals line. Grown in His Highness' Highgrove estate, the product line consists of organic food (Duchy has the most fantastic marmalades and strawberry



Stella McCartney shows the path to green at her recent Spring/Summer 08 runway show

EVEN AS ANNA WINTOUR SOLICITS BOOS FOR WEARING REAL FUR, FASHION, IT SEEMS, IS DEVELOPING A CONSCIENCE

jams) and even sustainable garden furniture. Being a charitable organisation, all profits go to promoting sustainable agriculture in the UK.

Eating green isn't just about going organic but is also about supporting local produce. Globalisation means that cheap foodstuff may be imported from far-flung countries, but quality is often suspect and transporting the goods involves the release of startling amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Gourmet restaurants such as Robert Redford's Tree Room in Utah and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen in London repudiate convenience-food culture by revelling in local organic ingredients that taste light years better than stuff from a can.

Also, inmates at the Opera prison in Milan are producing luxury, 'artistic' gelato from local milk and GM-free fruits, attempting to slash heat-trapping carbon emissions from food transport. In New York, the Slow Food movement has launched its own gastronomic seal - the Snail of Approval - conferred on outlets that serve sustainable, locally-sourced food.



Edun: Bono & Missus' all-organic fashion label

EDUN PHOTO EDUN STELLA MCCARTNEY PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

Hot air balloons fly over the organic vineyards of Napa Valley's oldest winery, Charles Krug, on a sunny day



Organic foods is one of the fastest growing trends all over the world

THE WHEELS ARE TURNING Studies by NASA indicate that if global temperatures rise by a mere two to three degrees Celsius in 2100, enough of the world's mountainous glaciers and polar ice shelves will disappear, flooding the Maldives and leaving above water only those buildings in Manhattan that are higher than eight storeys.

The chief instigator of this temperature rise is the sheer amount of carbon and nitrogen oxide emitted by automobiles, which are the chief form of human transport. Walking and cycling are great alternatives, but for those who can't, or would rather not, the world's auto-manufacturers are hard at work looking for answers.

The Toyota Prius, for example, is a hybrid gasoline-electric car that is incredibly emission-efficient and gives significantly more mileage than a gas-guzzling SUV. And since Susan Sarandon arrived at the 2004 Oscars in a Prius, eco-friendly cars have become de rigueur among the Hollywood jet set. But if the middle class styling of the Prius is simply much too pooh-pooh for you, there are plenty of others with shinier credentials.

APPLES PHOTO: CORBIS VINEYARD PHOTO: CHARLES KRUG

The stylish Mini Cooper D, for example, has been voted the UK's most CO₂ efficient car, while the latest Mercedes SLK models boast advanced engine technology that leaves air exiting the exhaust cleaner than the air that went in.

This new wave of consciousness has even caught on in the realm of the super-muscle sports car. Silicon Valley's Tesla Motors manufactures the

Atlantic is planning to introduce in-flight casinos and massage parlours.

HITTING THE G-SPOT Living green has become more than just a habit; it has evolved into a complete lifestyle. Keeping abreast of the myriad of latest developments is tough, but one of the best online resources is the ultra-discerning G Living Network, which focuses on how to remain

GREEN MEASURES HAVE PERMEATED ALMOST EVERY HUMAN HABIT, LEAVING NO EXCUSE BUT IGNORANCE NOT TO GO GREEN

Tesla Roadster, a Lotus Elise lookalike that runs entirely on electric batteries, while the Monaco-based Venturi sells the appropriately-named Fétish, a sweeping single-gear electric car that can hit Ferrari-like speeds of 255 km/h and retails for a cool US\$500,000.

Even in the air, airplane builders are quietly going green, doing their part to reduce the fumes pumped out each day by the world's 50,000 commercial flights. Boeing's new 787 Dreamliner is its most fuel-efficient model yet, while Airbus' superlative A380 offers both improved environmental credentials (increased capacity and travel distance lessen emissions per flight) and lavish amenities afforded by its additional space. Singapore Airlines now offers its first-class passengers private rooms with Givenchy-designed double beds, while Virgin

at the forefront of the style curve while remaining environmentally conscious. By covering global green news from architecture to politics from a glitzy broadcast perspective, G Living manages to stylishly convert environmentalism from a hippie habit to a luxurious lifestyle.

Indeed, green measures have now permeated almost every human habit, leaving no excuse but ignorance not to go green. Energy-efficient lighting is one: using fluorescent bulbs (like EcoFuture's The Bulb) that last far longer than cheaper, ordinary ones reduces the strain on power generation.

The proliferation of digital music devices like the iPod effectively negates the production of resource-hungry compact discs. Companies like Seventh Generation and Method produce stylish

FOUR REASONS WHY THE WORLD HAS GONE GREEN MAD



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

1. Clearance of land has already halved the Amazon rainforest in the past two decades. The consequences are dire: flora and fauna with potentially invaluable pharmaceutical properties may have already been eliminated; and global warming has been vastly accelerated by the destruction of a natural carbon sink.
2. Hyper-consumption of electricity sucks energy from grids, even when appliances are idle. Generally powered by either toxin-emitting coal plants or environmentally destructive hydro-electric dams, vast grids drive a stake into the environment's heartlands.
3. Poison-emitting industries – like paper, chemical and power plants – expel vast amounts of toxins into the sea, drip-feeding over-exploited fish stocks with mercury that leads to memory loss, blindness, infertility and mental retardation in humans that consume them.
4. Economics. Pure and simple. According to Sir Nicholas Stern's The Economics of Climate Change report, detrimental climate change will possibly cost the world economy a staggering US\$7 trillion in lost income unless steps are taken to minimise existing damage.



Hermès' hand-wrought silk bag

LIVING A MODERN LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE AND BEARING GREEN CREDENTIALS ARE NO LONGER MUTUALLY INDEPENDENT

The electric sports car Venturi Fetish is capable of a top speed of 255km/h



CAR PHOTO WWW.VENTURIFR

household-cleaning products that forego polluting industrial chemicals for ones made from natural cleansing substances, while sustainable cutlery like Spudware (made from 80% potato starch and 20% vegetable oils) and bamboo utensils and crockery from Bambu score a green kitchen hat-trick. As for those who can afford not to clean up after themselves, premium green cleaning services like New York's Zen Home and San Francisco's Greenway Maid will spruce up using only the finest non-toxic materials.

Paints containing lead and potentially carcinogenic VOC (volatile organic compounds) can be replaced with paints with little to no solvents, like Yolo. Green furniture is now an industry in its own right: certifications by the Rainforest Alliance and Greenguard ensure that cutting-edge furnishings by Herman Miller and Furniture are made from sustainable forest wood and use low-toxicity production methods, while houseware outlets like Eco Home and The Natural Store sees to it that even pillow cases and napkins bear the green badge of courage.

Eco-jewellery (now available from companies like GreenKarat) either use recycled precious metals or contribute proceeds to sustainable mining. Style-savvy reusable shopping bags, like Anya Hindmarch's best-selling and riot-causing I'm Not A Plastic Bag and Hermès' exclusive hand-wrought silk version, effectively replace the need for unrecyclable plastic.

Extreme consumerism can also be put to good use: so-called affinity credit cards direct a percentage of every bill to conservation causes that work towards negating carbon footprints (the amount of greenhouse gases emitted over a lifetime). And when even electrical manufacturers are going green by producing low-energy devices and the notorious petroleum industry is starting to clean up after itself, leading a green personal life doesn't seem that hard after all.

The very existence of humans puts pressure on the environment; there is no avoiding that. The relationship ought to be a symbiotic one. Push the environment past its tipping point and there will be no turning back. It boils down to choice. Going green in the 21st century isn't difficult; it doesn't even necessitate a dramatic change of lifestyle anymore. Living well and living green aren't mutually exclusive; and if tomorrow's ominous headlines are to be avoided, they simply must not be. ■

ALL CELEBRITY PHOTOS CORBIS

THE FIVE GREENEST CELEBRITIES



AL GORE

'The almost President'. Albert Arnold Gore has arguably done more than any celebrity to hammer home the impact of climate change through his documentary An Inconvenient Truth. And he has the Oscar and Nobel Peace Prize to prove it.



GEORGE CLOONEY

Clooney leads a dual life: he stars in blockbuster movies in order to fund more personal projects like the scathing review of the global oil industry in Syria. To drive his point home, the only wheels he will be seen in are those of his funky Tango electric car.



JULIA ROBERTS

Proof you don't have to be an activist to lead an eco-friendly life. Roberts lives la vida verde, building her new home with wood harvested from sustainable forests, recycled tiles and powered by solar energy. The Earth Biofuels spokesperson dresses her children in organic clothes and uses recyclable diapers on her youngest.



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

Big Oil-loving Republican Arnie makes up for his ties with Bush and Cheney by being the US state governor with the most aggressive greenhouse emissions reduction targets in a country that hasn't even ratified the Kyoto Protocol. He realises, perhaps, that if we fail this planet, there will be no sequel.



LEONARDO DICAPRIO

A year after Titanic, Leo founded his eponymous foundation, dedicated to promoting environmental causes. He sits on the American Natural Resources Defense Council, and is making a film - aptly named The 11th Hour - about a literal state-of-the-earth. In between all that, Leo has also opened a 'super luxurious', yet eco-friendly, hotel in Belize.

THE REBIRTH OF LIVERPOOL

CELEBRATING ITS 800TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2008, THE HISTORIC PORT CITY OF LIVERPOOL IS SHRUGGING OFF DECADES OF ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND INDUSTRIAL DECAY AS IT UNVEILS LIVERPOOL 08 TO THE WORLD, A YEAR-LONG SERIES OF ART, MUSIC AND THEATRICAL EVENTS THAT IS SET TO OFFER LIVERPOOL THE CHANCE AT A 21ST CENTURY RENAISSANCE WHEN IT REIGNS AS EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE IN 2008

BY MATT ARMITAGE

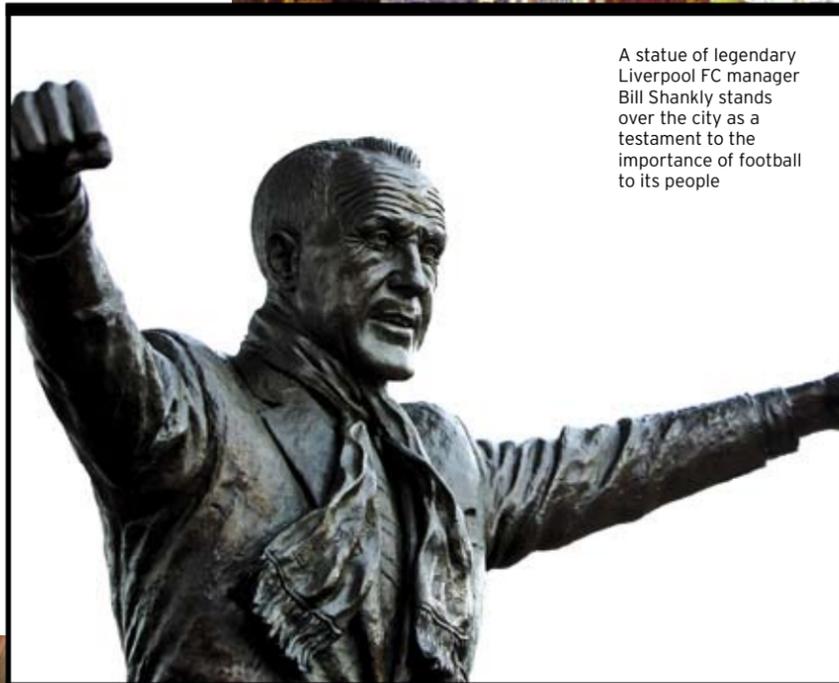
DETAIL ON A WALL BEHIND THE CAVERN LIVERPOOL STAGE - WHERE THE BEATLES WERE DISCOVERED BACK IN THE GLORY DAYS OF THE CITY



Playhouse Theatre



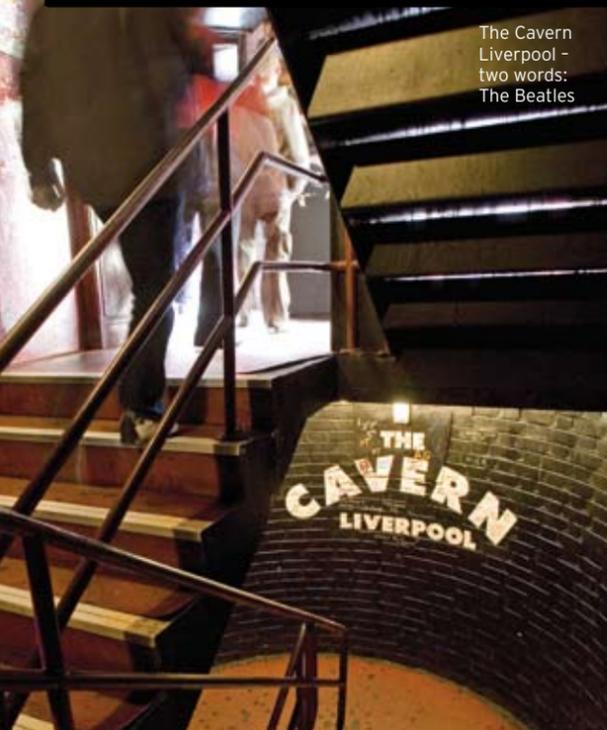
The Three Graces of Liverpool – The Cunard, The Royal Liver and Port of Liverpool



A statue of legendary Liverpool FC manager Bill Shankly stands over the city as a testament to the importance of football to its people



DL WWW.TATE.CO



The Cavern Liverpool – two words: The Beatles



A crucial cog in Liverpool's cultural renaissance

FIVE YEARS AGO, the city of Liverpool would hardly have been on the itinerary for most travellers visiting the UK. The city that had given the world The Beatles lived on in popular British consciousness as a joke, with Scousers (as Liverpoolians call one another) largely dismissed as petty criminals and drug addicts. The city that had once been the world's main port, with over 40% of global trade passing through its docks, had by the 1990s become one of Britain's poorest cities, beset by crime, high unemployment and drug abuse. And while the city had always retained a vibrant heart, its public persona now boiled down to two factors: music and football.

The Beatles and the Mersey Sound – its contribution to the swinging culture of the 60s – still defined the city to many outsiders, a fact which entailed thousands of annual pilgrimages to The Cavern Club, the live music venue that made stars of the Fab Four and others (like Gerry and the Pacemakers, Herman's Hermits and Cilla Black).

It's a similar story with football. Not only are its clubs, Liverpool and Everton, right up there in the Premier League and in Europe, but the city is also known for the quality of its home-grown talent, producing stars like Ron Atkinson, Sammy Lee and, most recently, Wayne Rooney. The city's devotion to football has conferred legendary status on some of its clubs' former players, like Newcastle-born Kevin Keegan, Kenny Dalglish and, of course, Liverpool FC's legendary manager whose shadow still looms large over the city, Scotsman Bill Shankly.

