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Letter from the Editor

Well here we are, a brand new millennium or, at the very least, the last year of the 20th century, depending on your point of view.

And what a century it has been! It has seen the advent of the flying machine, from the first hesitant gloping into the air by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk to the Stealth bombers of today; the development of the automobile from the days of horseless carriages through the gas-guzzlers of the 50s to the sleek hybrid hydrogen/electric engines being developed today; the first flickering television picture in the 30s to the uncountable high resolution (if mostly fuzzy) TV shows now available; the first atomic explosions and the development of fusion power; men and women in space; Teflon non-stick cookware and Velcro; a population growth from 1.5 billion to the 6 billion or so now inhabiting the planet; the discovery of DNA and the first hints of the true origin of life; and countless more wonders.

No one will hesitate to agree that whilst some of these inventions and developments have been for the good, many have not. But one thing no one of us will deny as belonging amongst the good, the recognition of gays as a part of life is now firmly accepted in many Western countries, in some parts of Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, and in many other countries.

Whilst persecution of our brothers and sisters still continues in some states, noticeably Malaysia and the hypocritical Arab countries.

What is in store for us in the next millennium? I will not venture to guess, but in the next century — let's have a go! We predict that gerontology will have advanced to the stage that centenarian swingers will be common in 2100.

Universal acceptance of gays and the indisputable discovery of the genetic causes of our orientation. Not only acceptance, but actual encouragement of homosexual relationships as a means of birth control in a world bursting at the seams.

Digital (or something similar) voice or thought-operated telephones that actually connect each time you call, and will present a picture of the caller; allow you to download your e-mail, browse the net; carry on e-commerce and who knows what else. Possibly this will be by means of a chip embedded in one's head and wired directly to the appropriate portion of the brain. What will happen to voice-mail and caller ID? Will we have to accept all calls? God help us!

Holidays on space stations (or space cities) orbiting the earth, not to mention the moon. Sex in free fall, wheee!

On the downside, most of our protein (juicy steaks et hoc genus omnibus) will come from yeast, algae or kelp. Sea farming and ranching will be the agro business (take note of CP groups).

However, on the upside, body part regeneration will be possible, either on the body or by cloned spare parts. An easy cure for obesity will have been found (other than starvation!). Let's hope.
Rome has fallen!

At last, the Rome Club in Silom Soi 4, so loved by so many gay and straight visitors in the late 70s’ and 80s’ and so hated by, it seems, almost everyone since the management chose to take a homophobic stance, is no more.

To whom has it fallen? Not the barbarian hordes from the North this time, but to two farsighted antipo-dean entrepreneurs and their friends. Yes, it is no surprise that the ambitious pair, David Shrubsole and William Ribbon of Icon fame, are the predators. And very welcome as such they are too!

In our second issue we predicted that they would go far, and reported David’s intention for the name Icon to be BIG—and so it is becoming. Icon, the Club (in Bangkok), much larger and ambitious than the one that has become the favourite in place in Pattaya, will, on Valentine’s Day Y2k, raise the lambda flag over the ruins of Rome and once again a friendly, fun place will emerge and will, we have no doubt, soon be a focus of night entertainment activity in Bangkok. All roads lead to Icon, so to speak!

Whilst the name of Rome Club is remembered with nostalgia by so many from the old days, William told us that they will rename it, not only to spread the successful “Icon” image, but to separate itself from the misguided, inhospitable attitude of the previous owners. They wish Icon, the Club, wherever it exists, to be thought of as a place friendly to all but with a gay approach; a place to meet your friends, take your friends and, if it so happens, meet new friends. To this end the “Rome” theme is going and David is busy decorating it in his eclectic, art nouveau/pacifica, style, echoing
but not copying that in the Pattaya club.

Not only will Icon operate in the old Rome premises, but there will be open air terraces on both sides of the street to “watch the world go by” and an ‘Icon, the Shop’ opposite. This will be a sort of coffee bar and will carry all the Icon brand products from calendars to underwear (perfume and other delights to follow).

William confessed to a hope that, “. . . we will be able to establish the old routine, say a visit to one or more bars and on to Icon, the Club, perhaps with a companion in tow, a little dancing or simply to enjoy the twice-nightly show (and all the hi-tech videos, laser light shows and so on), and then finish up with an early morning coffee and pastry breakfast at Icon, the Shop.”

What a good idea! We remember doing just that in olden times, except that, lacking Icon, the Shop, we normally ended up at a noodle vendor’s cart in Suriwong or perhaps bought some oh-so-delicious fresh patongko from another vendor.

The two old friends hope eventually to have an Icon presence in all the main Thai resort areas. Whilst these will be linked by concept and

said William. ‘In all our professional life or business ventures we have never concealed the fact that we are gay, and happy to be so,’ he affirmed.

‘The response to the news that we were taking over the old Rome Club has been so extraordinarily positive, actually I could say overwhelming,’ William told us, ‘that we now consider ourselves under an obligation to succeed and bring back the old atmosphere of the place.’ We predict that this will give them a captive clientele of fans of the once great club, amongst whom we will be numbered, and will bring many new “citizens” into their empire (if we may stretch the allegory).

See you there on Valentine’s Day!
The Colony Sauna

Located on the outer edge of Bangkok in the area known as Ekamai, is the Colony Sauna. Situated in a rambling old house, the sauna has been meticulously decorated to reflect the tastes of a clientele who are middle class and discreet. It combines the usual amenities of a well-run sauna with an attractive outside garden and swimming pool where guests are free to doff their kimono or flesh-clinging towelette and wallow au naturel.

The house was built in the 1950’s but little of the original edifice remains except the feeling of a large mansion that has been lovingly redecorated. On entering there is the usual fee payment and then an usherette takes you down to the changing rooms. The lockers are assembled along one wall and as one disrobes, a look to the right reveals a wide door with a view out to the garden and pool.

On my first visit, I confess to giving a tiny scream of astonishment when faced with a large farang spread-eagled on a prominently placed chaise lounge displaying his enormous appendage to the entire locker room. To overcome the initial shock of this rude introduction, I fanned myself vigorously with a handy hairdryer.

Once composed and properly attired I did a tour of the establishment in the company of an English architect friend who had been similarly discombobulated. He was surprisingly impressed with the cleanliness and layout. I say surprisingly because usually he is a complete bitch when it comes to assessing design aspects of gay establishments.

We of course had to assess the dry sauna, wet sauna, exercise room and the upstairs rooms where the more interesting things go on. All passed muster with shining colours and I do emphasize the shine of some of the colours! Still in semi-shock from the Gargantuan Farangus who we suspected of lying in wait for us outside the locker room door, we clung to each other for moral support as we made our way back to the pool area. Fortunately, we found another way through the bar and dining room area from which we could access the

Thai guys

Next issue: 20 April 2000

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pool without running into Gargantua.

The dining area and attendants were so appealing we decided to linger a bit and ordered Heinekens. Both our spirits began rising precipitously when we saw some of the toothsome nuggets who began floating through. Not that we didn’t take a peak out through the curtains to check if “SHE” was still there!!!! Fortunately the coast had cleared and a delicate mist was rising off the pool illuminated by the pool lights. As I squinted through the mist, a long muscled brown arm rose up and clung to the edge of the pool. It was followed by an angular Isan face which broke into a toothy grin when I was seen at the window. The arm waved and my notoriously impetuous heart leaped when I realised it was Panya, from Mukdahan who had gone back to school for the last term.

Memories came welling up of one particularly heavy night of passion months before. I excused myself from my friend who was already animatedly discussing the virtues of London’s architecture and saunas over those of Bangkok with a couple of portly Thai gentleman, took two Heinekens, and, well, discretion prevents me from providing further details. But I do give credit to Colony. It does draw the nicest guys.

The Colony Sauna, 117 Soi Charoen Suk, Sukhumvit Soi 55, Bangkok. Tel. 391-4393; Fax:711-4507

www.gay pattaya.com
The Gay Guide of the 20’s

Ebbe Kornerup, Friendly Siam reprinted

Had the Tourist Authority of Thailand existed in the 1920s, Friendly Siam might have served as its gentler, slightly quaint, advertising slogan to lure tourists to the Land of Smiles. Coming to the kingdom not as a result of a hard-sell campaign, the inveterate Danish traveller Ebbe Kornerup, author of books on Ceylon, Japan, and South America, felt impelled to recount his adventures in the kingdom’s four corners—by train, boat, horseback, and aeroplane—to the wider world.