But music and football exert only a small fraction of the force that has dragged the city back up by its bootstraps. Next year, Liverpool will launch a new look and a new identity to the world. Part make-over and part urban renewal, 2008 sees the city embarking on Liverpool 08, a year-long celebration of its cultural heritage which hopes to see an additional 2 million visitors join its population of 450,000. It's a project that has seen billions of pounds worth of investments and grants flood into the city to jumpstart and thus halt the decline in a moribund local economy.

Liverpool 08 will have the city celebrating a triptych of events: its 800th birthday, its status as European Capital of Culture 2008 (along with Stavanger and Sidnes in Norway) and its international art festival The Liverpool Biennial, a treble that mirrors its own Three Graces – The Cunard, Royal Liver and Port of Liverpool, buildings that dominate the

PHOTO MARY MCCARTNEY 2007

seaward approach to the city. It's a calendar that encompasses 12 months of more than 100 specially commissioned events, ranging from street-corner music festivals to 10,000-capacity classical concerts to lectures on the story-telling traditions of the city and its sea-faring ancestors.

Of course, these celebrations would not be complete without the endorsement of surviving Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr. McCartney will be headlining the massive Liverpool Sound Festival on June 1st at Liverpool FC's Anfield Stadium, while Starr will be part of the festivities that open Liverpool 08 in January along with a roll call of the city's locally produced music talent.

In keeping with the Capital of Culture scheme's remit of promoting local culture and arts, many of the events are specially commissioned works with a strong link to the city. The Everyman, Liverpool's leading theatre, has been substantially renovated in preparation and will be focusing on a programme



Ex-Beatle Sir Paul McCartney will perform at Liverpool 08 in homage to the city of his birth

of works with a 'Made in Liverpool' theme that will "be drawn from the astonishing array of local writing and acting talent as well as partnerships with national and international theatre stars," according to its Artistic Director Gemma Bodinetz.

One of the theatrical highlights will certainly be the experimental *An Audience with Shankly*, a play which attempts to explain the significance of football to the city's identity. Taking place at the opulent Victorian theatre the Liverpool Olympia, the show promises to break new performance ground by combining live monologues with documentary footage broadcast on massive projection screens; this multimedia experience will bring deeper understanding of the lasting sense of pride that football manager Shankly brought to the city.

In terms of lasting impact, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (RLPO) has been the artistic lifeblood of the city for generations. So it is natural that the RLPO takes centre stage throughout Liverpool 08. Among the many

been very much a part of the artistic rebirth of the city, combining a cinema, bar, brasserie and media room alongside exhibition spaces in a stunning industrial-themed building and providing a counterpoint to more established galleries like Tate and Walker.

The foundation's policy, according to Director Mike Stubbs, is to show exhibitions "of the kind the UK has never seen: encouraging both artists and audiences to break boundaries, and consider who we are and how we exist, from a fresh perspective." For Liverpool 08, this includes March's curious showpiece *SONICStreams*, an exploration of the effects of sound on the human body that combines new media artists with medical professionals.

Similarly, bars like Korova around the Fleet Street-Bold Street nexus (a newly restored warren of cafés), have continued to fly the flag for Liverpool's musical future, creating a new scene to rival those of The Cavern and the infamous Eric's Club that produced artists like Elvis Costello and Julian Cope.

LIVERPOOL IS A CITY THAT IS REASSERTING ITS VOICE AND RECLAIMING ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE AT THE HEART OF BRITISH CULTURE

highlights of its 2008 season are a number of performances by Sir Simon Rattle, the Liverpool-born conductor believed by many to be one of the leading classical music icons of his age.

Worthy of note is a performance by Sir John Tavener of his new *Requiem* (Feb 28), an attempt to unite followers of the world's great religions, and a night of pure indulgence with the John Lennon Songbook (July 18) where John Wilson conducts the orchestra through specially-arranged versions of many of the ex-Beatles' most popular pieces.

Art institution the Walker Gallery has been thoroughly upgraded in time for Liverpool 08 and along with Tate Liverpool - celebrating its 20th birthday in 2008 - will feature a variety of showpiece exhibitions, including the unveiling of *Liverpool Cityscape 2008*, a painting by Ben Johnson that memorialises the new waterfront skyline of a revamped Liverpool.

At a more grassroots level, facilities like FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology) have

With nightly musical activities throughout the city, Liverpool 08's treats include a number of audio-visual installations under the Twilight City umbrella that will combine electronic music with visual art to transform 'challenging' architecture in the city.

But the highpoint of the musical calendar is August, when the 3-day *Imagine Carnival* - Liverpool's answer to London's Notting Hill Carnival - transforms the city centre into a multicultural melting pot and when the city's annual *Matthew Street Music Festival* (August 8) unites more than 40 live-music venues with everything from traditional Irish jigs to the latest nose-bleeding rock and techno.

However, for sheer head-turning ability, Liverpool's international art festival the *Biennial* is also adding its flavour to Liverpool 08. Eschewing fixed premises for a variety of shows and installations, some elements (like Antony Gormley's *Another Place*, a series of human-like statues that appear from the tide at Crosby Beach), have already generated controversy and acclaim in equal amounts. Also confounding expectations is Richard

The FACT centre





A busker keeps the spirit of rock 'n' roll alive in Lime Street Station - which will soon be restored to its full Victorian glory



Manhattan chic arrives in Liverpool with the Malmaison

Wilson's Turning the Place Over installation, which literally rotates a section of a warehouse on hydraulics before returning it to its rightful place.

Works like Wilson's focus on the regeneration efforts that, by the opening of Liverpool 08, will have provided the city with the physical capital to match its impending series of world class events. A major focus of the regeneration has been to provide Liverpool with a new set of landmark buildings and to stamp a contemporary 21st Century identity onto the city. This includes buildings like the futuristic Malmaison Hotel (the lynchpin of the new Princes Dock development), a new Liverpool FC stadium, the Museum of Liverpool on Mann Island as well as the restoration of Lime Street Station to its former Victorian splendour.

The purpose-built Arena and Convention Centre

at the King's Waterfront, including the historic Albert Dock, will host the opening of Liverpool 08 at its 11,000-capacity indoor arena. Designed by the award-winning Wilkinson Eyre architecture firm, the arena and convention centre gleam like a spaceship from the future parked amongst the Georgian and Victorian architecture on the city's waterfront and is a development that will revitalise what was, at almost 15 hectares, Europe's largest unutilised city-centre plot.

But for sheer scale, the crowning glory of Liverpool's transformation has to go to the 42-hectare Liverpool One / Paradise Project right in the middle of the city's commercial district. With an investment of almost £1 billion, the project is giving a much needed facelift to the city centre. Stretching from the edges of the King's Waterfront project to the Liver Building and Town Hall, the project will

BUSKER PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

PLUMB PHOTO: MALMAISON HOTEL; NIKI DE SAINT-PHALLE & GUSTAV KLIMT PHOTOS: WWW.TATE.COM

add 40 buildings to the cityscape in six distinct districts - mixing 1.6 million square feet of retail, office, leisure and residential space in a pedestrian friendly zone that aims to make its centre the focus of Liverpool's city life; all in time for it to take centre stage in Liverpool 08 and beyond.

While its long term future is still very much under development, Liverpool is a city that is reasserting its voice and reclaiming its rightful place at the heart of British culture. So pity Stavanger and Sidnes whose own Capital of Culture status will undoubtedly be overshadowed by the mighty Liverpool 08. According to Warren Bradley, Deputy Chairman of Liverpool Culture Company, "This is culture by the people, of the people, for the people. I have no doubt being European Capital of Culture will change how Liverpool thinks and how the rest of the world thinks of Liverpool." ■

DON'T MISS THESE

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS, LOG ON TO WWW.LIVERPOOL08.COM. BUT HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS:



Jan 11-13: Liverpool 08 Opening Weekend @ The Arena

Features a bevy of local acts from Ringo Starr to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (RLPO). The best part, though, will be the hundreds of smaller celebrations in galleries, museums, bars and pubs as the entire city of Liverpool celebrates its birthday.



Feb 1-May 5: Niki de Saint Phalle @ Tate Liverpool

In the first major UK exhibition of 20th century French artist de Saint Phalle, the Tate Liverpool will present works from every stage of her career, including early paintings from the 1950s to graphic work and installation pieces from the 1990s.

Feb 18: John Tavener Requiem @ Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

The RLPO and her sister choir will perform the world premier of a new work by Sir John Tavener which seeks to address the differences between religions and to unite them in the face of a shared final journey.



May 30 onwards: Gustav Klimt @ Tate Liverpool

The Tate plays host to the most comprehensive Klimt exhibition ever staged in the UK, with a claim that it is 'bringing the bling' to Liverpool 08. His stunning works will be placed in 'residential' dioramas that attempt to contextualise the influence of his work on the Viennese Secession.

July 18: John Lennon Songbook @ Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

John Wilson conducts specially arranged versions of Lennon's canon in what is sure to be one of the most popular events of the festival.

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing dark sunglasses and a vibrant, multi-colored strapless dress with abstract patterns in shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue. She is standing in a lush bamboo forest, with sunlight filtering through the tall, thin stalks. Her right hand is on her hip, and her left hand rests on her thigh. In the background, a path leads through the bamboo towards a small white building with a blue roof.

WELCOME TO PARADISE

CASUAL LUXE ARRIVES AT THE ELEGANT SPA
SANCTUARY OF TEMBOK BALI

PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRISTOPHER A**

STYLING **JENNIFER CHOO**

HAIR & MAKEUP **TAISU**

MODEL **AMANDA @ FACES MODELS**

SHOT ENTIRELY ON LOCATION AT **THE SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK BALI, INDONESIA**

ALL CLOTHES AVAILABLE AT **STARHILL GALLERY, KL**

Dress & sunglasses **Celine**; Bangle **Louis Vuitton**



Keychain **Louis Vuitton**



Dress **Khoon Hooi**; Shoes **Fendi**



Earrings, jacket & handbag **Louis Vuitton**; Pants **Valentino**



Shirt & skirt **Kenzo**; Shoes **Celine**



Scarf **Kenzo**



Dress & shoes **Louis Vuitton**



Bag **Celine**; Shoes **Valentino**



Jacket & shorts **Fendi**; Shoes **Celine**; Bag **Louis Vuitton**



Dress **Christian Dior**; Shoes **Louis Vuitton**



Sunglasses **Celine**



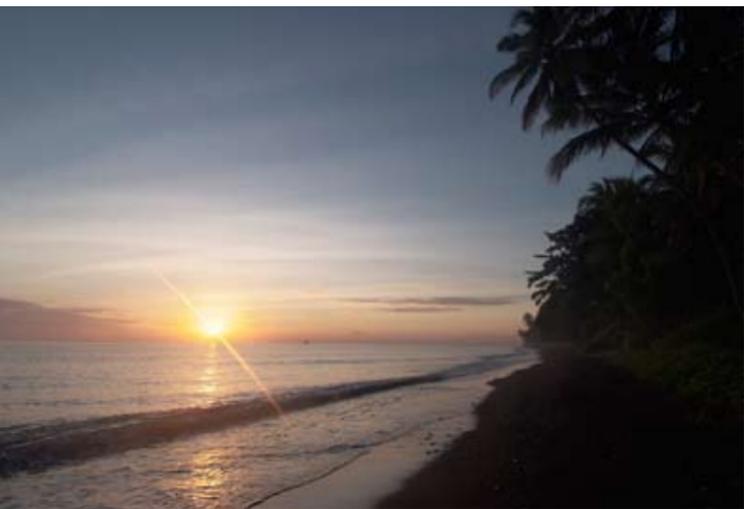
Top **Fendi**; Skirt, bangle & shoes **Louis Vuitton**



Balloon dress **Melvin Lam**; Shoes **Louis Vuitton**

HOLISTIC HIDEAWAY

REST YOUR WEARY SOUL AT TEMBOK BALI WHERE SPIRITUAL REJUVENATION AND HEALING SPA THERAPIES ARE AS MUCH OF A PART OF THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE AS THE BLACK VOLCANIC SAND THAT STRETCHES ALONG ITS BEACH BY EUGENE NG



Tucked away along the north-eastern coast of the magical island of Bali, amidst the rustic setting of the village of Tembok, lies an oasis of spiritual calm and physical healing. This is the Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali: a gorgeous new sanctuary whose very essence is infused with the magic of the isle upon which it rests.

Inspiration is provided by the award-winning Spa Village Pangkor Laut but, instead of merely being a slavish Xerox-copy of the original, Tembok Bali has lived up to its famed brand's ethos by the merging of the Spa Village's existing therapeutic treatments with the healing traditions of the local culture. The result has been a range of four distinctive spa programmes that suit different wants and needs: 'Balance', 'Creativity', 'Vigour' and 'Spa Academy'.

Each programme has its own set of individual goals ('Balance', for example, is concerned with 'Time for self', 'Timeless relaxation', 'Rediscovering personal balance' and 'Detoxification from stressful



behaviour'). Each comes with a recommended range of treatments and activities that take place both inside and outside the resort. These activities include yoga, art classes, beach walks and workouts, or tours around the island, cultural pursuits and even sunset cruises and white-water rafting. What's important here is that each programme has been designed for you to best your achieve your goals.

The spa treatments at Tembok Bali never neglect to borrow from the best of Balinese culture. You might, for instance, want to purify your body, mind and spirit by sampling the 'Penganten Melukat' - a traditional pre-wedding Balinese ritual involving a massage, a Boreh body scrub, and a bath in fresh milk and flowers. And along with the standard hair and body treatments and massage options, this Spa Village also offers a range of wraps, manicures, pedicures and facials.

The luxurious 31-room Tembok Bali is located around two-and-a-half hours away from the Bali International Airport in Denpasar and for good reason. This is what some might call 'glorious isolation'. If your purpose for checking in to this spa is to relax and rejuvenate, then it's best not to be too easily tempted by the numerous other tourist activities taking place all over the island; that kind of hustle and bustle was probably the cause of your stress in the first place.

It is a whole-hearted approach towards what can and will be a holistic experience. And if that were the case, the only problem with the Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali, then, is that you might never want to leave. ■

For full details of what the Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali has to offer, www.spavillage.com/tembokbali



Assioma D watch in yellow gold with pave diamonds.
Adelina bag in wrinkled light grey calf leather.
Besilia messenger bag in wrinkled moka calf leather.

Discreet Luxury

THE NEW BULGARI ACCESSORIES COLLECTION FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2008 IS ALL ABOUT DISCRETE LUXURY, WITH THE CREATIVE USE OF THE JEWELER'S CRAFT ON REFINED LEATHERS THAT ARE CREASED AND CURLED TO EMULATE THE "CUTS" OF ANCIENT PRECIOUS STONES.

THE ENTIRE COLLECTION IS AN ELEGANT MIX AND BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITION AND THE AVANT-GARDE, PAST AND FUTURE. PERFECT FOR THE TIMELESS WOMAN IN SPIRIT AND ELEGANCE.

AVAILABLE AT BULGARI STORES IN KLCC AND PAVILION (OPENING SOON)



Ostrich skin Polly bag in sapphire.
Elettra bag in moka suede and soft leather.



Parentesi bracelet in black deer leather, Doppio Tondo bracelet in black goat leather, Parentesi cuff bracelet in black deer leather.

M
I
V
O
E
T
A
E



Esta minaudiere bag in gold plated brass.



Assioma D watch in white gold with pave diamonds. Rossana bag in white wrinkled calf leather. Business card holder in white goat leather.



Pila bag in mastic karing leather.



SNAKES ALIVE!

ONE OF MOTHER NATURE'S MOST FEARED ANIMALS SLITHERS ITS WAY BACK INTO VOGUE

BY JENNIFER CHOO

Sinuous. Serpentine. Sleek. These sibilant syllables all describe that most controversial of creatures, the snake. Feared by most, revered by others, this reptile cemented its reputation as the villain when it appeared in the Garden of Eden, and tempted Eve to partake of the forbidden apple, thus forever casting mankind into mortal sin. The snake represents mystery and danger, which, of course, makes it oh-so-sexy.

Be it in legend, design movements or art, the snake has certainly made an unforgettable impression throughout history. That most archetypal of temptresses, Cleopatra,

rather dramatically committed suicide with the bite of an asp. The Art Nouveau movement transformed the snake into a symbol of exquisiteness and elegance, making it a motif for ornamental decoration as well as for jewellery. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec gave the reptile its iconic status when he immortalised cabaret dancer Jane Avril by depicting her wrapped in a snake costume in an 1899 lithograph.

So it seems fitting that fashion designers have turned to the viper to enhance the inscrutability of a woman even while enticing the opposite sex. In Hellenistic and Roman antiquity, gold serpents were worn both as high fashion and as talismans; Bvlgari got in on the trend in the 60s with a snake-bracelet watch which Elizabeth Taylor famously wore.

This slithery trend is now manifesting itself on all the runways and can be seen coiled around the most beautiful gowns on the red carpet (Claire Danes in Valentino, Portia de Rossi in Azzaro). Needless to say, precious jewellery is also gripped in a constrictor's embrace (Marcia Cross and Queen Latifah are both fans). And of course the season's sexiest bags and shoes are encased in voluptuous snakeskin. Kylie Minogue was spotted with a gold python Zagliani bag on her shoulder, Kate Moss with a retro snakeskin clutch and Eva Longoria caused a fashion sensation when a Prada python-skin bag promptly sold out after she was photographed carrying it. Sienna Miller is often seen in her favourite Devi Kroell snakeskin boots while the face of the perfume Coco Mademoiselle, Keira Knightley, wears python shoes by who else but Chanel.

The origin of the word snake come from the English language's Old High German word 'snahhan', which means 'to creep'. This is highly appropriate, considering how the reptile has managed to do just that into our collective consciousness; wrapping itself into a symbol of fertility, immortality, eternal love, wisdom, and now, wardrobes worldwide. Every lady deserves to enjoy a bit of intrigue and risk sometimes... and this serpent trend offers just that - minus the annoying problems of fangs and venom. ■



GAIO BACCI - BVLGARI COMMEMORATES ALL THEIR SNAKE-INSPIRED JEWELLERY

MAIN PHOTO: THE TROUBLE PENDANT BOUCHERON GAIO BACCI PHOTO BVLGARI



SLITHERY NUMBER Portia de Rossi in her serpent-inspired gown by Azzaro with her 'beau' Ellen DeGeneres at the 2007 59th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards.



SERPENTINE SEDUCTION

Elizabeth Taylor in her iconic role as Cleopatra, the seductive Egyptian temptress who succumbed to the bite of an asp, but at her own hand.



COILED COUTURE Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's famous 1899 lithograph of Jane Avril wrapped in the embrace of a snake costume.

PORTIA DE ROSSI, ELIZABETH TAYLOR & HENRI TOULOUSE-LAUTREC PHOTOS CORBIS



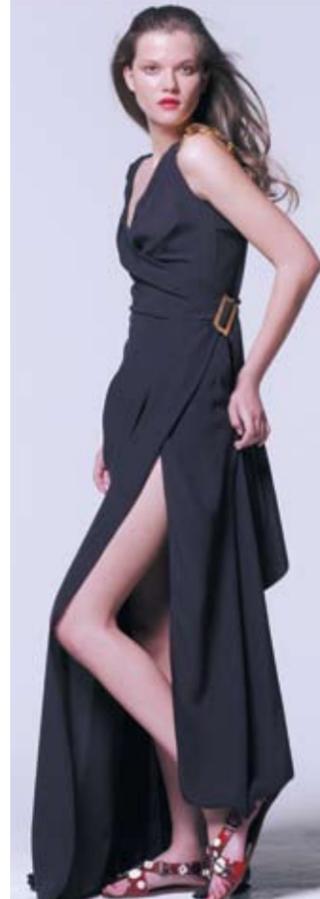
LEATHER LOVE

Mulberry's Mabel snakeskin handbag in purple.

CRUISE CONTROL

THIS SEASON'S CRUISE LINES RANGE FROM THE FLAMBOYANT TO THE FLIRTATIOUS

In between the grim uniformity of Autumn/Winter and the ethereal confections of Spring/Summer are the Cruise Collections. These ranges (also known as 'Resort') were conceived for the vacation wardrobes of those in colder climes lucky enough to be off on exotic Winter Jollies. These days, designers allow themselves to send out pretty, wearable clothes minus any grand artistic agenda, all of which makes this the perfect time to acquire the kind of pieces which will be worn to death regardless of the season. BY JENNIFER CHOO



RETRO RENAISSANCE

Bright and breezy, floaty and flirty: the **Louis Vuitton** woman on holiday as envisioned by Marc Jacobs embodies all these qualities. Sophistication can be had in LV's signature bracelet-sleeved suits while whimsical details like nostalgic motifs of speedboats and liners, anchors and airplanes, will delight the most jaded of fashionistas. Retro influences abound and no wonder: the collection is inspired by vintage travel posters.



HIPPIE CHIC

There is nothing half-hearted about Galliano's **Dior** collection which featured artisanal flair and showmanship rivalling his latest couture and ready-to-wear extravaganzas. Continuing his New-Look-meets-the-Orient train of thought, the collection's electric-bright palette is all embellishment and dazzling prints. Muumuus, bikinis, capri pants, trapeze dresses, cat-eye sunglasses, and scarf-wrapped hats all channel the 60s at its most hedonistic.





IN GRAPHIC DETAIL

Graphic elements assault the senses in **Gucci Women's** collection and are shown in full glory on its key piece: the full skirt. Worn with tailored tops and high-waisted belts, this is the updated 50s silhouette in its most desirable incarnation. But it is not all polished charm; biker jackets add a sexy edge and largely monochromatic colours are interrupted by injections of blood red or citrus shades while Gucci's signature bamboo and coral motifs are endlessly interpreted.



POLO HINTS

Sportswear gets a luxurious twist at **Celine** in a collection defined by refinement and understatement. Ivana Omazic's Parisian style is evident in elegantly tailored nipped-waist suits, graceful dresses and neat trenches. The neutral colour palette is punctuated by several pieces in a delicious shade of raspberry; while striped polo dresses, logo sweaters and cuffed shorts embody country club chic.



VARSITY BLACKS

Gucci Men's collection is all about jackets: bikers and bombers in the most luxurious materials, the belted military jacket and the new "Gucci Varsity". As with the women's collection, optical black and white are accented with orange, green and lime. Suits are skinny and high buttoned; trousers, long and lean. Frida Giannini's Gucci man is a contradiction: somewhat preppy, a little bit of a rockstar but always effortlessly turned out.



FEMININE FLAIR

A plethora of lace, pleats, ribbons and ruffles, **Valentino's** resort collection was unapologetically ladylike. Dresses and suits dominate the collection, the loveliest of which are embellished with floral appliques while others feature watercolour prints. Grecian draping made for some remarkably fluid pieces and his signature red dresses didn't disappoint.



THE FINISHING TOUCH

BECAUSE EVERYONE KNOWS THAT GOD IS IN THE DETAILS

BY JENNIFER CHOO

WELL HEELED Corto Maltese's iconic comic strips are the inspiration behind Riccardo Tisci's spectacular footwear collection for **Givenchy**. The standout has to be the stretch-nappa boot, fetishism at its sexiest, which wraps its way up the leg - from heel to thigh - and is held together, not by a zip, but by guêpière-style criss-crossing laces.



TOTE TO JOY Classic luxury-leather goods house, **Lancel** has updated its signature bestseller - the 'French Flirt' drawstring bag ('Premier Flirt' in 2006) - with bold colours and trendy materials, all in time for the new season. Combining soft leather with vibrant colour, engraved rings with refined stitching details, femininity with playfulness - this is the bag for independent fun-seekers.



PORSCHE FOR PLAY

In an unprecedented combination of a **Porsche** sports car with a Porsche Design collection, the limited edition Cayman S Porsche Design Edition 1 has spawned a highly desirable accessories collection. The must-have? The classically cut jacket made of fine-grain, ultra-soft lamb skin with a Bemberg lining showcasing the "Porsche Design honeycomb weave."



FLIGHT AND EASY Van Cleef & Arpels' Envol collection consists of a necklace, a bracelet and a Between-the-Fingers ring that emulate the delicate beauty and carefree spirit of the butterfly. The open structure of these pieces is a throwback to a more traditional style of jewellery and lends itself to the suggestion that the butterflies are nestling in the hollow of the neck or delicately poised on the wrist.

DATA DAY The latest addition to the now iconic **Dunhill** Bulldog family is the USB key. With his head facing proudly upwards when inserted into a PC, this 1G noble stainless steel bulldog is the perfect antidote to the sterility of modern technology.



YOU CHRONO MY NAME The precision timing of **Graham's** Chronofighter R.A.C. is made possible by its calibre G1742 column wheel movement, known as "roue à colonne," one of the finest chronograph movements in all of horology. Reinforcing the sport and flight aesthetic, its riveting dial design presents 30-minute and 60-second counters, all on a finely textured silver dial. This quintessential Graham timepiece is made even more desirable by its limited edition case of gorgeous red gold finished with a hypo-allergenic black rubber strap.



VILLE POWER Omega's classic De Ville line welcomes a new member to the family: the Co-Axial Chronoscope. A sportier addition, this self-winding gentleman's watch is powered by Omega's Co-Axial Escapement technology. Another unique feature is on the dial, featuring three-dimensional markers and numerals that catch the light for easy reading of the time. In polished or brushed 18-carat yellow or red gold, and stainless steel, and black alligator or brown calfskin straps.

HEART TO HANDLE Since its launch in 2000, **Roger Dubuis'** elaborate TooMuch collection has appealed to the lady whose motto is an emphatic: more is more. For this season, its distinctive rectangular curving shaped case features a white mother-of-pearl dial adorned by a ruby-set heart. Being the kind of accessory which people tend to remember, it is reassuring that there are only 28 pieces in existence.



PRIME TIME

WATCHES WHICH WALK THE WALK & TALK THE TOCK

BY JENNIFER CHOO



REGULATOR HOURS The jeweller's creative art meets high precision technology with **Korloff's** new additions to its prestigious K12 line. Comprising of a quarter-repeater movement and a mechanical regulator, the design of these watches follows in the footsteps of their predecessors by paying attention to the most minute of ergonomic and mechanical details. The case is available in stainless steel or in 18-carat white or rose-gold.

THE LOVELY BONES

Unique, surprising, attractive... it's impossible to encapsulate **Maurice Lacroix's** new Masterpiece Squelette in a single word. Uniting a contemporary, innovative design with the new skeleton manufacture movement ML 134, the timepiece shows off enough of its intricate engineering through its sapphire crystal dial to satisfy traditional watchmaking connoisseurs.



BIRTHDAY BLAST

On the occasion of their 35th anniversary, **Cortina Watch** commissioned **Vacheron Constantin** and **Chopard** to produce a limited edition of their signature timepieces: the Patrimony and Happy Sport respectively. These exquisite timepieces are a collector's dream with only 35 pieces of each model available worldwide.





PERSONAL TOUCH

MTM FORMULATES SKINCARE THAT IS AS INDIVIDUAL AS YOU ARE

BY JENNIFER CHOO

For the man who insists on bespoke suits and on monogrammed personal effects or for the lady who enjoys couture and made-to-order shoes, it would seem ridiculous to settle for anything less than skincare which caters perfectly to your own unique needs.

Founded on that very principle and drawing on Japanese manufacturing expertise, MTM established in 1991 the world's first skincare centre to feature specifically customised products and treatment services.

A highly personalised process, the MTM experience begins with an analysis and consultation during which skin experts determine the condition of your skin while taking into account lifestyle and environmental factors. Their highly trained professionals then identify your skin's tissue patterns, moisture capacity and internal temperature variations so that the most accurate skin care regimen and products can be prescribed.

Each unique skincare solution is composed of specifically selected ingredients, combined with advanced custom-blending technology. Formulations are then labelled with the person's name, product ingredients and attributes, as

well as the manufacturing date. For a complete and holistic experience, MTM also offers facial-treatment services with your very own custom-blended products. You can rest assured that this is as personalised as skincare gets.

For the fastidious fella who fancies some personal attention, MTM also offers a custom-blended Men's line which promises to alleviate the toll which hectic lifestyles take on one's skin. This "only-for-him" experience is tailor-made to cater to every skincare requirement.

Sixteen years on from the first MTM outlet, this dynamic brand is now highly regarded by skincare experts and industry professionals throughout the Asia Pacific region. It is also now available in cosmopolitan cities throughout Asia, including Shanghai and Singapore.

Indeed, it is reassuring to know that, in this age of mass manufacturing and one-size-fits-all, there are still those within the industry who still cater for the individual who will settle for nothing less than individuality. ■

MTM Skincare Center is located at S3, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery. +603 2144 8861. Open from 10am - 9.30pm daily.