Delighted by things Thai, his narrative also reveals an eye keenly alive to male beauty, and his descriptions of “fine young fellows”—the attractive prisoners, fishermen, labourers, and footballers—are augmented by a number of near nude photos.

photographs. Happily, fellow tourists do not enter the picture, and when not lavishing his attention on local youths, Kornerup seems mainly to have rubbed shoulders with princes, the diplomatic corps, and government officials. In Raheng he apparently shares a mosquito net with his "friend" Tim, a good-looking servant. He travels Central Thailand accompanied by a handsome, prize-winning kick-boxer, his "best travelling companion" ever. Always "friendly," he takes lads from Bangkok's "poorer quarter" on motorcar rides and to "picture palaces."

The tourist clichés—the temples, elephants, and bustling towns—are dutifully served up, but Kornerup's descriptive powers are really reserved for his other discoveries. "Big and powerful," the boatman Titpan has "extremely shapely lips...curved like those of a Greek youth." Young monks have "rounded, well-made bodies not in the least suitable for swathin' in all the yellow stuff they wore." Tim's lips are "curved in a wonderful way, both

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Friendly Siam

Thailand in the 1920s
Ebbe Kornerup

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childish and eager.” A group of Lao men have “exceptionally lovely” figures. Schoolboys in shirts, with “delicate brown skin... as soft as a horse’s muzzle and as fine as silk,” are, he enthuses, no less than “bewitching.”

How such “warm” descriptions eluded the rigorous self-censorship many early gay travellers practiced is a lingering question. This is a double narrative—a well-crafted story of a journey to a little-known, faraway country and a covert tale of a trip to a “homophile” paradise. But whether an extremely naive happy snap or a carefully coded manual on the Far East’s varied delights, Kornurup’s account is surely a Spartacus Guide before its time: gay travellers to “Amazing Thailand” will effortlessly recognize the smiling lips and chiselled figures of the “Friendly Slam” of the 1920s.
Banking on Fitness:

Silom City Fitness

by Desmond Derriere

My publisher phoned me in his usual hysteria, "Silom City Fitness needs an article and we’re near deadline!" She does go on. But then she’s Swiss and they are always so intensely time-retainive. So I put on my smart loafers and headed to the former headquarters of Standard Chartered Bank opposite the Dusit Thani. Then shock overtook me. Egads! I had completely forgotten my motto: 'Fitness is not for moi.' subtitled: 'I will not wear Spandex in the tropics.' I smoked two Marlborough Lights in quick succession but, being the professional I am, I rushed home and searched through my dusty Spandex collection. I selected pink and black—and then remembered when I last pulled on this uniform for Supergay, a Miami parade as I recalled (in the last Millennium!). I surveyed the effect in the mirror. Why is it that Spandex on moi seems always to demand to be re-named "Expand-ex".

Never say die, I headed out into the maelstrom of Bangkok traffic and arrived sweaty but radiant. Steven Hathaway, Managing Director greeted me with a similar patina of sweat glistening on his ample biceps. He had been under one of those machines. I looked around suspiciously trying to focus on the former Bank where I had exchanged thousands, and which was now transformed into a sea of gorgeous bodies straining to lift kilo-grams of granite for the God of Beauty who was poised overhead behind a screen of fluorescent lamps.

"We put the men’s change rooms in the former bank vault," said Mr. Hathaway as I followed my nose to the distinct smell of liniment. Sure enough, there they were, men of all proportions towelling down surrounded by the ghosts of millions squandered. Mr. Hathaway has big dreams. Two thousand square meters of space crammed with equipment and some very succulent staff members (22 at last count). They only opened on January 15th so I...
was witnessing the very first days of a new start-up, but I could certainly see the possibilities. The barred gates leading to the back vaults where the saunas will be provoked some extremely interesting images. We both stood looking at the huge steel doors leading to the space for the future saunas. Mr. Hathaway sighed, “That’s where they kept the safety deposit boxes. We don’t have the combinations”.

“Excuse me?”

“Well, when we leased the premises, we took it as it was. But no one seems to know the combinations so we’ll have to cut a hole through the wall here in back and go in that way to put in the saunas.” Where’s Robert De Niro when ya need him? now I ask you.

Anyway it was approaching 6:30 PM when all of Silom’s bright young things and some not so young, react to that testosterone driven urge to hit the stepmasters after arranging loans with the IMF. My pink and black Spandex outfit had already excited several comments but fortunately I was out of earshot. “What we are aiming at is affordability,” said Mr. Hathaway as my gaze became riveted to the posterior of a young man who was doing something on one machine that I didn’t think was humanly possible, much less legal.

“We will be hosting aerobics conventions within a year,” Mr. Hathaway enthused as we headed for the second floor and watched an enthusiastic throng do in Spandex what a lot of queens do at D.J. every night of the week, but not with as much synchronization. I couldn’t help forgetting myself enough to attempt a few of the moves that the crowd was getting into and I was sure that several of them were distracted by this mirage in pink and black who had just appeared on their periphery. Was it my imagination? Could I really be a Fitness Queen in the Closet???

“You’ve got great rhythm,” commented Mr. Hathaway. I blushed the colour of my pink top.

But now I am proud to say I am the 253rd member of Silom City Fitness. Just look for the cute one in pink and black.

Snippets

Gay men make better fathers

As if we didn’t know—a study published in London recently stated research had shown that gay men make more committed and sensitive fathers than heterosexual men.

The study, carried out by Dr. Gillian Dunne for The Gender Institute at the London School of Economics, said gay men were less afraid to show their “caring” side than their heterosexual counterparts.

A quarter of the 100 gay fathers or would-be fathers involved in the study took the commitment to their children so seriously that they chose to work under 30 hours a week or gave up paid work to look after them.

The gay fathers offer us some very interesting role models about how men can be parents, Dr Dunne said.

continued on page 52
of the largest and liveliest go-go bars in Bangkok with a loyal and recurrent clientele plus a strong contingent of regular tourists.

Much of the credit for the bar's success must go to the lads who work there but nothing would have been possible without the vision and enthusiasm of the owner who has made it all possible. At first meeting, Khun Vorakit seems an improbable type to own a go-go bar. Son of a captain in the Royal Thai Navy; owner of an educational bookshop and holding a key position in one of the country's top financial institutions, Vorakit has an impeccable background but, significantly, he is also open, frank and often flamboyant about his homosexuality. So why a muscleman bar?
most all of them come to work in the bar because they have friends who have done the same and several of them have had a background of military service. Most will concede that they are straight and only work in the bar because of the money but there are a few genuinely gay muscle men that can be found at Tawan. All of them receive a small daily salary for attendance to cover their transport and food, plus a larger performance fee when they appear in any of the variety of shows.

Costs in the Tawan Bar are similar to other go-go bars in the area with drinks being 200 Baht and a bar fine or 'OFF' being charged at 300 Baht. Some of the most popular guys can expect to get 'offed' every night whilst others may only get a customer once a week. The bar's average is 8 'offs' per boy per month and an engagement with a customer earns the boy an average tip of Baht 1000; however, some have been outrageously lucky and been given gifts beyond their wildest dreams from wealthy customers. Several have received motorcycles, TV sets and other expensive household goods for their services, whilst one really hit the jackpot and was given a condominium to put the goodies in! However, unlike the practice in many bars, the boys can refuse to go with a client – for any reason.

When Thai Guys talked to Khun Vorakit he was helpful and forthcoming with all our questions but discretion is the making of a good go-go bar owner. So, who are the famous people who have been customers at Tawan? He can't say but there have been several. Politicians? Maybe . . . Movie Stars and Pop Singers? . . . Perhaps . . . And who was the most famous client? Probably an American Pop Idol—but if you want to know the name . . . he won't be the one to tell you.

"They are the type I like and so do many of my friends—both Thai and farang," he says. Most of the guys who work there decide on Tawan as their place of employment because of Khun Vorakit. OK, so he's the boss but he is also a father-figure to many of them, a friend and a good employer compared to most other go-go bar owners. Vorakit has earned the respect and loyalty of his workforce, many of whom have been in the bar's service for many years—for example his manager Pan has been there for over 10 years and is as well known to the customers as is the owner.