IMPRESS YOURSELF The unprecedented high quality of Impress by Kanebo is due to an integration of state-of-the-art technology and artisan craftsmanship. This elegantly simple but effective cosmetic range is for the mature woman whose style has grown beyond frills and fripperies. It focuses on improving the skin's 'binding and adhesive' system, the key to skin enhancement and beauty. @ Kanebo Salon, S21-22, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2144 1218



LASH OUT Rated one of the top 4 local spas by Malaysia Tourism Traverama Awards, Spa Indrani has earned its reputation as THE destination for the ultimate in spa relaxation. This exclusive spa uses only the best products and is currently the only one in Malaysia offering the Talika Eye Ritual and select Talika products which boast a clientele of celebs such as Victoria Beckham. Talika Eye Ritual is the only product clinically proven to stimulate eyelash growth, lengthening eyelashes naturally in 28 days. @ Spa Indrani, S27 Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2782 3868



LIFT AND LEARN Looking great without going under the knife is now possible with Radio Frequency (RF) technology. The latest non-invasive and non-abrasive trend works by shrinking bundles of collagen under the skin, thus tightening it and taking years off the face. It also improves all common skin signs of aging like wrinkles, fine lines and dark eye circles. Best of all, the treatment is low risk and offers almost instant results. Not quite the Fountain of Youth, but still a few steps closer. @ IPL Skin Care Clinique, S2, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2141 4277/ 80

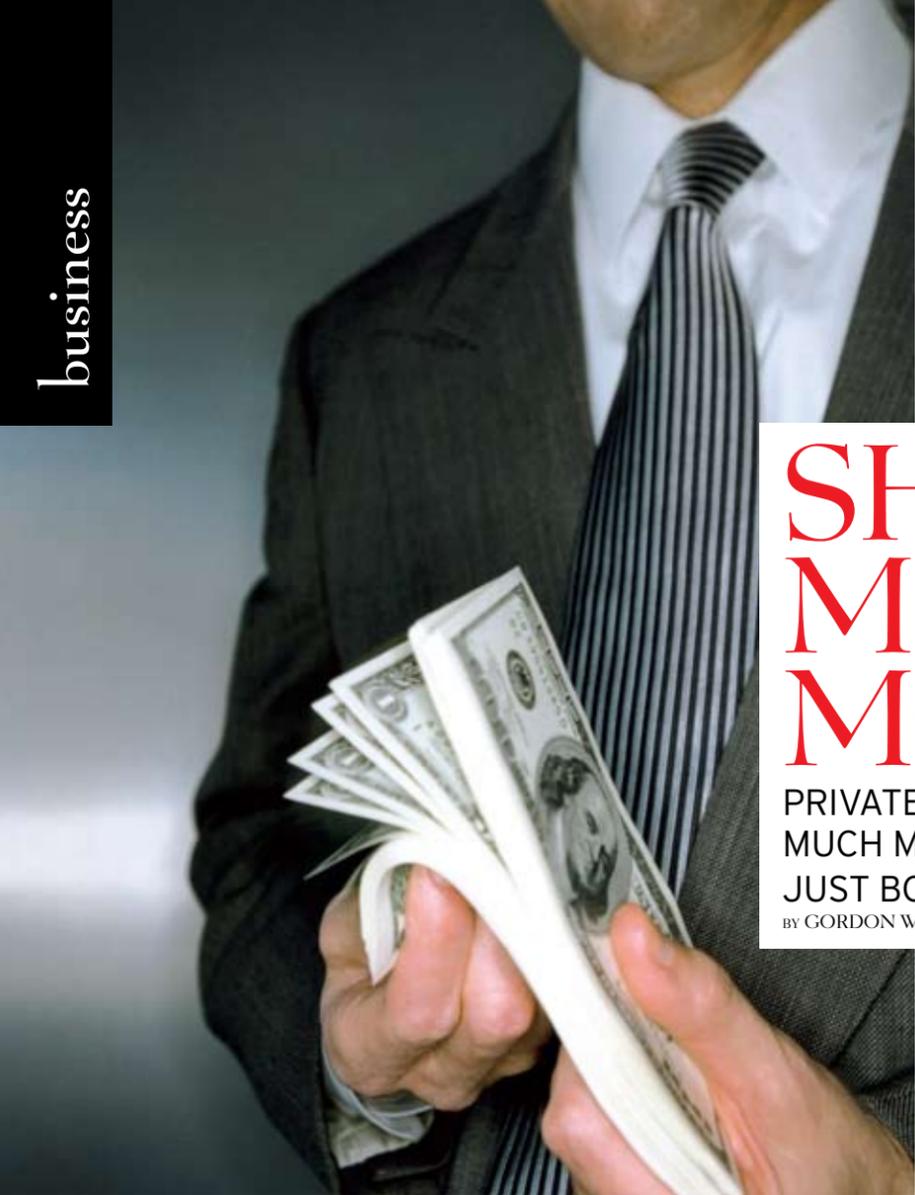


NEST AND RELAX Give your skin the perfect pick-me-up with the ultra-energizing Beaubelle's Opulent Glow - Bird's Nest Face Spa. Boasting anti-aging, brightening, whitening and blemish-reducing properties, prime quality bird's nest is combined with medical-grade oxygen, 24K gold flakes, ginseng root extracts and Fountain of Riches Mist to make the remedial and restorative properties of one of the Chinese's favourite delicacies work not just for the body, but for the face too. @ Beaubelle Body Care Day Spa, S15, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2148 4898



DECLÉOR HORIZONS AHEAD The Escentuals Urban Retreat is a beauty haven dedicated solely to pampering. With the ultimate selection of luxury brands to choose from, Decleor comes highly recommended. This aromatherapy skincare line (from Paris, since 1974) is recognised worldwide as the most comprehensive and effective range of Aromatherapy Face and Body Treatments (try the Aromaplasty Treatment and Aromatic Spa Mosaic). The brand's Aromessence™ line is so highly concentrated that only a few drops are needed to release an abundance of unique benefits. @ Escentuals Urban Retreat, S32-37, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2148 3288

EYELASH & WOMAN WITH SHELL PHOTOS CORBIS



SHOW ME THE MONEY

PRIVATE BANKING SHOULD DO MUCH MORE FOR YOU THAN JUST BOOSTING YOUR STATUS

BY GORDON WU

The definition of having 'arrived' changes with the times. In the 70s it was that American Express card. In the 80s it was that BMW convertible. In the 90s it was that London apartment. In the Noughties, it's your own wealth manager. No queues, no parking problems, no dimwits with vacuous stares.

In the rarefied world of private wealth management, the bank comes to you. Relationship managers, often extremely attractive women with brains to match, arrive at your office/ golf course/ favourite restaurant with a menu of investing options that are usually not on offer to the hoi polloi. This could include advice on currency exchange, investment and wealth management, and on pensions, inheritances, trusts, wills, estates and tax planning.

Moneyed customers will have first dibs at the best IPOs, bonds and mutual funds, real-estate deals and other structured instruments and alternative asset classes like precious metals and art. You can

even instruct your private banker to customise a portfolio in any number of countries in any number of asset classes, depending, of course, on how much moolah you have. Suffice to say, the more money you have, the more slavish personal bankers will be to your every whim and fancy, whatever that may be, whenever and wherever.

The best in the field are Swiss lender UBS, US bank Citigroup and British bank HSBC. So unless your name ends with Khashoggi, Onassis or Hearst, if they're ringing your cellphone, answer it! They've been ranked first, second and third by Euromoney magazine based on assets under management, ratio of clients to wealth managers, profitability and services offered.

While the traditional targets include businessmen and heirs, teams, such as in the case of Coutts - also known as the Queen's bankers - have been known to divvy themselves up to target in-patriates, landowners, professionals, sportsmen, entertainers

PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

and family business owners. And because these are global banks, they have the financial clout and resources to offer everything from information and advice to products and reach.

But the need to be selective in who you do business with is important, because while it may still reasonably be the domain of the high net worth, most banks are dropping the threshold for entry. Some local banks allow access for as little as RM100,000 in cash assets, which these days may seem like a lot, but is a far cry from the conventional definition of high net worth: folks with more than RM1 million in financial assets not including their homes.

Going by this definition, a report by Merrill Lynch and consultants Capgemini shows the number

Wealth managers that don't satisfy these basic rules will lose their mandate, and there's quite a few ways they can fall short. Hefty upfront charges for access to financial instruments can and will cut into potential gains, making it that much harder to make a decent enough return to pay for those charges in the first place. That's something which British private bank Coutts has been accused of recently when it began marketing its credit cards for the wealthy, according to the Motley Fool's UK edition. The worst kept secret in private wealth management is that bankers ultimately want one thing and one thing only: to get their mittens on your capital so they can reinvest it for you in exchange for a fee.

Which is fine - except that you have to keep an eye out for the real gains: ask, do the returns justify the

PRIVATE BANKS CAN SMELL THE MONEY AND ARE HIRING [WEALTH MANAGERS] FASTER THAN YOU CAN SPELL 'R-I-C-H'

of wealthy individuals in Asia grew 8.6% to 2.6 million in 2006 - a growth which was driven by a boom in every major industry from construction to air travel to entertainment and music. But that's no surprise. India and China, the world's two fastest-growing economies are in Asia. So too are the tiger Asian economies of Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. And by 2011, the combined value of Asia's wealthy is expected to be US\$12.7 trillion, which is greater than Europe and second only to North America.

Private banks can smell the money and are hiring faster than you can spell 'r-i-c-h'. JP Morgan and Citigroup, for example, are just two global banks caught up in the mad rush. It is no surprise, then, that young, smart attractive bankers from UBS and Credit Suisse are falling over themselves to win a piece of the pie: your pie.

NO GUARANTEE Of course, having your wealth managed by these folks is no guarantee of financial success. Daniel de Fernando Garcia, head of asset management and private banking at Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria was quoted by Reuters as saying that there's only three things wealthy folk want their money for - to stay rich, to get richer, or to enjoy their riches.

fees and charges imposed? If not, then perhaps it's time for a switch. Bankers are also getting smarter in engaging new clients. At a recent Reuters Wealth Management Summit in Geneva, banks realised that there were fees to be won from managing endowed funds: otherwise known as Ways to Give Money Away.

Maximilian Martin, the head of philanthropy services at UBS, has said that demand is rising for philanthropic advice. This is part of a growing wave among the rich looking for a balance to their daily work of aggressively accumulating wealth - which makes a change from the more traditional advice of which yacht or work of art to buy. Yet more eclectic is the move into attracting new clients in the form of Gen X'ers. For these younger folk, who are poised to inherit millions or maybe even billions from their parents, the focal point is all about education, networking and succession planning.

Whether you already fall into the above or will do soon, the best advice perhaps is this: treat private banking as you would any other business deal - buy into it for the real return and not just for the sheen it gives you. After all, just as with the BMW cabriolet and the apartment in Hampstead, everything wears off with time. ■

A NEW CLASS

CLIMB INTO A MERCEDES-BENZ E280 AND DISCOVER THE JOYS OF CIVILIZED CONTINENTAL-STYLE MOTORING

BY ELLFIAN ABDUL RAHIM

Mercedes-Benz has always been more than mere four-wheeled transport and, in this country at least, being driven in or piloting one will guarantee that you get more than just a once over at five-star hotels, chic night spots and valet parking areas everywhere. There are automobiles that can make you feel that you're perhaps slightly more important than the average motorist and the newly gussied-up W211 Mercedes-Benz E280 is certainly one of these machines.

Stereotypes aside, however, there are more than enough reasons to justify spending upwards of RM400,000 on a set of wheels like these. In the E280, Mercedes Benz has come up with something that's about as close as one can get to a perfect automotive equation. Here is a car that offers everything: room, poise, performance, safety and, to a certain extent, frugality.

Of course, you won't see past the car's typecast persona if the only one who gets to drive is your chauffeur. So step into the driver's seat for a totally refreshing driving experience, be it a short drive to the convenience store or a marathon cross-country jaunt. On the go, the first thing that strikes you is how silky smooth the car's gearing is. The clever seven-speed transmission is electronically calibrated to downshift only when necessary and to ascend to the higher gears without delay.

You are usually unaware that it's doing so. You can drive around the city all week and hardly see the high side of 2000rpm. On the open road, the softly sprung, long-travel suspension irons out the worst a sloppy road maintenance crew can throw at it. Unquestionably, the Mercedes glides from point-to-point like no other car.



However, the conventionally suspended, comfort-oriented base model E-Class does resent being pushed too hard on tight bends, where pronounced body-roll and understeer characterises its handling. It defies the preference for firm, taut, luxury-car suspensions that attempt, with varying degrees of success, to deliver pseudo-sporty dynamics.

Mercedes has this style of drive as an option on the E280, or as a standard in higher spec E-Class models, by adding its patented Airmatic air suspension with adaptive damping, plus wider wheels and tyres. The standard E280 remains resolutely, and enjoyably, old-school Mercedes in its ride and handling. It's a similar story with the speed-sensitive steering, which is accurate but comparatively languid, remote and prone to mild rack-shake on choppy bends.

The brakes are more than adequate in terms of power and progression, with greater pedal feel than some previous models. The Sensotronic electric actuation technology, which in part prompted a worldwide E-Class recall earlier this

year, continues to cause the occasional problem on rough roads, but the test car happily passed through three days of vigorous driving without any drama whatsoever.

Under the bonnet, the V6 engine is capable of providing most of the torque from as low as 1,500rpm and 95% of maximum torque between 3,000rpm and 4,000rpm. This means that when driven at slower speeds, the E280 is not hamstrung for more power, but purrs in contentment and waits for those open roads to reappear. Such wonderfully civilized behaviour is great for cruising and it follows that petrol consumption is not an issue here, as an average of 30mpg is something to be proud of.

The E280's interior is pretty much unchanged from previous models. It retains a lovely sense of elegance, openness and light that adds to the enjoyment of touring in the Big E. Now standard are: active front-seat head restraints; leather/vinyl upholstery; automatic air-conditioning, lights and wipers; a six-stack CD player; eight airbags; cruise-control with speed limiter; 17-inch alloy wheels with

225/55 tyres; front/rear parking warnings; and remote central locking. Of course, the standout in the long list of standard fittings is the gorgeous moon roof than can be partly tilted or slid open.

On an all-day drive, the firm and wide driver's seat looks after you, though you still tend to sit on, rather than in, it. The driving position can be tailored to all physiques: leg room is sufficient for anyone. Dash layout is efficient and easy to use, as is the multi-function wheel. The back seat is similarly firm and un-contoured. Tall front seat occupants may create slightly restricted rear legroom and similarly sized passengers may have to sit slightly knees-up.

Bottom line, the E280 with the 3.0-litre V6's deep reserves of pulling power, paired with refined, effortless grace, gives this car a style of performance that works on every drive, in or out of town. In spite of its minor shortcomings, and a lofty sticker price, it's very easy to see why many people want to own one once they've gotten behind the wheel, and why many more feel a tad inadequate driving something lower down the food chain. ■

TRAVELLING WITHOUT MOVING

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH HOME AND BUSINESS WHILE YOU'RE AWAY HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER

BY MATT ARMITAGE



It isn't easy getting away from it all these days. You could be by a pool, or stretched out on a beach, but there's a good chance that there will either be a laptop by your side, hooked up to a Wi-Fi network, or a mobile phone keeping you connected via a roaming partner. And you can literally 'pop' into the office by remote, using video conferencing or Messenger or Skype software.

It's a far cry from the 'splendid isolation' of old, when news of your motherland could take weeks to arrive. Our business and social lives have become inextricably linked, so much so that the more time we spend away, the more we seem to become dislocated from our own lives.

But finally, the same technology that keeps us wired in is bringing some of the home comforts to us while we are away. One of the simplest and fastest of these is Really Simple Syndication (RSS), developed over 10 years ago and finally come of age, which delivers updates on websites to our browsers and, increasingly, our phones.

Free services like Netvibes (www.netvibes.com) and iGoogle (www.google.com/ig) allow subscribers to customise their homepage with a variety of constantly updated information



iPhone



Slingbox

from multiple sources. Many sites publish RSS links and these pages use search engines to locate the links for you, thus keeping you in touch with the latest news from media services, leisure sites and possibly your own corporation.

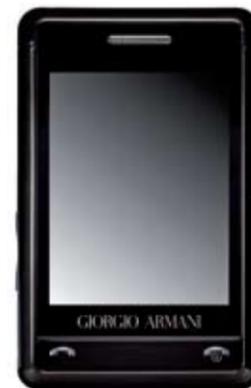
Large numbers of local and national radio stations now stream their services online, and one of the most extensive, the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk), keeps an archive of programmes that allows you to listen at your leisure when in different time zones. And as broadband speeds increase, so does our ability to stream ever larger packets of data. In Japan, 8MB broadband lines allow users to download an hour's worth of High Definition video content in just a few minutes, and the rest of the world is catching up fast.

This makes the Slingbox (www.slingmedia.com) one of the most exciting developments in gadget land. This nondescript piece of plastic connects to your TV tuner and the Internet router in your living room, streaming TV shows live to your laptop or web-enabled phone, which means real-time news, sports and soap operas, if you must, direct from the den.

Even the laptop is starting to look superfluous with the next generation of mobile phones combining computing power with the ability to make calls. Devices like Apple's touch-screen iPhone and Nokia's E90 Communicator merge Wi-Fi Internet browsing with a variety of productivity and leisure software, enabling you to watch movies and listen to music as easily as it is for you to edit a PowerPoint presentation.

But before you get completely lost in connectivity, remember that all of these devices have one thing in common: the 'Off' button. So when it all gets too much, use it, and then check yourself into a Spa Village for some real-time recharging. ■

PHOTO CORREIS



CLOTHES CALL The new Giorgio Armani-Samsung luxury mobile phone sees two industry giants collide in this hi-tech fashion statement. But this sleek number isn't purely style over substance. With the size of a credit card at just 9.9mm thickness, it packs a host of features (vibrating display, 3-megapixel camera, music player, net browser, external memory slot, Bluetooth® stereo headset) and comes with a leather GA carrying case. It also kickstarts an alliance that will see the development of an innovative range of portable and home-consumer electronics products as an extension of the Giorgio Armani, Armani Exchange and Armani/Casa lifestyles. Available in Europe from November 2007; in other markets in 2008. www.armani.com

SOLID GOLD HITS Of course we've all heard of the iPod Shuffle, but you simply have to hear about this one. Some have plated them in silver and gold, others have swathed them in Swarovski crystals and diamonds. But few have completely re-engineered them with an 18-carat gold casing. At almost £10,000, roughly 200 times the price of a standard Shuffle, this really is the ultimate, if slightly extravagant, audio gadget. www.xexoo.com



THE PAPERLESS TRAIL In terms of interactivity and portability, the paperback novel or the notepad takes some beating. But iRex Technologies is bent on trying with the iLiad: a book reader, note scribbler and more. Its gorgeous monochrome 8.1 inch Electronic Paper Display is perfectly visible in both bright and dim light, but here's the clever bit: unlike a laptop, the screen doesn't flicker, making it easy on the eyes. The iLiad allows you to annotate all manner of file formats and to turn handwritten notes into text; it also comes with Wi-Fi for web browsing and is also able to store hundreds of books and articles on USB devices. www.irextechnologies.com



RINGING SEXY BACK

Sony-Ericsson phones are getting sexier and sexier. One of their latest, the T650i is a quad-band candybar with a more than capable 3.2 megapixel camera and 3G. We love the swirling illumination effects but the killer here is the traveller's gem: scratch-resistant mineral glass and a screen visible in bright sunlight. If only it was waterproof, we'd be able to make calls swimming with the fishes. www.sonyericsson.com

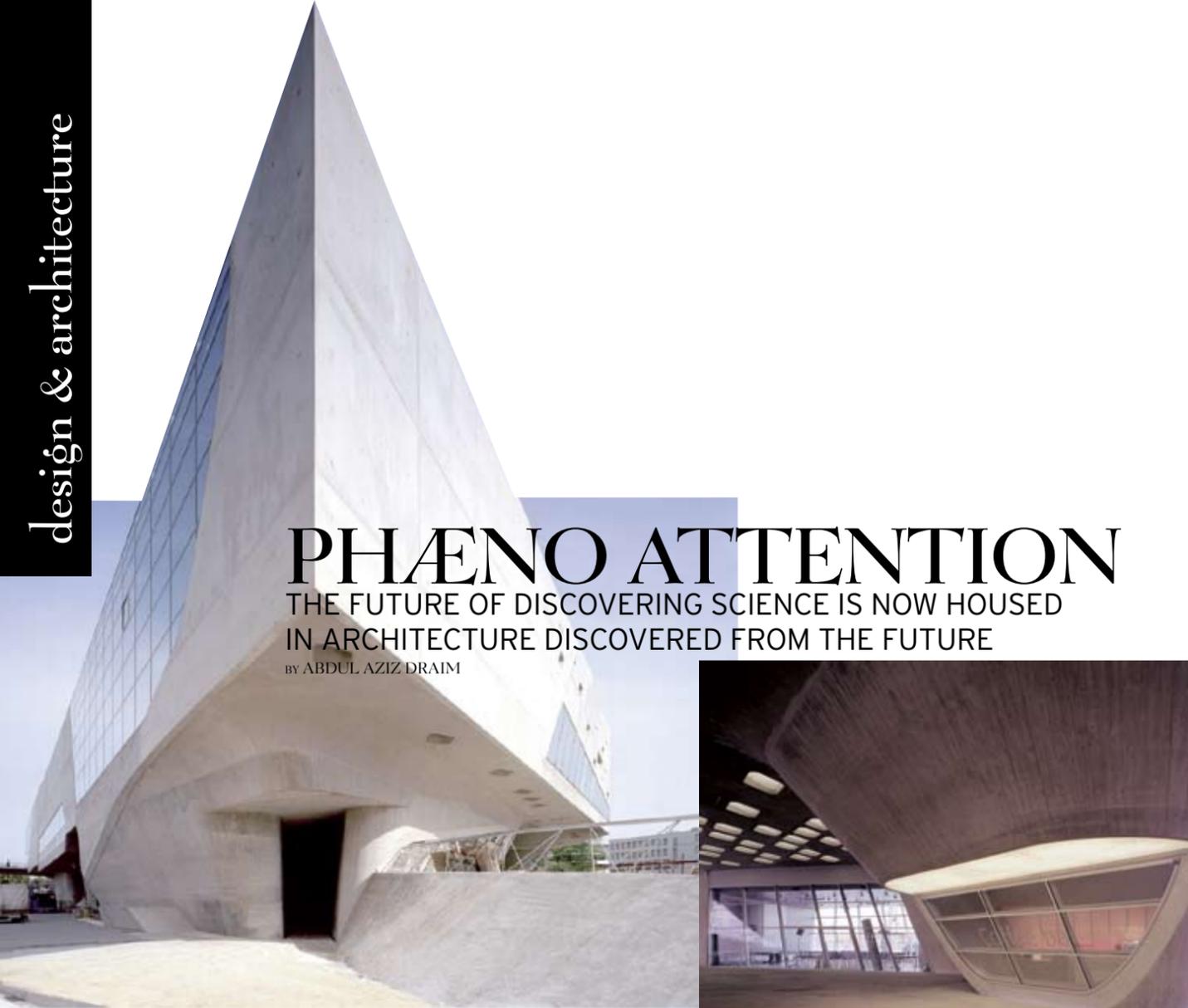


I GOT THE TOUCH Apple Inc. has a nifty habit of confounding all and sundry on a regular basis. It's not easy keeping things simple but the company's minimalist ethos is the work of some of the world's most innovative industrial designers. With the latest iPod, Apple removes all horror of buttons and switches and consigns it to the past in favour of a gorgeous touch-screen display. But what sets the 8GB and 16GB Touch apart is its integrated Wi-Fi and Safari Internet browser with innovative touch and flick finger-zooming. www.apple.com

PHÆNO ATTENTION

THE FUTURE OF DISCOVERING SCIENCE IS NOW HOUSED IN ARCHITECTURE DISCOVERED FROM THE FUTURE

BY ABDUL AZIZ DRAIM



One of Wallpaper* magazine's finalists for Best Architecture Award 2007, the superlative Phæno Science Centre by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid underlines her reputation for producing work distinguished by an unusual form language that captivates with its spatial dynamics.

Located in the centre of Wolfsburg, Germany, next to the ICE rail line, and at the crossroads between the Autostadt, the city and the railway station, this futuristic sculptural 'spaceship' is home to 250 interactive Experimental Stations that cover 9,000m² dedicated to discovering the world of science. There's fun science stuff such as a rodeo gyroscope, a fire tornado, visible sounds, a game where ambition doesn't win, suitcases with minds of their own and mysteriously disappearing and reappearing visitors!

The breathtaking design of this completely unique structure was conceptualised for this very purpose. Borne by conical supports made of self-compacting concrete (SCC), the building appears from the outside to break free from the

ground below it. But under its 7m-high ceiling, Phæno's interior is a constructional wonderland of forms that find their inspiration in craters, caverns, terraces and plateaus.

The rest of the building consists of three Visitor Laboratories, two restaurants, a science theatre, a coffee bar, a room for special events on three levels and the in-house shop (the Supermarket of Knowledge). But Phæno is a €79 million initiative of the City of Wolfsburg that in itself reflects the very nature of the purpose it has set out to fulfil.

Dr. Wolfgang Guthardt, the project's initiator and Phæno's director, explains: "In Phæno the essential idea is to have fun, to feel one's curiosity being awakened, and to deepen one's knowledge in the discovery of science. We deliberately set no agenda and each visitor paves his or her own individual way through our Experimental Landscape and chooses his or her own focus of interest." ■

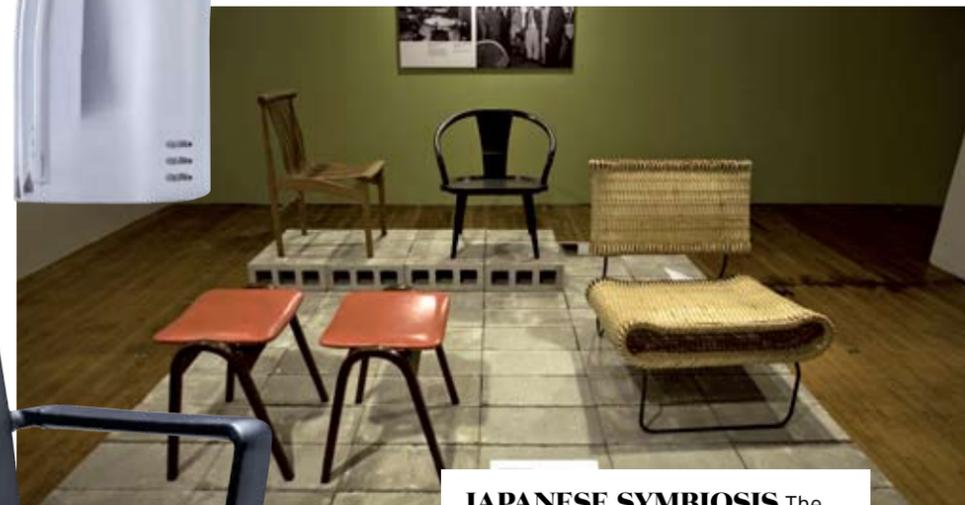
Not just on the outside, but on the inside too. www.phaeno.de



PHÆNO PHOTO KLEMENS ORTMEYER JAPANESE SYMBIOSIS PHOTO COURTESY THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM



THRILL SPEAKERS Sound and design coalesce in spectacular fashion in the hands of renowned industrial designer Ross Lovegrove. With the 2m tall loudspeaker system Muon ('mew-on'), superior sound comes courtesy of the best British acoustic technology in industry leader KEF. This is housed in a structure fabricated from super-form aluminium and imagined by Lovegrove's design aesthetics as an interpretation of the 'physics of sound'. What that really means is anyone's guess, but the Muon's sinewy body couldn't have taken on a shape more beautiful than the one it now has. There are only 100 pairs of Muon loudspeakers that have been manufactured. They go for HK\$880,000 per pair in Hong Kong and £70,000 per pair in the UK. www.kef.com/products/muon



JAPANESE SYMBIOSIS The style now recognised as Japanese Modern can be traced to two men who shared the same first name and whose symbiotic partnership is the focus of the exhibition Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi, artist-designer and interior designer respectively. Showcasing a selection of some 85 works borrowed from collections in Japan and the US, Bonnie Rychlak - curator of the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, New York - reveals: "Noguchi and Kenmochi shared an interest in modernist design mixed with admiration for traditional Japanese form and craft and together they created beautiful furniture that was among the most forward-looking of its era (1950s). I hope visitors to the exhibition will leave it with a greater appreciation not only of the work of each man, but also of the powerful role that collaboration can play in creativity." The exhibition ends March 16, 2008. www.noguchi.org



MUCH ANDOO ABOUT SITTING When is a chair not just a chair? When it's the Andoo, the recipient of the Best of the Best for Highest Design Quality for Product Design at the 2007 Red Dot Awards. The creative result of Vienna-based firm EOOS, the chair has been designed to "reflect archaic calm and clarity" - the two components that define a minimalist art sculpture. But this isn't just art. Using a combination of hard (wood) and soft (leather) materials, the chair is also as comfortable as an armchair with an elastic sprung back and pocket springs within its seat. Which means that it's not just all about sitting pretty. www.walterknoll.de



MOLO DESIGN : PAPER CHAISE

What the Milan Furniture Fair (I Saloni) and the Red Dot awards had to teach us in 2007 was this: designers are going green. And no other design firm has driven this message home more eloquently than Vancouver's molo design, the brainchild of architects Stephanie Forsythe and Todd MacAllen. Among their more creative efforts is 'soft', a dynamic furniture line made entirely of paper or non-woven textiles and the 'paper softseating' series. These pliable flame-retardant pieces of furniture are made entirely from kraft paper with 50% recycled content. Utilising a honeycomb structure that gives each piece strength and flexibility, 'softseating' can be manipulated to form stools, benches, loungers and even low tables, which means you can create your own personalised seating-room topography. So ingenious is its concept that 'softseating' has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York for their permanent collection. molo design is also set to open their very first workshop in Milan. www.molodesign.com

GENIUSES AT WORK
 COME 2008, THESE TRAIL-BLAZING DESIGNERS WILL SHOW YOU THAT ORIGINALITY REALLY DOES GO A LONG WAY

BY ABDUL AZIZ DRAIM



THE YTL LUXURY MAGAZINE



JULIA LOHMANN : INNARD BEAUTY

With her latest foray into furniture design, Royal College of Art graduate Lisa Lohmann has again rendered us mildly squeamish yet fascinated at the same time. Commissioned by Galerie Kreo in Paris, the Lasting Void stool allows Lohmann, 31, to further play out her affinity for meat-industry off-cuts; it is actually moulded from a plaster cast of the body cavity of a cow that died of natural causes and later had its internal organs removed. "I've always been interested in the transition of an animal to the product," the German designer explains. "That transition point is not the killing - we still have emotions for the animal then. It's only when it is cut up that it becomes steak and we feel detached." Together with her husband, Julia Lohmann runs graphic design agency Studio Bec. Her work is currently exhibited at the Design Centre Design, Grand Palais, Paris, which ends January 7, 2008. www.julialohmann.co.uk