Khun Vorakit has genuine regard for the lads at Tawan and ensures that they all take the necessary precautions for their chosen profession. Medical check ups for AIDS and other STD’s are arranged quarterly plus doctor’s lectures in the bar on the hazards of the job are compulsorily attended every six months. Every time a customer takes out one of his men, condoms and lube are issued free. He admits that a few of his muscle men have taken steroids in the past but he actively discourages the practice and makes sure that they know from a doctor the perils of such action. Additionally, he pays for their gymnasium fees to make sure that they are all healthy and look good for the customers. He’s often seen in Lumpini Park exercising with some of his lads and regularly supports bodybuilding contests.

When it first opened all those years ago there were only 20 performers but now there’s a stable of over 70. They vary in age from 19 to 30 years old with the average being 25. The majority come from Isan with some hailing from the South of Thailand and a minority from the North.
Tarntawan Place Hotel – A Place You Can Even Take Mother

"Did you see that pretty flag dear?" mother asked as I eyed the contours of the bellboy taking our luggage in to the Tarntawan Place.

I cringed. Yes, I had seen the rainbow flag fluttering in the breeze on Surewong as we headed into the entryway. But I didn’t think mother would.

"No, mother I didn’t." I was thinking only of a cooling gin ton and a nap after twelve gruelling hours on British Airways.

"It was just like the flag I saw in that strange parade in London. You remember I told you how I was watching the telly with Auntie and I saw a boy just like you with a ring in his nipple." We had fortunately reached the lobby and we were being overwhelmed by welcoming staff. The muscles in my neck began to relax. After all I knew the Tarntawan was easily the most discrete gay-friendly hotel in Bangkok and I knew mother would feel at home. Also knew I could keep my cover.

The reception gave me our keys with a wink. "Oh no. There’s been a bit of a mistake, mother. Sorry." I specifically asked for adjoining rooms but they’ve put us on separate floors." I gave the reception clerk a pound note as I went with mother to the elevators. Following her to her room, I watched as the bellboy opened the door.

"Oh, my, my, my! This is a bit of alright, now isn’t it Davey? Must have set ya back a few bob." I didn’t want to tell her that the price was very, very right. She ran her fingers across the dresser and bent over to smell the orchids. "This will do just fine," she sighed as she plopped on the bed. She was asleep in an instant.

We had dinner that evening in the lobby restaurant because I know the management has a keen eye for consistency, having had years in the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong. Mother even got her chips. I ordered a good white wine and it did the trick. It did. Mother was already yawning by the time she got her crème caramel. I escorted her to her room.

"Night-time dear. Sleep tight. Don’t let..."”

"Yes mother. No problem. Pleasant dreams."

I sailed out to Surewong Road and zipped around the corner. I could almost count the steps to my favourite bar. I could see his face, his number, his smile before the gilded door had even opened.

Next morning I slept late, but it was still morning when I awoke. I did a quick wash and rushed downstairs to the coffee shop because I’d promised mother we’d do the Grand Palace. As I approached her table, she looked up absolutely radiant. There was something different about her. Then I realized that her hair had been done and it was now a silver-mauve colour. I glanced at my watch. It was only 10:30!

"We had breakfast together," she said slyly as I took my seat and ordered espresso. I glanced around the Tarntawan’s lobby. So ordered, so contained.

"Excuse me?"

"We had breakfast together. That nice young man coming out of your room this morning at 6:30. Such big muscles for an Oriental. I was passing by your door. Couldn’t sleep. Jet lag I guess. Anyway, we had a wonderful chat. So nice and respectful. Not like our young people. Here they respect their elders."

I nodded and looked into the depths of my espresso.

"He took me to his friend just round the corner." I could feel my penis shrink, anticipating the next blow.

"Anyway, she was still asleep but she got up anyway. Opened up the shop just for little me. Can you believe it?"

"No I can’t mother."

"She convinced me that I needed a bit more body and the colour needed highlights. Do you like it?" I nodded and dabbed my lips with my napkin.

"Funny though," I readied myself for the next blow. "She really had quite a deep voice for such a sweet young woman."
Sun-and-Sanuk in Hua Hin

Don’t expect too much action, take a book with you.

The town of Hua Hin in the Gulf of Thailand, a leisurely two-and-a-half-hour drive from Bangkok’s bright lights, offers a possible alternative to Pattaya for someone in search of a quiet or romantic beach holiday within easy distance of the Big Mango. Thailand’s oldest beach resort has long-time royal connections—and thus a substantial airforce and royal guard presence. The town up till about ten or twelve years ago was the main favored haunt of Bangkokians on weekend holidays. A handful of expats in the know would join the southwards trek in search of clean, uncrowded beaches, freshly caught seafood, and a much-needed escape from urban hustle.

The seafood does remain truly succulent. Almost everything else has changed though since those sleepy days, not all that long ago, when dogs wandered the streets and Wir sprechen Deutsch signs had yet to spring up. Still mainly a weekend town, Hua Hin has recently been discovered by international tourists in a big way. Successfully marketed—one could justly say hyped—to German and Scandinavian sun-and-fun-seekers, it now offers a lot more than it did in the way of entertainment, shopping, and foreign food restaurants. At Satukarn Square in the town centre everything from lobster bisque to a fairly decent cappuccino is available with the day’s catch, cooked to your requirements. Pizza Hut has set up shop, and Starbucks surely can’t be far behind.

Ever in search of a good game of golf and quiet patch of beach, upmarket Thai tourists now take refuge in weekend condos dotted along the seacoast in Cha-Am at the town’s outskirts and head into the city only for supplies or the occasional bite. Luxury standard accommodation is on offer at the nearby Dusit and Regent Resorts, some 8 kilometres from the town centre. If you have deep pockets or want a splurge on a tryst with that special guy, Cha-Am is the place for first-class dining, lots of privacy, and long romantic walks on well-kept beaches.

Hua Hin isn’t exactly a hot gay destination in itself, given the rivalry offered by her sister city Pattaya. Anyone wanting a change from “Soi 4 at the Beach” and unaccompanied by his “darling” may nonetheless find that the town offers some pleasing possibilities. As usual when things are not ruthlessly organized to separate you and your baht as quickly as possible, a bit of creativity, a dollop of patience, and some persistence and good luck will likely be handsomely rewarded.

Like all holiday spots where foreign tourists gravitate en masse, Thai guys lag not too far behind. A few are out for sanuk with friends, and there are also the usual enterprising types trying to eke out a livelihood. The beach scene is rather hit-and-miss, though, and Pattaya’s Jomtien beach would win any cruising efficiency contest hands down. At peak times, Hua Hin beach is just a tad too crowded for success. After all, most of those straight sun-seeker lemmings are out simply for that take-home tan, and you might find that you tend to disappear into the seething terang masses covered in suntan lotion and scurrying for umbrellas.

The bar scene is very small and low key. Not far off the main road to the beach, Damnoenkasem Road, is The Red Indian Boy Bar, a few minutes’ walk from the upscale Sofitel Central, a former railway hotel that went into steep decline and now, after an extensive and thorough overhaul, offers in-town luxury digs. Casual and friendly, the place doesn’t of course sport any Red Indians. Lady Luck more likely hangs out here than at the beach, however, and if she fails, there are some freelancers looking out to cater to a lonely Lone Ranger’s needs. The “mixed” highly popular disco at the Hua Hin Grand Hotel sees some guys and freelancers and is a fashionable hot spot where you can recover from a hard day of tanning.

The more typical “Thai-style” bar is Doi-Boy, off the Petchkasem Road near The Mall, just besides Guys Bar of Khun Dam. It offers predictably dreadful shows, somewhat more convincing lady boys, and is otherwise a pale imitation of the Bangkok and Pattaya scenes—but, after all, you did want to get away from town, didn’t you?
Between the Paws of the Sphinx
A Tale of Intrigue and Sex

I was just throwing a liberal dash of Rigore Body Splash over my shoulders still dripping from my shower when the phone rang.

“Dahling, just got in on Egypt Air.” It was Deliah. “Let’s go to Egypt tonight. Any plans?”

“Deliah you really are a ditz. I am standing here as we speak, dripping on my antique Persian. It’s 10:30 at night and I teach on Tuesday. I am hardly in a position to think of Egypt.”

“Not the country dahling. That chichi bar you took me to last time I was in town.”

“Not Egypt dear. Sphinx. Sphinx. Sphinx.”

“Oh whatever. You know I have trouble with monuments. What time?”

“Eleven. I’ll wait waiting outside by the Sphinx.”