MOLO DESIGN PHOTO MARTIN TESSLER JULIA LOHMANN PHOTO STUDIO BEC



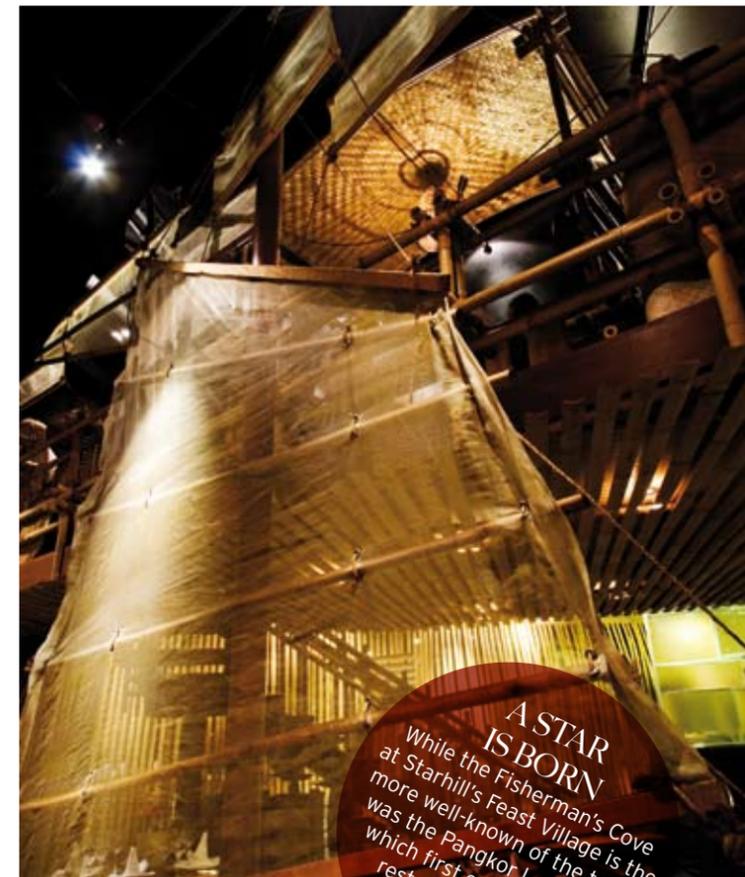
THE YTL LUXURY MAGAZINE

A TALE OF TWO FISHIES

FRESHNESS AND GREAT TASTE GO HAND IN HAND. WANT A BITE OF IT? SET YOUR SAILS FOR ONE OF THE TWO OUTLETS OF FISHERMAN'S COVE

BY CHUA SIEW CHING

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS CHOEN LEE @ ASPECT NETWORK



A STAR IS BORN
While the Fisherman's Cove at Starhill's Feast Village is the more well-known of the two, it was the Pangkor Laut outlet which first established the restaurant's fame for its superb cuisine.

You know you are in for a foodie feast when the first thing that greets you as you enter a restaurant is the view of a busy kitchen with its staff bustling around preparing the day's orders. Couple that with the sight of fresh ingredients and you are guaranteed a gastronomic treat.

Welcome to Fisherman's Cove, YTL's truly unique restaurant built around the concept of a fishing village. With two outlets - one in its luxury resort, Pangkor Laut, and the other in Starhill Gallery's Feast Village - Fisherman's Cove is the last word in coupling freshness with masterpiece recipes.

While both establishments have distinctive differences - location and ambience being the most obvious - one thing is for sure: an extremely satisfying meal is what you'll have experienced when you dine next at Fisherman's Cove.

HOOKED ON FRESHNESS Take a quick peek at the menu and it is enough to make your mouth water. Consisting of the finest selection of seafood, pastas, meat and desserts, the restaurants are a celebration of flavours and aromas. Despite a variation in both menus due to logistic reasons, a unifying theme of freshness runs right through. In the Feast

Scenic view from the deck at the Pangkor Laut Fisherman's Cove



Village, large glass fish-tanks display the catch of the day; in Pangkor Laut, its location is a guarantee of this.

Both restaurants send a simple message: with freshness in your ingredients, great taste is always assured. "This has been the reason for Fisherman's Cove success," enthuses Chef Wai Look Chow, now the head chef at the Feast Village restaurant. "It's the only way with seafood. Then all you need to do is dress it up in your favourite dressing such as lemon juice, olive oil and herbs."

However, the Pangkor Laut establishment has also opted to take a slightly different approach than its Feast Village counterpart in terms of the menu, choosing instead to offer a focus of three cooking styles for all its seafood: Western grill, Chinese and Italian.

SENSATIONAL VIEW, SCENIC FOOD While the offering of distinctive recipes (see sidebar below) is what sets Fisherman's Cove apart from the competition, both are also blessed with delightfully contrasting ambiances.

Although both are built based on the concept of a typical fishing village with its bamboo structures and furnishings, the two-storey Fisherman's Cove in the heart of KL city's Golden Triangle is decorated with sails, lacquered furniture and lamps resembling fish baskets that give off a charming, rustic atmosphere - you can almost imagine being on some sort of modern day kelong... until the smell of your Tiger Prawn Meat Rolled with Foie Gras, Chutney and Orange comes wafting towards your table.

At Pangkor Laut, the restaurant's natural surroundings need no embellishment; how can you beat having, say, the delicious Steamed Spicy Local Barramundi presented



Welcome to a dining paradise at Pangkor Laut

with Roasted Aubergines and Wok-Fried Chinese Brussels Sprout while soft live music plays in the background as the sea breeze catches your hair, enveloping you in the best of what Mother Nature has to offer. It is the perfect place to lose yourself as you unwind and allow your taste buds to take over.

Sister restaurants they may be, twin winners they both are. Take your pick for freshness at either Fisherman's Coves for a dining experience unlike any other. ■

A QUICK GUIDE TO FISHERMAN'S COVE

FISHERMAN'S COVE @ FEAST VILLAGE

LG10, Feast Village, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jalan Bukit Bintang, KL
Tel: 03-2782 3848

Hidden in a nook at the Feast Village, the restaurant's open-concept kitchen proudly displays all its available fresh ingredients. Watch the chef create your meal right in front of your very eyes.

Must-tries Symphony of Fisherman's Cove Hors D'oeuvres, a beautiful dish of four unique starters;

Snow Crab Meat and Avocado Soup with Shallot Chips; Char-grilled Black Cod with Tomato Salsa, Mint and Capsicum; Honey and Soy Glazed Chilean Sea Bass with Duck Confit Risotto and Butter Roe Sauce.

FISHERMAN'S COVE @ YTL PANGKOR LAUT RESORT

Tel: 03-2782 1000 or 05-699 1200

From the luxurious Pangkor Laut Resort comes this delightful

restaurant that offers fantastic ambience and a stunning sea view.

Must-tries Blue Swimmer Crabmeat Salad Seasoned with Walnut Oil garnished with Mango Tartare; Oven Baked Fillet of Red Snapper with Japanese Tomatoes, Olive Oil, Sea Salt, Water Cress and Olive Tapanade; Les Fraises, sauteed Cameron Highland strawberries in red wine sauce and very berry ice-cream; Le Cake, a flourless dark-chocolate cake served with vanilla ice cream which is simply to die for!





IN THE KITCHEN

CHEF WAI IS THE MASTERMIND BEHIND FEAST VILLAGE'S FISHERMAN'S COVE. HE SHARES HIS SECRETS AS TO WHAT MAKES THIS RESTAURANT A FIRM KL FAVOURITE

With a colourful bandanna tied tightly on his head, the first impression you get of Chef Wai Look Chow is that he means business. This is indeed true when it comes to the food business. As the Head Chef for Fisherman's Cove, Feast Village, Chef Wai is in charge of the entire kitchen operations. "I have to bring the restaurant to a level that I want it to be," says the 37-year-old, who is more importantly, also the creator of the restaurant's exciting menu.

In the hands of someone as experienced as Chef Wai, this isn't a tall order and a quick glance at the unique offerings at the restaurant is testament to that. From the most tempting of seafood creations to the most delectable of dessert offerings, his inventiveness in the kitchen shines through.



The open kitchen at the Feast Village outlet

For Chef Wai, the thing that counts the most when it comes to the kitchen is the freshness and the variety of the ingredients made available to him and his crew. "Our main goal is to provide each and every guest with the perfect dining experience," he says with conviction, "and to achieve that, those two factors are of utmost importance."

This single-mindedness stems from the arc his career has taken: as a young boy, Chef Wai was forced to fend for himself in the kitchen when his parents were busy at work. Today, he heads one of the city's most celebrated restaurants after being part of the team that set up the original Fisherman's Cove in the Spa Village Pangkor Laut.

He professes to be a fan of reality cooking programmes, if not to expand his knowledge on new styles of cooking, but also to learn about new and different ingredients. "I love to watch how other chefs use ingredients I've never seen or touched before," he says. "This way I can learn many new things." Which probably goes a long way in explaining why the offerings in Fisherman's Cove are a combination of some of the most unique ingredients fused together, resulting in not just delicious tasting dishes, but surprising ones too.

What is also surprising is Chef Wai's other secret of success in the kitchen. As a father of three, he is one of the rare few chefs also 'appointed' head of the home kitchen. "I have fun cooking at home though," he smiles. "When I'm done, my whole family sits down and enjoys the meal. We share the food and the happiness it brings. And when you're happy, your cooking will be good as well."

The secret is out. No wonder there are so many happy dining moments at Fisherman's Cove. ■



A RED REVOLUTION

THE CARMENÈRE GRAPE IS ALMOST EXTINCT IN THE REST OF THE WORLD, BUT IS THRIVING IN THE COLCHAGUA VALLEY OF CHILE. IN 2005, 'WINE ENTHUSIAST' NAMED COLCHAGUA "WINE REGION OF THE YEAR," AND FOR THE PAST DECADE, FRENCH, CHILEAN AND CALIFORNIAN MAESTROS HAVE BEEN PAMPERING AND PUNISHING CHILEAN GRAPES TO FIND THE BEST COMBINATIONS. THE FIRST REAL HARVESTS OF 2007 ARE IN. THE RESULTS - PARTICULARLY IN RED WINES - ARE STUNNING THE WORLD

BY JONATHAN FRANKLIN/TCS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORTEN ANDERSEN/TCS

Sun blinds me as I swerve my rental car around the horse. Will I hit the poor beast? Should I steer off the road and careen into the vineyard? And why are these plodding horse-driven buggies in the middle of the highway at rush hour?

The travel guides described this trip as a "convenient 90 minute drive" south from Santiago, the capital of Chile. Not one travel book mentioned the crazed traffic or the wandering horses in their endless praise of the red wines of Chile - those same red wines which are the only reason that I have rented a car, abandoned Santiago and driven back in time to find the Colchagua Valley, where, rumours have it, some of the world's finest wines are now produced.

I am in a hurry to arrive. Colchagua is supposedly a valley packed with wine vineyards and palm trees all to be enjoyed while sipping an endless variety of Chilean wine.

But my problem is getting there - I can't see. The sunlight cuts low this morning, having just cleared the Andes Mountains, it strikes my eyes hard and there are no clouds for protection. But a new sign

on the horizon catches my eye. Vinedo (Winery). Then another. Dozens of wineries. Names I have never heard of like Estampa and Hacienda El Auracano. Meaning that I am close at last.

Between vineyards are small family farms of beautiful chocolate-coloured soil farmed by local cowboys known as huaso who are distinguished by their trademark black hat, the crisp brim stretching out nearly to their shoulders, providing permanent shade for long horseback treks through the fields.

My mission this weekend is to taste and understand Chile's chic new wine - the Carmenère grape which is almost extinct in the world, but thriving here in the Colchagua Valley.

"I find Carmenère fascinating and delicious, and regard its identification in Chile in 1994 as the single most important discovery (or rediscovery) in the entire wine world during the past decade," wrote Michael Franz, wine columnist for the Washington Post.

Pronounced car-men-air, this red wine is dark purple and versatile, like a cook's favourite peppery

spice. Alone, the Carmenère has fruity overtones - cherries and wild berries - and is smoother than a typical red wine like cabernet.

After the nerve-wracking, shock-absorber-destroying ride, I finally pull up to the quaint town square - this is Santa Cruz, epicenter for the renovated Chilean wine-tasting industry in the Colchagua Valley. Here it is common to see children as young as eight galloping through town, their ponchos flying behind them. Ten years ago, when I first visited Colchagua Valley, Santa Cruz was

After a 10-year-long research-and-development project, the first real harvests of Colchagua are in. French, Chilean and California maestros have brewed out the recipes, pampered and punished the grapes, and the results - particularly in red wines - are now stunning the world.

The man behind the renaissance is Carlos Cardoen, a gregarious local businessman with a resumé like James Bond's. Photos of Cardoen with Saddam Hussein and Fidel Castro are no longer on display at his hotel, the Santa Cruz; they are

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE CARMENÈRE IN CHILE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT [RE]DISCOVERY IN THE WINE WORLD IN THE PAST DECADE

anonymous, like so many other rural ranchlands in Chile. Colchagua in 1996 was home to the weekend cowboy - wealthy landowners who worked in Santiago during the week, then drove south from Santiago to fill the weekend with polo matches and BBQs. All weekend they drank homebrew cabernet sauvignon and merlot and it was amongst this elite, that a rumour began to whirl, a rumour that Colchagua was going to be "The Next Napa."

Among this circuit circulated the elite vintners and winemakers, a virtual cult of connoisseurs who seek the world's best wines and the corresponding world-class weather to make it. They included winemakers like Alexandra Marnier and Eric de Rothschild who started snapping up properties and cultivating a new culture of winemaking.

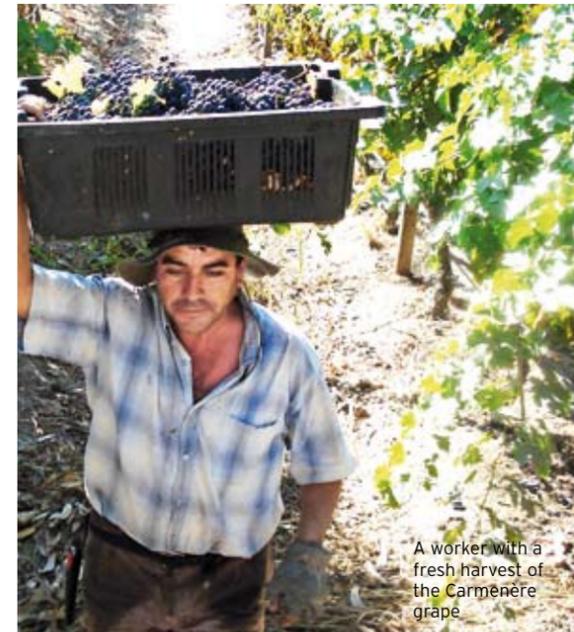
"The difference between 1994 and today, is that before they (the local winemakers) were producing wine like a commodity, big volumes," says Marnier as she stands on the roof of her new US\$7 million wine cellar. "First you need much more sophisticated tools like stainless steel tanks, better barrels. Second, everything begins in the vineyard. We started to plant on the hillsides, where the soil is poor and fewer grapes are produced."

Marnier who is the heir to the Grand Marnier liquor fortune looks at me with an eye of conspiratorial knowledge as she lowers her voice, as if she were telling me a great family secret. "Even the French realise that great wine doesn't necessarily come from old wineries."

relics from the 1980s when Cardoen a hyperactive entrepreneur was the world champion bomb maker. He designed, built and sold the world's premier bombs, and he didn't care whether your last name was Bush or Hussein. "An arsenal is an arsenal," he told his guests. Colleagues remember that he was capable of sketching out a new bomb design on a table napkin, combining physics, chemistry and an artist's sensitivity for blowing everything (and everyone) off the map.



Wine-making is a festive event here at the Colchagua Valley



A worker with a fresh harvest of the Carmenère grape

Today Cardoen is a silver-haired country gentleman, living in his Chilean vineyard, investing millions of dollars into wine. Cardoen has led the movement to create the Chilean equivalent of a Napa Valley for wine connoisseurs. The Santa Cruz has one of Chile's most complete wine cellars and its restaurant draws tourists from the whole region.

I meet Cardoen at his hotel. Dressed in local attire, he ushers me to the bar inside the Santa Cruz, where I am introduced to the latest top picks in Chilean reds. Forget about the merlot and cabernet sauvignon, there is this new, hip and delicious red wine coming out of Chile - Carmenère.

"Colchagua is ground zero for Carmenère," said Thomas Wilkins, as he explains to me how this noble grape emigrated from France and ended up thriving here in Central Chile.

The story begins in France in the 1860s when a tiny bug developed a taste for grapevines. Within years it had eaten through the roots, destroying thousands of acres and eliminating entire vineyards. The only survivors from that epidemic, Wilkins explains, were clippings from France which had been shipped to Chile before the outbreak.

Wilkins smiles when he describes the versatility that local winemakers have. Not only do they make world-class merlot and cabernet sauvignon, but by blending the Carmenère with cabernet, they have a secret ingredient available only to Chilean winemakers. While Argentina has Malbec and

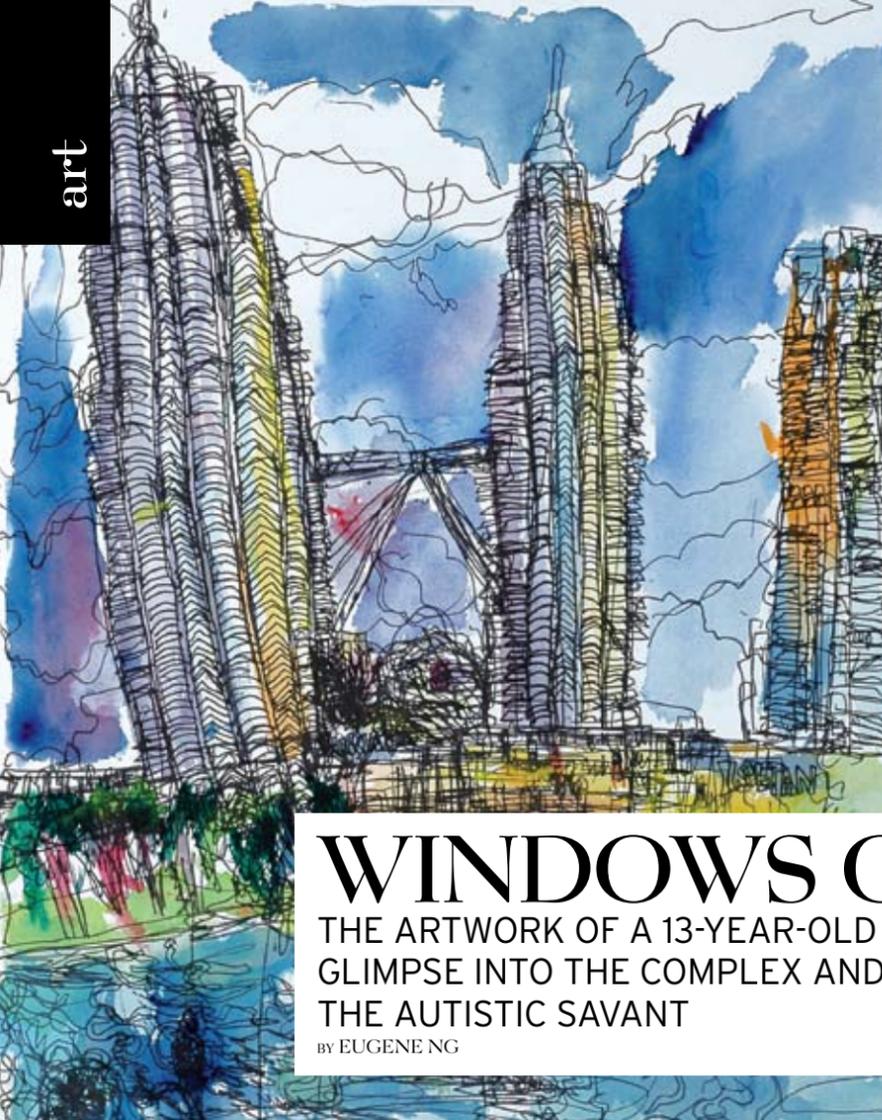


(This photo and below) Wine ages in the Colchagua Valley



Australia Syrah as national emblematic grapes, Wilkins sings the praise of Chile's own: the royal, noble Carmenère.

I only stayed in Santa Cruz for two nights. Work and five daughters called me back to Santiago, but after eating world-class steaks, wandering the grape fields listening to wine legends and absorbing the local pace of life, I was as relaxed as if I had been a week at the beach. Driving back north to Santiago, I see the horses, the buggies and the traffic and just smile. I am not in a hurry any more. ■



WINDOWS OF GENIUS

THE ARTWORK OF A 13-YEAR-OLD BOY GENIUS GIVES US A GLIMPSE INTO THE COMPLEX AND MYSTIFYING WORLD OF THE AUTISTIC SAVANT

BY EUGENE NG

Consider Daniel Tammet, who has memorized the number of pi to 22,514 decimal places. Or consider Stephen Wiltshire, who once took a helicopter ride over London and who was then able, three hours later, to complete a "stunningly detailed drawing of London which spans four square miles with 12 major landmarks and 200 other buildings drawn to perfect perspective and scale."

Welcome to the wondrous world of the prodigious savant - a world also inhabited by an exceptionally talented 13-year-old boy by the name of Yeak Ping Lian. This Malaysian boy is fast making a name for himself in the international art world. He has already exhibited as far afield as New York (at Autistic Savant Artworks: Don't 'dis' the ability), and his work has drawn admiration and critical acclaim from all quarters.

In popular culture, 'autism' and (by extension) 'savants', are most closely associated with the famous Dustin Hoffman/Tom Cruise movie Rain Man. The word 'savant', however, is generally used to describe individuals who are exceptionally gifted in any given field (such as art, music or maths) while also suffering from disorders such as mental autism which impairs their basic abilities. Within this select group, there is then an even smaller group of individuals (which include the likes of Wiltshire, Tammet and Yeak) who are called

'prodigious savants' and who have abilities which would be considered phenomenal even in a person with no mental impairment or limitations.

According to experts in the field, Ping Lian's work is unprecedented with respect to the vast range of subject matter he portrays on paper: from dogs to flowers to people to architectural structures and landscape in both full-colour and black and white. Some of his favourite buildings to draw include the Petronas Twin Towers, Sydney Harbour Bridge and the US Capitol Building - many of which he is able to put straight down on paper owing to his photographic memory (which many savants are blessed with).

Ping Lian began drawing at the age of 8, when his mother first started cultivating his interest in tracing in order to help him develop writing skills. It was in 2002 that he suddenly began to produce works of fine detail and surprising depth. "I know he will be an artist one day," wrote his mother Sarah at the time.

How wonderfully true that prophecy has turned out to be. ■

Jan 21-Feb 28, 2008 @ Suria Stonor Show Gallery (16, Persiaran Stonor, KL); +603-7804 0000 or www.pinglian.com



MALAYSIANS IN NEW YORK

Photographer Eric Peris and artist Yeoh Kean Thai will become the first Malaysians ever to exhibit at the International Asian Art Fair to be held in Park Avenue, New York this year. Showing under the auspices of The Private Gallery of Shalini Ganendra Fine Art, Peris will feature his 'Tin Mine Landscapes' series - a melancholic and meditative body of work from the 1970s which still retains the power to evoke Malaysia's beginnings. (Peris will only exhibit 23 images; the rest of the original 41 have been irretrievably lost.) As for Yeoh, his current series, 'Link', continues his fascination with exploring the deterioration of the environment caused by urbanisation but explores it through different manipulations of perspectives. *Mar 27-31, 2008; www.shaliniganendra.com or www.theprivategallery.com*



AMOURS A-MERRIER Fashion and styling is the inspirational backbone of Sandra Knuyt's newest series, named 'Les Amours de la Belle Epoque' after the famous French era when art and fashion met in fabulous ways during a time of peace between the European powers. Known for her depiction of strong women, Knuyt loses none of this trademark edge in the latest; in fact, she pushes it one step further with even more 'what-you-see-is-what-you-get' expressions. These striking portraits will grace the walls of her gallery and boutique, setting off her latest collections of fashion, accessories and fine jewellery. *Jan-Mar 2008 at Sandra Knuyt Gallery & Boutique, Shangri-la Hotel, KL, and Pangkor Laut Resort & Spa; 03-4103 3996 or www.sandraknuyt.com*



KOALA LUMPUR Rim bun Dahan kicks off 2008 with a cross-cultural exhibition featuring two multimedia artists selected for the Malaysia-Australia Visual Arts Residency 2007, a programme which saw the pair live and work at the family compound of famed architect Hijjas Kasturi for 12 months. The gallery's 13th Residency Exhibition will thus showcase paintings and slide projections inspired by our recent 50th Merdeka entitled 'Recollections of Long Lost Memories' by Ahmad Fuad Osman. Aussie artist Gabrielle Bates will unveil 'Mouth of Flowers' which includes paintings, objects and video works. The pair will also collaborate on a video piece that will premiere on opening night. *Jan 13-27, 2008, at Rim bun Dahan Gallery, Km 27, Jalan Kuang, 48050 Selangor; call +6013-224 2158 or rimbundahan@gmail.com or www.rimbundahan.org*

Lee P
 MARKS&SPENCER
 Microsoft
 Lufthansa
 American
 Airlines
 apple

FONT OF KNOWLEDGE

A SMALL MOVIE ABOUT A SIMPLE TYPEFACE IS MAKING BIG WAVES

BY MATT ARMITAGE

While big budget productions like Michael Moore's *Sicko* and Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* have brought documentaries out of the art house and into the mainstream, there has been a parallel development in micro-documentaries that has taken the genre into new and more leftfield territory. Subjects that would once have been confined to a hardcore of specialist viewers are now finding a wider audience who are interested as much in the motivations of the film-makers as in the content itself.

One pioneer in the field is Plexifilms, an independent US film production company started in 2001 by Gary Hustwit, a former VP at digital magazine Salon.com, and Sean Anderson, who had worked at classic movie re-issuing house The Criterion Collection which releases "films we like". Earning itself a reputation for quality niche movies and documentaries, it wasn't until 2005's *Moog*, directed by Hans Fjellestad, that the company crept out of the underground.

That movie, a chronicle of the life's work of Bob Moog, the electronics pioneer who created the Moog analogue synthesizer, beloved of today's cult bands, was as much a chronicle of obsession and perversity (more so on the part of the musicians interviewed than Moog himself) as biopic but it was that single-minded passion that made it palatable to a wider audience.

And the company has hit pay-dirt again with *Around the*

World with Helvetica, an 80-minute celebration of 50 years of one of the world's most famous typefaces. Loved by graphic designers for its simplicity, Helvetica is a favourite for road signs, billboards and corporations. Companies that have built their own iconic identities on its clean lines include Jeep, Marks & Spencer, Lufthansa, Microsoft and Apple.

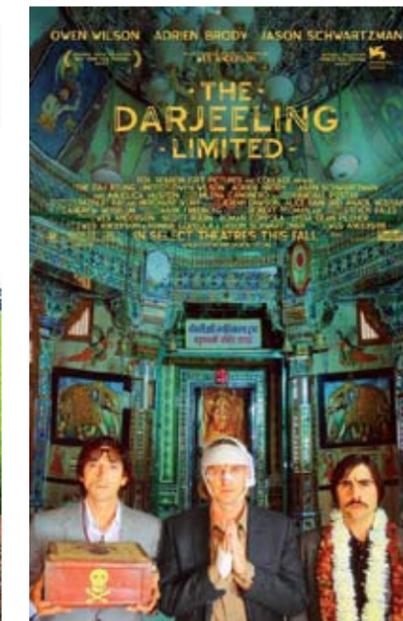
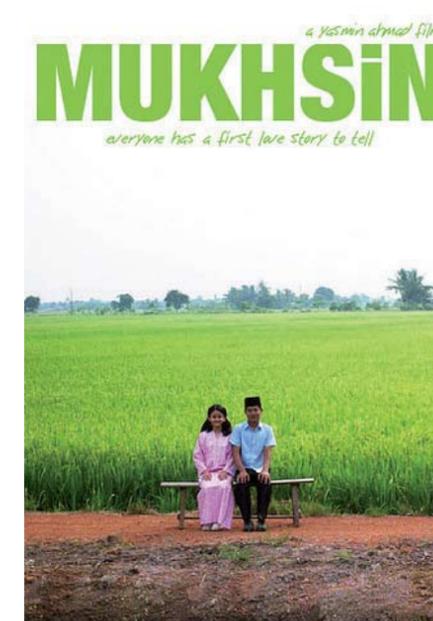
Directed by Hustwit and co-funded by Veer, a visual company famous for its Helvetica variants, an idea that would sound like paint drying at a Hollywood pitch is actually an illuminating and rewarding appraisal of the way communication seeps into our daily lives. Through interviews with design luminaries including Massimo Vignelli (who used it for the American Airlines wordmark among others), Wim Crouwel and font architect Herman Zapf, the film's potential geek appeal is counter-balanced by the weight of the philosophies that underpin graphic design.

Despite a limited release, the movie has become one of the most talked about independent productions of 2007, with a highly anticipated DVD release in November. Most interestingly, it has captured the imagination of the media and the public alike, igniting debate on everything from newspaper print to the legend above the local takeaway. And in causing us to reappraise the world that surrounds us, a world that is increasingly full of fonts, this movie transcends the limitations of its subject matter and asks us to re-examine the boundaries between art and design. ■

LONDON CALLING

THE BRITISH FILM REVIVAL IS GETTING A VIGOROUS HOME NOD AT THE LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

BY MATT ARMITAGE



Time was when the London Film Festival (LFF) was a celebration of everything except British film. With its movie industry in decline throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the LFF served only to highlight the fact that Britain had become the country that Hollywood made its movies in, rather than a place that movies came from.

But as Hollywood flocks into Eastern Europe, attracted by its lower costs, a new generation of British directors has moved into the void, with auteurs like Guy Ritchie, Paul Andrew Williams and Danny Boyle producing internationally successful movies with a strong British identity.