I forgot to ask where she was staying but knowing her it was probably the Malaysia. She liked the coffee shop where she could exercise her sociological interview skills at 3 AM on some of the lizards frequenting the plastic jungle plants. She was particularly fond of one old iguana who had stories going back three decades. Other than the pack of Marlborough Lights she had to fork out for, Deliah got a feast of stories from the lives of the reptiles at a very cut rate.

As usual she was late. I waited in the shadows of the Sphinx and ventured to stroke its ample thigh. As I reached up another hand appeared from nowhere and stroked mine. Suddenly a head appeared in the light and smiled. “Sorry. I didn’t see you.” He was obscured by backlighting and a halo of smoke from his cigarette. I caught the familiar scent of Gitars as he retracted his hand and moved into the light.

A white shirt open at the neck revealed a brown throat, a small gold chain and a chest begging to be revealed. We shook hands and he said his name was Randy, Thai-American and here to learn Thai.

“Here to learn Thai?” I asked incredulous.

“Yes, my mother has always wanted me to come back here. After she met my father she took me to America and I’ve never been back since. She’s afraid I’ll never know my other side unless I come back to immerse myself in my home culture.”

“So why choose Sphinx? Not exactly your run of the mill Thai-style bar?” I asked focusing on a face that belonged in a Thai soap opera.

“I like it here because it’s discrete. The other bars are too much of the scene if you know what I mean. I want to come out slowly.”

For some reason, my “oh oh, he’s unattainable”, alarm bell was going off. Cut it off before it goes further, it warned me. But our drinks had just arrived and my heart had a further reason for reaching 300 beats a minute. I had just spied Deliah moving down the Sai looking like a galloon in full sail. Various waiters shrank back in a mixture of wonder and fear.

I decided wisely to forewarn this poor child before he was inundated in her bow spray. “My friend Deliah is just arriving and . . . .”

“Dahling you’re looking so brown. I could just kill you,” she said sweeping into harbour. “You look like you were in Jomtien last night.” Her lip stick did a slide across my cheek,” and who do we have here? You have been a naughty boy Roy, you devil.”

And I could have just killed HER. I glanced at Randy to gauge the effect. But he was beaming. Guess he’d had ample experience with Deliah’s type in L.A. “Don’t you just love this,” she said standing up and doing a whirling dervish in front of our table. A weird assemblage of textiles that had been hung in tatters around her rounded hummocks, suddenly became a whirlpool of colour with Deliah in the middle. “Issey Miyake. It’s the absolute rage in Tokyo. Cost me a fortune.” That was probably true. Must have been 10 meters of cloth if there was an inch, and chiffon is not cheap.

“So Randy, how long have you known Roy?” she asked, moving over slightly and placing five ringed fingers on his forearm. But he didn’t flinch or bat an eyelid, and I thought, horrors of horrors, he’s bi.

He turned to me and smiled. “Maybe ten minutes but I’m hoping for more.” At that moment I truly loved Deliah. Without her gushing intercession I would probably have reacted to my in-built alarm bell and gone home alone. I glanced over at the burnished profile of the Sphinx and wondered for a moment. Ah but no, it was just a coincidence, a very fortunate coincidence.

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Neung

Neung doesn’t fit the stereotypical image of an artist. His name card dubs him “PAINTER” which could lead some to misunderstand his artistic credentials. Neung is a big guy, as in “works out regularly”, likes the gym and the results of this avocation are evident. Less evident but on display all over Bangkok are the results of his chief preoccupation, painting and design.

Neung was born in Bangkok 28 years ago, but grew up in Samut Prakarn in the southern suburbs, where he completed high school. His family still lives there. After finishing high school, Neung went to art school at the Chaeng Sin Art College, studying International Art and Design. He attended for three years and finished his studies in 1993. For four months, January to April 1993 he went with a friend to Brazil where he travelled around and then took an airbrush course for three months to perfect body painting—which had struck his artistic fancy and which he continues to perform on festive occasions in Bangkok. Currently he spends most of his time on his painting, which varies from very abstract to semi-abstract erotic paintings to the very realistic portraiture for which he has developed a significant reputation.

Whenever Neung exhibits, he voluntarily gives 10% of the proceeds of his exhibition to the HIV Foundation of the Thai Red Cross at Chulalongkorn Hospital.

Other than his paintings, Neung is a major player in the new Karaoke and Entertainment spot, Happens on Soi 2. He designed it... let Metro Magazine describe it: “He is one of five partners and his studio is on the second floor above the disco and bar. He describes his work at the bar as a “Jack of all trades”, but he indicates that he is tired of the night scene and needs a change. Hence, when asked what he sees before him in the new millennium, he pauses, reflects and then says he wants a more stable existence maybe working for an advertising agency doing creative design work.”

His last stint in design was in Bali, Indonesia. In 1997, he went to Ubud, in Bali for one and a half years and worked designing furniture, small decorative items, woodcarvings and porcelain. He says he enjoys that work and is willing to take orders and handle the production of his designs if customers are interested. He can be contacted on his mobile phone number or he can be found most nights in Happens on Soi 2. And if you want a preview of some of his bigger works take a peek inside Balcony or Happens for his mural size pieces of semi-clad warriors getting down to serious combat. One piece exhibited in Dick’s Cafè during BGF invites salacious comment. Neung dubs it his “naughty” piece. I would describe it as, “what you can do with well-arranged fruit”.

Most bar owners will tell you that one of the names of owning a public house is that is that the public don’t behave as they would in their own home — they even write on the toilet walls. Horrors!

Knowing this before they opened, Silom Soi 4’s Fun Pub, The Balcony, decided that instead of coping with this frustration, they would make a feature of it. So the gents too walls now sport the same finish as school room chalk boards and sticks of chalk are provided for the customers to leave their thoughts for posterity — well at least until the next time the cleaner drops by.

Some of the ‘penmanship’ has been very funny and inventive whilst other epistles are just contact messages, email adresses or ‘phone numbers. Anyway, next time you’re caught short in Soi 4 or if you feel that you really must share that frivolous one liner with the rest of The Scene then drop by The Balcony and ‘Scribble while you Piddle’.

So here, Gentlemen, Ladies and er... for you amusement and delection, are some of the best and some of the worst, some not particularly original but certainly all of them reparable:
What type are you?

Lifestyle, Purchasing Behaviour and Media Exposure of Gays in Bangkok

Don’t worry, we are not going to face you with one of those ubiquitous questionnaires which always produce the answer we didn’t want (unless we cheat), but simply to present the conclusions of the academic research carried out by Kingrak Ingkawat, a graduate student of Chulalongkorn University’s Faculty of Mass Communication.

Sample and definitions

The study carries the daunting title shown above, but in fact covers only Thai male homosexuals and used a sample group of 300 Bangkok gays,

E-mail: bluestar@thaiboy.net  http://bluestar.thaiboy.net
between the ages of 20-45 selected from i) 50% from bars, discos, saunas in 3 major areas—to wit—Silom, Ramkhaemhang-Sukhumvit and Sapan-kwai. ii) 10% contacted through the Internet and Gay magazines. iii) 40% from "General Gays", civil servants, the business sector, students and unemployed men.

KI commences his conclusion with the premise that male homosexuals have expanded to become the largest subgroup and are widely visible in Bangkok society. It is a reflection of society, he concludes, that cannot be hidden—not only the difference in sexual status, but also the activities, lifestyle and purchasing behaviour of male gays are interesting—in that the group is large enough to form a "niche market" worthy of [commercial] attention.

Carefully identifying his terms he defines a gay as being a man who is homosexual, is happy with his male identity and sexual orientation but dresses in a way that would not immediately identify him as being "gay" and with behaviour ranging from being "gentle" to that of a macho straight man. Transsexuals and transvestites (katoeys) were excluded from the study.

Initially he categorises the extent of the "exposure factor" of the chaps in the sample:

Close friends know of their orientation

77%

Widely known as gay (e.g. in their workplace, school)

43%

Known by family members to be gay

33% only

KI draws the conclusion that disclosure, "coming out" [of the closet] as it is widely known, is difficult and that there is an element of shame involved. Particularly, he notes, there is a fear of upsetting parents and, as a result, are sometimes forced to marry, or to get married just to demonstrate a non-existent "straightness". He records that some of his sample group (without stating a percentage) had wives and children but often patronised gay establishments or had illicit gay relationships.