Which is why the New British Cinema category is now one of the LFF's most exciting. This year's event includes: *Dog Altogether*, the double award winning directorial debut of actor/writer Paddy Considine; *In Prison My Whole Life*, a documentary on death row resident and political activist Mumia Abu-Jamal by Marc Evans; Joanna Hogg's *Unrelated*; and celebrated documentary-maker Nick Broomfield's controversial Iraq War docu-drama *Battle for Haditha*.

Now in its 51st year, the Times newspaper sponsored event ran from October 17 until November 1, 2007, in venues all around London. As well as its focus on British cinema, this year's festival continued with its world cinema ethos, screening works from over 60 countries. There was a strong showing from Asian nations, including Indonesia, Thailand,

South Korea, Hong Kong and Philippines. Malaysia's *Mukhsin*, an exploration of culture and young love by the country's leading director, Yasmin Ahmad, also showed at the festival to favourable reviews.

What sets the LFF apart, say, from the star-studded Cannes jamboree, is its strong public access ethos. And though it has attracted much stronger industry attention in recent years, you'll find very few closed door screenings beyond the gala opening and closing ceremonies.

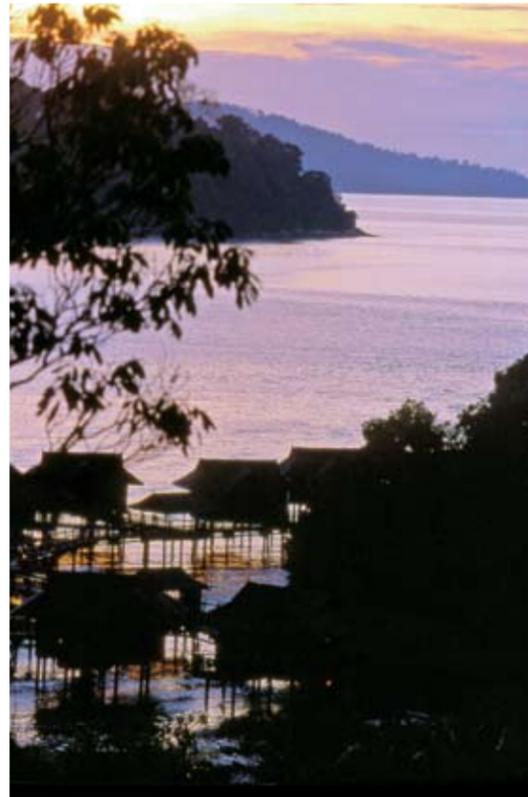
Highlights of this year included: a show-and-tell screening of Wes Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited* where the US director took questions from a lively audience; and the Romanian farce *California Dreamin'* which deals with the misadventures of a group of US Marines in a remote Romanian village; and the moving and compelling portrait of life in a Vietnam War POW camp, the Werner Herzog directed and Christian Bale-starring *Rescue Dawn*. ■

WHICH MOVIE IS THIS CLASSIC LINE FROM?

"You're gonna need a bigger boat."
 (Turn the page upside down to find out the answer)

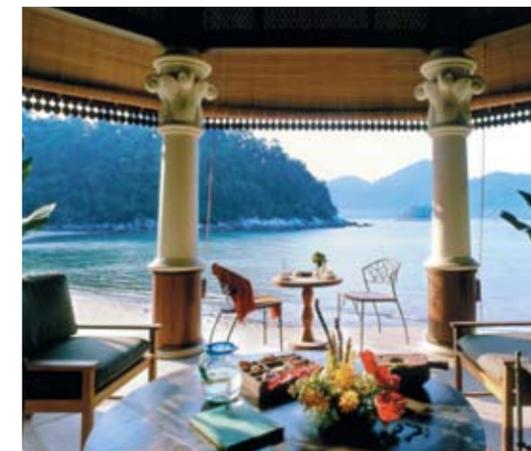
(2261) samp

Pangkor Laut Resort



Voted the world's best resort, multiple award-winning Pangkor Laut Resort promises the privileged visitor an experience of exclusivity and elegance. Its home is the private island of Pangkor Laut, which is blessed with a stunning 2-million-year-old rainforest and with pristine beaches bathed in the waters of the Straits of Malacca. The accommodation is luxuriously appointed and the resort boasts unparalleled hospitality and attention to detail. On the gastronomic front, guests can enjoy a wide range of cuisine, whether dining at the new Feast Village, at Fisherman's Cove by the sea, or on one of the Resort's teakwood junks. Add the tropical sun, luxurious surroundings and the services of the Resort's world-renowned Spa Village – which combines the healing arts of India, China and Malaysia – and it is no wonder that this is the choice holiday destination for international celebrities and the most discerning of holidaymakers. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.pangkorlautresort.com

The Estates at Pangkor Laut



In a small secluded cove near Pangkor Laut Resort rest the eight wonders that make up The Estates. Each of these individually crafted enclaves is reminiscent of the traditional South-East Asian way of living of days gone by, when an 'estate' was made up of a number of special purpose buildings scattered amidst gardens of astounding beauty. Comprising either two, three or four bedrooms, each Estate offers a private infinity-edge pool, as well as discreet living, dining, bathing and sleeping pavilions in various adaptations of Malay architectural traditions. Every Estate has an Estate Manager, two dedicated attendants and a Chef, all of whom will aid in addressing every aspect of each guest's tenancy: from housekeeping to meals to any special requests you might have. There is also a private vehicle and driver assigned to each Estate should guests decide to leave the seclusion of their villa to dine in one of the Resort's restaurants or to go for a treatment at the Spa Village. The Estates is truly the perfect luxury hideaway. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.pangkorlautresort.com/estates/

Tanjong Jara Resort



An evocation of the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara Resort is the only luxury resort that sits along Malaysia's beautiful East Coast beaches. Built on a 17-hectare site that blends in with its natural surroundings, the 99-room Resort is an embodiment of the gentle Malay arts of service and hospitality. With a philosophy based on the concept of 'Sucimurni' (which emphasises purity of spirit, health and well-being), Tanjong Jara is the perfect place to escape and rejuvenate. The Resort's Spa Village is the only luxury spa in the world focusing on traditional Malay healing methods, and has also been voted 'World's Most Innovative Spa' by Tatler magazine United Kingdom. The Resort offers four different luxurious accommodation options, each commanding stunning views of the South China Sea and appointed in a fashion fit for a Malay king. Tanjong Jara is surrounded by sleepy fishing villages, shaded by coconut palms, alongside a meandering river teeming with wildlife – providing guests with an authentic taste of the region's spirit and culture.
Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tanjongjaresort.com

Cameron Highlands Resort



Set amidst tea plantations and rolling hills, this tranquil boutique hideaway promises visitors all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of Cameron Highlands' grand colonial heritage. Cameron Highlands is Malaysia's largest hill resort and is the only place in this tropical country where you can find tea plantations and strawberries, while enjoying a gentle temperate climate. Largely unchanged since its colonial heyday, this 'little corner of England in Asia' is still dotted with Tudor-style cottages and is a place where scones and afternoon tea will not seem out of place. The Resort itself is representative of all this: with tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings, plantation shutters and even a fireplace adding old-world charm to the surroundings. It also houses a Spa Village boasting a host of tea-inspired treatments as well as an 18-hole golf course and 56 luxuriously appointed rooms and suites which weave in the wondrous colours and textures of Jim Thompson's famed Asian silks. Visitors can also enjoy numerous nature trails, visit tea plantations and an orang asli village, or immerse themselves in the unsolved mystery surrounding the disappearance of Jim Thompson in 1967.
Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.cameronhighlandsresort.com

Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali



The key to every YTL Luxury Spa Resort is the marriage of luxurious accommodation and sterling service with beauty, tranquility and a sense of sanctuary. The Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali is all that and more. Inspired by the Spa Village Pangkor Laut, this latest jewel in YTL Hotel's crown embraces the same healing ethos of celebrating local culture, honouring the ancient remedies of the region and infusing each visit with the essence of the surrounding location. Set in a landscape of great natural beauty, this 31-room luxury spa resort offers guests the best of Balinese massage, wellness and spirituality therapies which seek to restore not just the body and mind, but also to replenish the spirit through a range of carefully-designed programmes. The seclusion of the resort also offers guests the opportunity to get away from the stresses of the world and rejuvenate within a place tailor-made for that very purpose. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tembokbali.com

Spa Village



YTL's multiple award-winning Spa Village brand has developed a solid international reputation within the luxury spa market and grown from strength to strength over the years. Besides the original Spa Village Pangkor Laut, there are now four other Spa Villages – Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, Spa Village Tanjong Jara, Spa Village Cameron Highlands and Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali – with another, the Spa Village Malacca, soon to be opened. What's unique about all the Spa Villages is that each draws inspiration from the healing cultures of its particular region and blends traditional therapeutic remedies with a modern methodology. Whether in Pangkor Laut, Kuala Lumpur or Bali, the Spa Village is a sophisticated and rejuvenating experience, not just because of the quality of its services but simply because the Spa Village is more than just a place: it's a philosophy. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.spavillage.com

JW Marriott Hotel at Starhill Gallery, KL

The JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur was designed with the business traveller in mind. Located in the city's business district, this five-star deluxe hotel is the ultimate venue for meetings and functions. Facilities include 47 flexible meeting room options (including a grand ballroom) within the property, the adjoining Starhill Conference Centre and the newly built Carlton Conference Centre (at The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, KL), all of which are connected via link-bridge. There is also a Business Centre providing a full range of business services. Rooms feature ample workspace, a plush high-back executive chair, broadband connection and other standard communication services (two-line speaker phone, fax modem, voicemail). The hotel is also integrated into the world-class shopping centre, Starhill Gallery, which features high-end shopping, a range of award-winning Spa and beauty salons, and numerous fine-dining options at the Gallery's Feast Village. Tel: +603-2715 9000; www.marriott.com



Majestic

The Majestic Malacca is the first luxury hotel and spa in the historic city of Malacca. Faithfully restored and lovingly refurbished by YTL Hotels, the 108-room Majestic Malacca resonates with historical significance even while it has been thoroughly updated to cater to the needs of today's upmarket traveller. Architecture, décor and dining all reflect the legacy of this ancient city's history, and take guests on a luxurious journey into the past. The Majestic Malacca also houses the newest Spa Village. Adhering to the brand's philosophy of honouring the healing traditions of the local region, the Spa Village Malacca is now the only spa in the world to base its healing heritage on the Baba-Nyonya culture. It thus offers luxury-spa seekers such delights as the warm-energy treatment of Malaccan palm sugar and honey scrub and a hot nutmeg and rice rolling body massage. An icon of Malacca's past has now become something to be desired in the present. Tel: +603-2142 8000; www.majesticmalacca.com



The Ritz-Carlton at Starhill Gallery, KL

Based on the philosophy that great service should never merely be reactive and compliant but anticipatory and spontaneous, The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's only 5-star luxury boutique hotel offering a full personal butler service. Its location in the heart of the city's prestigious Golden Triangle district makes for easy access to the trendy Bukit Bintang area: Starhill Gallery, one of the city's premier shopping centres, is linked to the hotel via an enclosed sky bridge. With 365 elegantly appointed guestrooms



(including 110 suites and 1 penthouse), 24 meeting rooms, three exceptional restaurants and an award-winning 'tropical' Spa Village, The Ritz-Carlton is regarded as one of the city's finest business hotels where combining business and pleasure is as effortless as the masterly service it provides. Tel: +603-2142 8000; www.ritzcarlton.com

Eastern & Oriental Express

Coursing right through the heart of South-East Asia – from Singapore through Malaysia to Thailand – is the celebrated Eastern & Oriental Express, the ultimate centrepiece of a visit to the Far East. Explore the mysticism of South-East Asia in the unparalleled comfort and luxury of what is regarded as one of the world's most exotic train journeys. On board the E&O Express, you will enjoy a journey in the plush of surroundings and will be pampered by private stewards attending to your every need. Famed for its exceptional fine dining, and classic atmosphere of luxury, adventure and nostalgia – the E&O Express is a priceless pilgrimage that is bound to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, even for the seasoned traveller. Tel: +65-6392 3500; www.orient-express.com



E&O PHOTO: JOHNNY MCGEORGE

THE FABULOUS LIFE

YTL LIFE'S RESIDENT AIR-KISS QUEEN MAKES A GRAND ENTRANCE... THEN HIGH TALES IT OUT OF HERE

BY LADY CRISTAL CHAMPERS

Hello luvvies, mwah mwah to you all! Hope all is tickety-boo in your world.

Let me take you on a flight of fantasy into the fabulous world of luxury travel and lifestyle of the trendsetters, the pretentious, the pretenders, the well-heeled, the high-heeled, the rich and famous or even infamous as in the case of poor little Britney Spears who is spiralling downwards more rapidly than a lead balloon. Having clawed her way out of Kentwood in rural Louisiana to hit the big time in La-la Land, the poor little lamb is now being swallowed up by the flame of fame and fortune and is in complete meltdown. There is more brass in new money than class. Don't try this at home, darlings!

Living the high life is hard graft as virgin high-lifers will tell you regarding their first taste of luxury. No, not that type of virgins, you dirty boy, but more like lottery winners who are propelled into its lap by accident rather than by birthright.

I have observed many an airborne faux pas in the business and first-class cabins in my jet-setting life. I once overheard a passenger asking the air stewardess what caviar was. She politely explained that it was 'some kind of salted fish eggs' to which the passenger replied, "Sounds nice. I will have two please, soft boiled." Bless. The flat bed in the cabin is also a death trap for the uninitiated - yes, it can be a major production to get just the right gradient - and seeing someone being mangled by a luxury flat bed is not a pretty sight.

On another note, my good friend Lady Prunella and I have decided to join all the Hollywood luvvies like George Clooney, Brangelina and Leonardo DiCaprio et al to save the planet and reduce our carbon footprints. Why, how we used to grace the boutiques in Bond Street and Knightsbridge in London, pounding the streets in our Jimmy Choos while indulging in some serious retail therapy! Now we confine our shopping sprees to Harrods and only use our private jets sparingly on our winter jaunts to warmer climes.

Poor Lady Prunella had to undergo therapy when a wretched airline that shall remain nameless overbooked its first and business classes and she had to travel steerage to

New York. Poor little dear has never quite recovered from the shock of having to sit among the paupers and drink wine from a bad year, eat dreadful food and worse, eat with plastic cutlery! How unkind to a châtelaine whose idea of a disaster is not being the first to get the season's latest Prada bag.

Her ladyship is also an animal lover and is totally devoted to her two poodles, Gin and Tonic, and her horse Johnny Walker. But she can't give up wearing leather and fur. Her excuse is that man-made materials like polyester and nylon are non bio-degradable and bad for the environment. Underneath that bleached blonde hair over a surgically-enhanced face, there is a brain somewhere I am sure. The fur-lined and diamond-encrusted champagne-soaked world of the wealthy bons vivants and lotus-eaters who live in stately homes and own floating gin palaces in the Mediterranean is a dirty job but someone's got to do it. ■



ILLUSTRATION EDWARD MAK