**Basis of Study**

Succumbing to the universal urge to categorise, KI then studies the activities, general interests and opinions and lifestyles of his sample in order to place them in neat little labelled packages. (To be fair, he does admit that there could be considerable overlapping of the different views.)

**Activities:** The predominant activities of his sample during free time or on holidays were: resting at home; going out with a partner and going to night spots.

The least practised activities were dressing up in drag; smoking and gambling

KI concludes that the generally held belief that gay men perpetually patronise naughty nightspots, smoke, gamble and take drugs is untrue. On the contrary, most lead fairly normal lives. 65% of gays are non-smokers.

**General Interests:** The study found that most Bangkok gays were aware of Aids, use condoms during sex (83%), are conscious of physical beauty (body shape awareness, 77%), are ambitious to be successful in their careers or studies (83%), and prefer to dress in style (65%).

**Views, opinions:** Most gays are environmentally aware (93%), think of saving for the future (80%)—(but do they?), think that they know enough about Aids (85%), and are happy to be gay (65%).

He concludes (quite how, we're not sure) that these results indicate that today gays can be as happy in society as straights and compares this to the condition 20 years ago, exemplified by the magazine column "Sad life of Gays" a famous agony column by Ar Kho Paknam (Uncle Kho), which revealed a hopeless, repressed, and depressing life for most gays in the capital.

Discussing lifestyles, KI explains that the statistical method of "factor analysis" was used on the activities, interests and opinions to categorise his sample into 6 lifestyle categories:

**Categories**

**Homely-gay lifestyle.** This guy man is interested in homely activities, religion, productive activities such as gardening and cooking and usually stays at home during holidays. He is charitable inclined and spends some time meditating, goes to libraries, exhibitions and art galleries. Subscribes to newspapers, is an IT consumer but is not too interested in being fashionable or going to nightspots.

**Night-loving gay lifestyle.** This chap loves going out dancing at night. He smokes and drinks believing that he causes no harm to others by so doing. Loves gossiping and uses drugs such as Ecstasy as a stress reliever. He is a slavish follower of "high fashion", and gets his information from TV, magazines and the radio, not books or the net. He is scornful of Thai products and thinks that traditional Thai values and customs are "out of date". He does not save for the future.

**Obviously-gay lifestyle.** A fully "out of the closet" gay man. Dresses in drag on some occasions, is promiscuous but selectively so (looks for handsome, muscular or a particular type partner), interested in cosmetics and thinks nothing of wearing fake makeup in public. He dresses in high and unusual style, is happy to gamble and co-operate in any gay activity. Reads fashion magazines and has no interest in the net.

**Trendy-gay lifestyle.** This guy is keen on getting on in life, is interested in IT technology and is avid for any form of new knowledge. Believes communication to be crucial and cannot do without communication devices. He is a great media consumer, anxious to try out new things, particularly in IT, before others. He is highly independent and self motivated. As a consumer, he is interested in entertainment, fashion, IT and health.

**Conservative-gay lifestyle.** Surprisingly, this is the majority. He is prudent, thrifty and knows a good deal about Aids. He disapproves of overt displays of homosexuality or effeminate men. He believe that the rights of gays are still limited in Thailand. Nevertheless, he is likely to dress fashionably.

**Healthy-gay lifestyle.** In this group are the muscle men, very health conscious and taking part in sports and pumping iron (very body shape conscious). He avoids fattening foods and prefers low-sugar products. Careful dresser and can afford to travel as a tourist up-country or abroad. He is usually well educated (above BA degree). He is likely to buy many magazines and IT products.
The study found that Bangkok gays fell mostly into either the conservative or trendy groups—with a degree of overlapping between the 6 sub-groups.

Sub-group profile

KI draws a profile of the gay subculture group:

Works hard and enjoys entertainment. Fond of entertainment and enjoys nightlife but is conscious of progress.

Safe-sex conscious. Uses condoms, highly concerned about AIDS indicating that the AIDS campaign directed at gays has been successful.

Stylish dresser, uses beautifying products, body shape conscious, not brand-name loyal. When buying clothes or other products, concentrates on the fabric, pattern or effect rather than the brand name.

Freedom loving but still family influenced. Loves freedom but mostly avoids disclosing sexual orientation to parents or family institutions. Often reconciled to spending life without a permanent partner.

Patriotic and traditional. The majority of gays support traditional Thai customs and institutions. They have trust in Thai manufactured products.

Health and body shape conscious. Most gays are health and body shape conscious but take a negative rather than positive approach, i.e. they will give up smoking and avoid fattening and high-sugar foods rather than exercising, taking part in sports, body-building or similar activities to promote health. It is surmised that this may be due to lack of time and/or opportunity (facilities).

Happy and confident in their orientation. Most gays have no interest in being anything but men and are disapproving of overt gay and effeminate behaviour.

Purchasing behaviour and consumption of services. Gays will spend a lot on stylish clothes, and fashion accessories such as perfume and lotions, and also on entertainment such as cinemas, music and discos. Saunas are popular as a place to find sex-partners.

Media exposure. Gays are high consumers of newspapers for their entertainment columns (72%), entertainment magazines (41%); ladies magazines such as Image, Preaw, Dichan (41%).

The TV programme preference of Bangkok gays is news and soaps (similar to the straight people who are interested in news and ladies who are soap addicts). They (at 85%) buy many more magazines than straight men (at 7%). In terms of information, their main interest is about new meeting places and gay activity.

Researcher’s comments

KI comments on his study that it reveals that a cross-section profile of gays is very similar to that of their straight counterparts with no big differences being evident. Nevertheless, the general view of gays is negative, taking no account of their above-average environmental awareness, diligence or their habits of saving and their, also above-average, spending power.

The media presents gays in a rather negative light as being ridiculous and focuses on unusual sexual behaviour without considering the realities of gay lifestyles. This approach adds to the general public’s misconcep-

Editor’s comments

This research was commercially oriented, so it is not too surprising that there are some striking omissions, particularly in that the research sample is, in our opinion, too small and to locality focussed, and no research was carried out to establish what percentage of the total male population is gay, in or out of the closet (a much desired statistic—anyone know?)

The study was carried out only in and around a certain central area of Bangkok and one that is likely to contain gays of different habits than a more universal sample. It would appear that the study concentrates only on areas of the subject (and, indeed, areas of the city) that are of purely commercial interest and thus ignores many other factors of gay life which are of vital and consuming interest to gays and sociologists generally.

We suspect that a wider sample, particularly one covering the provinces with differentiation between the tourist towns of Pattaya and Patong in Phuket, and a more comprehensive questionnaire may have shown some dramatic differences, certainly so in the exposure factor up-country. These differences could have a significant commercial impact. Nevertheless, there is something to be learned from the study and we hope that KI, or someone else, will soon make a more painstaking effort to cover the whole spectrum of gaydom in the kingdom.

www.gaypattaya.com
Gay Travel Tips

The Road to Man’lay

by Durian Gray

"Man’lay! Man’lay!" shouts the bus conductor at Yangon’s Interstate Bus terminal, a teasing promise of what was in store as I boarded the overnight bus on the fabled "road to Mandalay". My seatmate, a beefy Baptist Karen (one of the ethnic groups who are mostly Christian) guy was snuggly-close enough for feellies when the night lights went out. And don't forget that most Burmese men wear sarongs called lungyils with the same “thing” underneath as the Scotsman's kilt.

At first encounter, Myanmar (Burma) seems like a gay paradise: warm welcoming smiles, long-lasting handshakes, well-built, topless men in skirts with obviously nothing on underneath, and an eagerness for friendships with foreigners. The men often adjust their lungyis by opening and re-tying the knots and then flattening the cloth against their groin, revealing a profile as miraculous as the Turin shroud. The lungyi invites clandestine exploration, and often a squeeze in the right place (as my seat-mate allowed) will not be rebuffed. That said, however, on numerous occasions, the object of attention only wanted to get wanked or sucked off, and in many cases were non-reciprocating and took no active part.

Once I reached Mandalay and went out for a reconnaissance evening cruise, I was chatted up by a handsome twenty-something guy on a bike with several friends in tow, all a bit drunk. We sat down on the bench facing the moat across from the hotel where I was staying. As we chatted, he pulled up his lungyi displaying his smooth, firm, tattooed thighs, and invited me to touch his member which, as he boasted, was rather large. I obligingly did so, and in no time he went back with me to my hotel room for more action. As it turned out, the boy named—don't laugh—Ko Ko Lay, said he works on the luxury river cruiser, "The Road to Mandalay", but as it was the rainy season, he was out of work for a

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At a prime location in the centre of the thriving gay area of Pattaya, you can own a profitable, well equipped business. Restaurant with a fine bar, 40 places, 2 fully equipped and 2 naked rooms upstairs. Long term lease, very reasonable rent. Price 1.2 Mio. Baht (negotiable).

Information with Mr. Dieter, phone: (038) 713 469
Although there are plenty of "MSM" (that is, the politically correct expression, popular in South Asian development circles, for men who enjoy sex with men), there are no exclusively gay clubs in Myanmar. In that respect, Myanmar customs are more like those in India and Bangladesh than its south-eastern neighbour, Thailand. Therefore, cruising takes more significance for those active in the MSM scene.

For years, Yangon's small downtown Mahabandoola Park was the meeting place for gay Burmese men, but after a police crackdown the cruising spread out to other parks around town. Now the main venue is the woodsy Kandawgyi Lake Park with its vast areas of secluded bushes and trysting spots, many of which are occupied by straight couples heavily petting behind parasols on the weekends. Although the park closes at dusk, next to the Kandawgyi Palace Hotel there is a boardwalk on the lake that gets cruisy at night.

Another area called Bogyoke Park diagonally across from the Hotel Nikko Royal, and also on the lake, has several late night restaurants and stays open until around 11pm. Because of the late hours and pitch darkness, the bushes in secluded areas are well-known as lovers hideaways. I found the staff at one of the restaurants to be unusually eager to make friend with a foreigner and were happy to lead me down the garden path into the bushes, and later the next morning one came to my hotel room for further hanky-panky.

Aside from the parks, another good place to meet young men in Myanmar are the discos. As in Tibet, the military regime in Myanmar also encourages non-political diversions such as discos, and there are a number of them in Yangon, although none outside the capital. So, when my Burmese friends invited me to join them at the Pioneer Disco at the Yuzana Garden Hotel, I eagerly put on my dancing pumps.

Admission is 1,000 kyats (pronounced chats) or about USD$3.00, which includes a drink and snack (a
handful of Pringles or peanuts). The price is expensive by Myanmar standards, as an ordinary labourer might earn only 100 or 200 kyats a day, (at the time of writing 330 kyats equaled one dollar). The clientele is, as a result, mostly rich teens and twenty-somethings, whose fathers are either well-to-do Chinese businessmen or in the military. Many of the red-eyed kids are stoned on speed—guys dancing with guys, girls with girls and a few hetero couples. The music, deejayed by a swarthy South Indian from Malaysia, is deafening techno-pop, accompanied by strobes, lasers, smoke machines, videos and screens.

A young Chinese-looking guy in red is boogying wildly on the dance floor and after our eyes lock, he comes up to me and stage-whispers, "I wanna dance w/ you". We later exchange numbers, his name was Win, which means "bright", actually he was dazzling, but even though I went back to the Pioneer on several successive nights, I never met Win again but we did speak on the phone.

All in all, although it is easy to make friends in Myanmar, I found the sex to be mostly quickies in the bushes or toilets and one night stands. As a former S&M (that is, Sales & Marketing) director of one of Yangon's better hotels put it, "Don't think of Myanmar as a holiday destination, but as an adventure." Or as Kipling (almost) put it, "Ship me somewhere's east of Suez/ where the best is like the worst/ Where there ain't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst/ For the temple-bells are callin' an' it's there that I would be/ By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy by the sea... For there's a Burma boy a-settin' and I know he thinks o' me."

Myanmar (the country formerly known as Burma):

Getting There:
From Thailand, Yangon is served by Biman Bangladesh (which has the cheapest fares), Myanmar Airlines (state-run and best avoided), and THAI from Bangkok. Air Mandalay flies from Chiang Mai. It is also possible to enter the country overland from Mae Sai.

Where to Stay:
There is a severe over-supply of hotels in over-built Yangon, so there is no shortage of rooms at very competitive prices with most decent rooms for under $75 a night.

Recommended digs:
- **Asia Plaza:** New and already a bit sleazy, but cheap and good place to bring back trade with downtown location behind the Central Railway Station. $25. Fax: (951) 25025, e-mail: www.bol.infogate.com.mm
- **The Pansea Hotel:** A reconverted old state guesthouse, pricey but charming and no problem with visitors. (nick-named "the Pansy"). Fax: (951) 228 260, e-mail: pansea@myanmars.net; www.myanmars.net/pansea
- **The Savoy:** Another charming reconverted old colonial mansion. Email: savoy.ygn@mntpt400.stems.com, or savoy@myanmars.net. Fax: (951) 524 892.
- **Sedona Hotel:** Yangon and Mandalay—the The Yangon hotel is overpriced but the Mandalay property is better and has a cruising area across the street. Fax: (951) 289880, e-mail: sedona@kepland.com.sg
- **The Strand:** Like Singapore's Raffles, a restored old colonial hotel, now catering to the luxury market, but ridiculously overpriced. It ain't

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Website http://www.iconhotel.com
worth it, but do drop in for high tea or Mandalay rum punch.

**Thamada Hotel:** A budget businessman’s hotel with rooms for about $40, good downtown location, and for an extra $5 guests can have use of the pool, country club and health club facilities at sister Inyla Lake property. Fax: (951)665537, e-mail: InylaLake.myanmar@mtpt400.stems.com

**Traders Hotel:** In terms of personalized, friendly service and pampering, Traders is probably the best deal in Yangon’s over-built hotel scene that is highly competitive for winning the loyalty of the few visitors to the Burmese capital. I mean ballhops knowing your name, chit-chatting and following you to your room, waiting on your every need, and offering to bring all kinds of amenities and services. Another plus is the hotel’s convenient downtown location. The package rate for a minimum two night stay is only US$190++ (single occupancy) and only $215++ for double. The package includes: two nights accommodation in a Superior room, daily buffet American breakfast (rather sumptuous, we might add), Airport transfers, a personal massage (in the health club, or in-room for no extra charge). For additional nights of room plus buffet breakfast, there is a 40% discount off published room rates. Tel. (951) 242828, Fax (951)242-800. E-mail: radershotel.yn@mtpt400.stems.com

**Recommended Travel Agents**

- **EPG Travel**, run by American expat Doug Graham who knows the turf. E-mail: EPG@mozart.inet.co.Thailand. www.wpg-travel.com
- **Tour Mandalay**, run by amiable Anglo-Burmese, Khin Zaw Nichols, e-mail: KZN.TMC@mtpt400.stems.com;

www.myanmar.com/tncy

**Meeting the Locals and Cruising**

Check out **Scott (Bogyoke) Market**, and the YMCA gym during the day, **Yangon parks** (particularly around Kandawgyi Lake) late afternoon and dusk, and **Discos** (best is Pioneer Disco at the Yuzana Garden Hotel) at night.

For actual river cruising, there are river boats that run between Mandalay and Bagan on the Irrawaddy (now spelt Ayeyarwady) that range from local ferries to the super deluxe Road to Mandalay (a refitted former Rhine riverboat) that starts at $1,500 a cabin for the three night cruise, including meals and sightseeing. Hiking and trekking enthusiasts can make Kalaw, a hill-station in Southern Shan State, as a base for hill-tribe treks. Myanmar does have one international-standard, but as yet undiscovered beach resort called Ngapali (rhythms with Napoli). It is very quiet and secluded, and there is no nightlife. One recommended upmarket resort under Italian management is called The Sandoway. E-mail: orc@datserco.com.mm.

**When to Go:**

Weather-wise, the best (coolest) time to go is “winter” (December-February), but for fun, the best time might be had if you go during Thingyan, the water festival, (mid-April) which is also the Burmese New Year and coincides with Thailand’s Songkran. The Nat Festival (full-moon in August) in Taungbyone (near Mandalay) is also a hoot as it’s popular with Burmese gays and tranies, many of whom serve as spirit mediums for the nats (local spirit deities).

### Bruno’s, the restaurant for the cognoscenti

Whilst it cannot be said that the 30 year old Bruno’s Restaurant is known to generations of enlightened diners, certainly this can be said of Bruno Forrer the man. From his earliest working days as a hospitality industry apprentice, to executive positions in the world’s great hotels including the Dorchester in London, the Oriental in Bangkok and the Royal Cliff in Pattaya, he has been recognized by a host of the world’s leading personalities, either famous or little known, who now flock to his splendid restaurant in Pattaya.

‘I had no intention of opening a restaurant,’ Bruno told us, ‘but I had for many years been a friend of Dolf Riks [whose similarly famous establishment used to occupy the premises now taken by Bruno’s restaurant] and, as he got older he was less able to keep up the restaurant.’ He continued, ‘I’d never thought of Dolf as a restaurateur or chef, but as a friend. Someone with whom I could spend a pleasant few hours chatting about life, art and music. Dolf was a great conversationalist and raconteur. His predilection gave me an idea.’

Bruno took the idea to his friend and colleague of 45 years, the late Louis Fassbind “Mr. Pattaya”. The idea was for the two old friends to take themselves out of the stressful life of running an internationally famous hotel (Fassbind was the executive director of the Royal Cliff Beach Resort at the time and Bruno, the General Manager of the Royal Cliff Grand) and enjoy their mature years by simply running a restaurant and thus both help an old friend and also enjoy themselves.

And thus Bruno’s Restaurant was born. From a charitable impulse to a project enthusiastically embraced by the partners. Later they were joined by chef Freddi Schaub (from the Royal Cliff Royal Wing) but last year, sadly,
the jovial and much loved Louis Fassbind passed away. The friendship of the pair is commemorated by a painting that hangs in the restaurant of two look-alike, gourmet friars obviously enjoying the taste of a bowl of soup.

Whilst Bruno has always been interested in good food, and more so wine, he confesses that after his early training as a commis chef he was determined to ‘get out of the kitchen,’ and so he did. The culinary delights of the restaurant, therefore, (and truly delightful they are), are in the capable and sometimes inspired hands of Freddi. The menu covers the full gamut of fine Swiss/French cuisine (with good Thai dishes available) and some dishes are served at Bruno’s that are no longer available in France—the delicious Cuisse de Grenouille (frog’s legs) for example—animal activists have now made these unlawful in France. It is also possible to eat a fine three-course meal at a very reasonable price by choosing from the menu of the day. Soupe de Jour brought to your table, an unlimited choice from the splendid salad bar and, when that has been enjoyed, a bevy of handsome waiters will appear at your table with the your entrée of choice, lifting the silver plate-covers off each guest’s plate simultaneously in fine, Tour D’Argent, style.

Whilst many restaurants in Pattaya can be called “gay friendly,” Bruno’s is warmly so. This, if for no other reason, makes sound economic sense, ‘Gays are often more sophisticated and certainly have more money to spend,’ says Bruno. ‘The female companion for the night from the bars of Pattaya will normally look at the right hand side of the menu and, having no idea what she is choosing, point to the most expensive dish—which she will probably not like. Usually they’re much happier with fried rice’ he commented wryly. ‘Gay boys, on the other hand, seem often to be more experienced with menus, know what they like and will choose that. Some of course develop expensive tastes,’ added Bruno regretfully; remembering one of his friends who ate smoked salmon for breakfast lunch and dinner.

For those who like fine wines, Bruno’s is the place. He is a lover of wine but certainly not a wine-snob. Many of the best wines in his cellar come from Australia and cost from Baht 1,400 to 20,000 a bottle. ‘I drink quite a lot of it myself,’ he said, ‘If a customer opens a new bottle and asks me to share a glass, who am I to refuse?’ Here I drink chamomile tea,’ he added, taking a sip. (We were sitting on the plant-covered patio of Bruno’s luxury seaside condominium.) He recounts how he chided a Frenchman who was unhappy that Bruno no longer stocked his favourite French wine (now valued at over 50,000 a bottle). ‘Not all good wine comes from France,’ he told him, ‘This Australian wine is equal to many of the good French wines.’

Many famous people have crossed Bruno’s path, some to his possible disadvantage. He reminisces about when he was at the Dorchester in London, the late financier, art-loving philanthropist Gulbenkian was dining in the grill room and when he was due to leave, his driver could not be found. ‘I’ll have to take a taxi,’ grumb-
Gay men happy parents of newborn twins

Hot on the above story came the news that two gay British medical business millionaires, Barrie Drewitt and Tony Barlow, have become the parents of twins born in California to a surrogate mother using in-vitro fertilization, and plan to register them as the first British children with two fathers and no mother.

The boy and girl were born on 9 December last year at a clinic in Modesto, California, to an American woman who carried embryos created from the eggs of another American and the sperm of one of the gay couple.

The fathers plan to bring the twins, whose names are Aspen and Saffron Drewitt-Barlow back to their home in Banbury, Essex and then attempt to have them registered in Britain, after having won a US supreme Court order allowing them to register their names on the twins birth certificates as Parent 1 and Parent 2.

Lawyers have warned the men that as unmarried they have no automatic right to pass their nationality on to the twins and that a birth certificate issued in the United States may not be recognized in stuffy old Britain. What is needed is a new law—see below.

Same-sex marriages

The USA religious lobby is beginning to seem a little less reactionary than it used to be. Some 850 clergy and other religious workers endorsed a declaration on morality that calls upon all faiths to bless same-sex couples and allow gay and lesbian ministers.

The declaration, issued in November last year by presidents of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ, also advocates open access to abortion and sex education at all age levels.

Officials and clergy from those two denominations and from the Reform and Reconstruction branches of Judaism, made up nearly half of the initial signers of the statement.

The paper got slim backing among Catholics—two nuns, no priests and a handful of lay activists—and none from major Evangelical, black, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Mormon, Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim organizations.

Gore for Gays

And legal same-sex marriages just might be passed into law if Gore wins the next USA presidential election. (So exercise your expatriate voting rights all you Americans living in Thailand!)

Vice-president Al Gore said last month that the United States is close to granting anti-discrimination guarantees to gays and lesbians. Meanwhile ...

"Don't ask, don't tell" doesn't work ...

admitted President Clinton, agreeing with his wife. He promised to create a new policy that would help gay service members to remain on duty without being persecuted for their sexual orientation.

'I can only hope that the [recent] brutal beating to death of a gay soldier will give some sobering impetus to a re-examination of how this policy is implemented, and whether we can do a better job of fulfilling the original intent,' Mr Clinton said.

Sperm in the mail

About 1,000 Volunteers from Scotland are sending sperm samples through the post in special liquefied envelopes as part of a survey into the effects of pollution on sperm to the Medical Research Council in Edinburgh.

Such a survey would be quite appropriate in Bangkok—and we think we could drum up at least 1,000 volunteers. Any takers?

The Sea Hag Restaurant:
The most admired Thai restaurant in Phuket.

Coming to Phuket, most people want to know where "the really good places are". What is the top of the list? Well, The Sea Hag earned the prize as the top of the list a long time ago, and continues to take care of people, straight or gay, wanting the best food in town.

Chances are that most people enjoy eating in restaurants where they are welcome and can be themselves. If you are gay, it is often an openly gay restaurant that is chosen. Some restaurants and cafés court the gay community just for the
more freely available gay bath. So, it is doubly wonderful to be at the best restaurant in town, and have the most genuine welcome in an atmosphere where everyone is comfortable being exactly who they are, with no flag waving or props.

That is how most people find the Sea Hag.

The Sea Hag Restaurant, owned and operated by Khun "Kenya", serves the most admired Thai food in Phuket, with an emphasis on local seafood, house specialties and a wide selection of good and thoughtfully affordable wine in a really comfortable "with friends" atmosphere. It has become an institution in a rapidly growing area, and continues to keep pace with the changes in the tourism picture of Phuket.

This admiration for the "Sea Hag Cuisine" is easy to understand, having seen and tasted what comes from the kitchen. The food speaks for itself, and so do the guests, time after time.

Khun Kenya started in the restaurant business in Udon Thani, living in France and the United States, in every place acquiring different experiences and techniques. His experience has resulted in the polished menu offered here at the Sea Hag Restaurant, first opened in 1991, now in its ninth year in Patong.

Sitting with friends, having a great dinner in mid-January, 2000, we looked around the room at our fellow diners. There were three tables with many gay diners, people we had met in Patong, some from Cologne and Munich and another table from London. The table next to us had six people from France, the family of a restaurateur from Bordeaux, there for the second night in a row. The other tables seemed to have similar minded people and, as Kenya would say, "Friends of mine— I met them tonight . . . ." Upstairs there are twelve tables, filled tonight with airline crews, regular attendees at Sea Hag.

Kenya's tableside conversation and manner is legendary. People love to sit and talk with him, and he probably likes it even more. In the middle of a conversation he may notice something that needs fixing, gives clear instructions to a member of the staff, and then he is back in the conversation, opening a new bottle of wine, and trying to explain why he likes red wine best even though he usually drinks white wine.

His explanation is, "just because I do".

That is sort of how and why Kenya's standards for high quality prevail at the Sea Hag: "just because they do."

The Sea Hag is an "in" spot, a favourite for the gay community, and with good reason.

The Sea Hag, thirty meters from the beach on Soi Permpong off of the Beach Road, is open seven days a week, with lunch from noon to 4:00 PM, dinner from 6:30 PM until closing, usually about midnight. Normal dinners can start at around 250 baht per person. There is a full bar, and excellent coffee and desserts are served.
Bangkok - Sukhumvit area

Map of Bangkok (Sukhumvit area)

1. Man’s Club
2. Big Boy
3. Albury
4. Inter Mustache’s House
5. Crepes & Co
6. No Body
7. Nice Guy’s
8. Jet Set
9. Damnsak Mae Sai
10. Rasi Sayam
11. Turning Point
12. Mercury
13. Ebony
14. Cat
15. Mambo
16. Zone 22
17. Utopia’s executive hotel
18. Smart Fashion
19. Colony
20. Hero

Albury
Big Boy
Cafe
Colony
Crepes & Co
Damnsak Mae Sai
Ebony
Hero
Inter Mustache’s House
Jet Set
Mambo
Man’s Club
Mercury
Nice Guy’s
No Body
Rasi Sayam
Smart Fashion
Turning Point
Utopia’s executive hotel
Zone 22

Sukhumvit comments

Some highlights amongst the gay venues in Sukhumvit.

Albury (3)
Well-managed and fashionable men’s club, gym and restaurant. A wide choice of muscle-bound masseurs.

Big Boy (2)
A bit sleazy but check it out yourself.

Colony (20)
Well-established sauna and bar set in a villa with a fine garden. Massage available.

Crepes & Co (5)
Specialising in savoury and sweet pancakes of all types. Gay-friendly.

Hero (21)
The brand new venue with restaurant, massage, dark room, jail, tropic garden bar, cruising area and sauna. Maybe even bigger than Babylon, very stylish.

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Those Strangers

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Silom comments

Some highlights amongst the gay venues in Silom.

Aqua Spa (41)

Balcony Club (4)

Boys of Bangkok (24)
One of the boldest shows in town.

Dick’s Cafe (20)
Stylish bar and cafe with European style sandwiches and Thai snacks. Very pleasant for an afternoon coffee or a late night snack and nightcap.

DJ Station (13)

Freeman (7)
New place with cruising area upstairs and good show. Already very popular.

Icon (22)
The well-known Icon Club from Pattaya has taken over Rome Club. Fabulous shows, a real asset to Silom Soi 4.

Pharaoh’s (38)
Popular gay Karaoke in Silom Soi 4.

Sphinx (3)
Located deep down in Soi 4. Famous and popular.

Suriwongse Hotel & Coffee Shop (21)
The Coffee Shop of the Suriwong Hotel is a popular meeting place before and after hours. Open 24 hours.

Tarntawan Place Hotel (31)
The stylish, comfortable, gay friendly hotel—not noisy although right in the heart of the action.

Tawan (32)
Recently doubled in size in a place where size matters! Very popular.

Telephone (1)
Stylish, newly decorated telephone contact bar. See someone you fancy? Just dial the table number. For years one of the most popular bars in Silom Soi 4.

Utopia Tours (42)
The first gay travel agent in Bangkok; individual and group tours throughout Thailand and the region. Located at the Tarntawan Place Hotel.

Via Convent (5)

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Map of Phuket

1. Uncle Charlie’s Boys
2. Super Boys
3. Passport
4. Bingo
5. Thipaluck
6. Patong A Go-go
7. James Dean
8. Young Shark’s Club
9. My Way
10. Boat Bar
11. Heaven
12. Climax
13. Black and White
14. David’s
15. Monte Carlo Guesthouse
16. Pink Cadillac Cabaret
17. Alkazar Garden Boys
18. Connect
19. Gay World
20. Tangmo Club
21. Body Touch
22. New Rendezvous Hotel
23. Young Shark’s Guesthouse 1
24. Young Shark’s Guesthouse 2
25. Bicycle
26. Alkazar Garden Boys
27. Bingo
28. Bicycle
29. Black and White
30. Boat Bar
31. Charlie’s Boys, Uncle
32. Climax
33. Connect
34. David’s
35. Gay World
36. Heaven
37. James Dean
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43. Pink Cadillac Cabaret
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45. Super Boys
46. Tangmo Club
47. Thipaluck
48. Young Shark’s Club
49. Young Shark’s Guesthouse 1
50. Young Shark’s Guesthouse 2

Next issue: 20 April 2000

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Please send your credit card number, expiry date, reason of payment, amount to our address (of course including your address).
Don’t be surprised: The amount will be credited to Amigo Tailor in Pattaya.
Some highlights amongst the gay venues in Phuket.

Bicycle Bar
Located at the Ahroonson Complex, just north of the Paradise Complex. Popular bar and restaurant. English and German language no problem, good personal attention.

Boat Bar
Not to be missed. Continues to be the in-place for the with-it gay (and some straight) crowd. Great show, professionally presented. Stylish, friendly, reasonable prices.

James Dean
The original actual Gay Bar in Patong, now includes Guesthouse. Friendly bar, newly renovated, seating inside and on pavement. Drinks fairly priced. A top venue.

My Way
The top of the list in terms of go-go bars, anywhere on the planet. Considered the best. Great new show, changing regularly. Large, with attentive hosts and friendly boys. Big Sister club to My Way in Bangkok.

Passport
The go-go bar has picked up its class-quotient, and is better every season. Corner dancing stage with friendly boys.

Patong Boys A-go-go
Go-Go Bar on Soi 5, Great location, laid back with friendly boys. Comfortable and not noisy.

Pink Cadillac Bar
Has a strong following. Cabaret show, intimate setting. Friendly crowd with long history in Patong.

Sea Hag
Thai Seafood Cuisine presented by an artist. Khun Kenyas's restaurant is the flagship of gourmet Thai food, with a broad based crowd, and a strong gay following. Very popular, upstairs and downstairs.

Thiphaluck
Coffee shop bar with tables on pavement. Extremely popular with locals, loyal following.

Young Shark Bar
Also at the top in terms of go-go bars. Good management, good shows and plenty of noise and fun, lots of friendly boys. Centre stage with good seating, crowded and busy. Also has busy and well-run guest house.

Looking for a sincere boy friend

Khun Thanong (42) would like to find a new farang boyfriend. After a relationship of 12 years his former partner has died some years ago. No financial interests.

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Pattaya comments

Some highlights amongst the gay venues in Pattaya.

Ambiance
The first gay hotel in Pattaya. Well decorated rooms with all necessary amenities. Conveniently located in the heart of Boyztown.

Boyz Boyz Boyz (1)
One of the first go-go bars in "Boyztown". Still in same location and thriving. Very popular as a night cruising venue for beachboys.

Bruno's (8)

Butcher Hans Pub (51)

Café Royale
THE Piano Bar of Pattaya with more to offer.

Charlie Boys (21)
Cosy, music and air conditioning at a bearable level.

Coco Banana (9)
Open-air pub with many tables to sit with friends and watch the world go by. Newly renovated, the seating highly improved.

Crazy Pub (44)
The first to open in Sunnee Plaza. Famous for it's shows.

Duilio's (11)
Gay-friendly restaurant conveniently located beside Foodland on Pattaya Central Road. Pleasant ambience for outdoor (and indoor) dining. Italian food "as mama used to make". Reasonable prices.

Icon, The Club (24)
Stylish club with popular singer and show.

Royal House (31)
Stylish massage parlour with a wide variety of masseurs. Try the VIP rooms with video and music.

Servus Vienna (40)
The cozy gay-friendly Austrian restaurant in Sunnee Plaza.

Splash (52)
The newest venue in Soi Boyz Boyz. Swimmers in a glass pool. Drop in!

Throb (2)
Go-go with style right in the heart of Boyztown. Great show.

Top Man (36)
Probably THE Night-club in Sunnee Plaza. Has great sound system with up to date video music. Cabaret every night at 11:30 p.m. Well worth a visit.
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