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February - March 2001

- Rent boys - Book Review
- What's up in Chiang Mai?
- Surprises in Yangon!

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**THAI GUYs**

*the gay newsletter*

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**THAI GUYs** is published every seven weeks and distributed in most major gay venues in Thailand.

Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys
Peter Jackson & Gerard Sullivan (editors)

Review by le Scarlet Pimpernel

Just when you thought that you had read everything there was to know on the subject of homosexuals in Thailand, that prolific duo, Peter Jackson and Gerard Sullivan have provided yet another thought-provoking and stimulating collection of essays with the above title.

The book explores Thailand’s diverse sexual population, from kathoey or “ladyboys”, (transvestite or transsexual males), toms and dees (masculine and feminine lesbians) and male sex workers who service male clients.

There are nine articles in the collection. They discuss sexual and gender diversity in a series of case studies of contemporary forms of male and female homosexuality and transgenderism in Thailand. The collection does not portray the world of homosexuality in Thailand with the rose-coloured glasses so often tinting the commentary of more casual writers who often gush over the wonders of Thailand as a “gay male sexual paradise”. Many of the collections reveal the social and emotional difficulties experienced by the individuals interviewed.

For visitors dropping into the sexual free-for-all in Bangkok, Pattaya or Phuket, it is easy to gloss over the harshness of life for the vast majority of Thai gays and lesbians. Why? Because very few short term visitors have the chance to see gay men living their everyday lives, either in Bangkok or upcountry. Not to mention the lives of Thai lesbians, who have suffered from a real dearth of serious literature recounting their lot in life.

In an introductory article, Studies of Rates of Same-Sex Sexual Experience in Thailand, Jackson discusses the problems of making cross-cultural comparisons of rates of various forms of sexual expression. As he puts it, “The problems associated with interpreting data from another culture are demonstrated by the culturally relative character of even such a fundamental notion as what constitutes “having sex”.

He goes on to quote from a nationwide survey of sexual attitudes in Thailand which found that 98% of both male and female respondents regarded heterosexual “penis-vagina” penetration as having sex, whereas less than 50% of respondents of either gender regarded oral or anal sex between men to be “having sex”.

While it could be pointed out by more vicious that the confusion over what constitutes sex does seem to cross cultures, in fact even reaching all the way into the
Oval Office of the White House, still the fact remains that this survey showed that it is not a particular form of erotic contact per se which defines that act as "sexual" within Thai culture; the gender of the partners is also important.

As a result, as Jackson concludes, surveys which do not construct the question to be more specific and merely ask, ‘Have you ever had sex with another man?’ might be falling into a trap and producing results where informants under-report the incidence of same-sex contact. One value of this book is the use of Romanised Thai terms for various acts and states of sexual being such as the relatively recent rak-ruam-phet-homosexchuan which Jackson, who reads and writes Thai, is a recent analytical category of homosexuality, more in line with how the expression is used in the West. Thai studies, he points out, ‘[do not distinguish] between transgenderism and homoeroticism, or between homoerotic behaviour and homosexual identity’. This brings up what most gay men from the West confront so often, that in today’s Thai gay scene many men portray themselves as “real man” because although they are having sex with another man, they assume the masculine sexual role and this gets them off the hook. This view is especially true if such a male’s partner is an ‘effeminate or feminized male who is labelled or self-identifies as a kathoey.’ While the above observation certainly applies to male to male sex outside Bangkok, the book does state that more and more in Thailand’s urban centres it is increasingly common for men to be labelled ‘gay’ if they engage in any type of homoerotic behaviour.

The nine articles are written primarily by academics from various fields of research. That said, the articles do not suffer from the kind of stuffiness one sometimes encounters in such collections. Only one article focuses on Masculinity and Tom Identity in Thailand. But because the topic is so rarely covered, it is all the more valuable for those who want a better understanding of Thai sexual culture, especially as it relates to women.

One article also talks about kathoey living in Thailand and abroad, in this instance in Amsterdam: Transformations of Transgender; The Case of the Thai Kathoey. By Han Ten Brummelhuis.

The edition reviewed was published in Thailand by Silkworm Books, this year and is available at Bookazines (550 baht) 224 pages.

The Phuket Gay Festival News is at: www.gayphuket.com

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"Funny boys Pub located opposite Day Night Hotel"
I knew I was going to have to do something radical if I was going to use the next four years to the best advantage. I got together a town group made up of my close family friends, trusted advisors and my dog, Petula. We all hunkered down over non-alcoholic egg nog. Petula slurped hers up lasciviously. To lighten the atmosphere of defeat, I slipped a video discreetly into the VCR and hoped it would break the mood. It didn’t. I had forgotten that it was a clip taken by a paparazzo who had tried to blackmail us into paying several thousand to waste it. It showed me jogging in Spandex when I looked exactly like a pregnant chad. Thank God we coughed up the money. But why was it still lying about? If Jay Leno got his hands on it, I’d be burnt toast. Although how can you get anymore burnt than I already am, now I ask you? Anyway, every cloud has a silver lining just like my old blind uncle used to say. Fortunately, the video provoked consensus. Everyone after seeing it, suggested “A Total Makeover”.

The challenge was enormous: to embark on a makeover that would change the course of human destiny and get me that job God said I deserved. Since I had personally founded the Internet, I decided to resort to a tool I could manipulate in my sleep. In beginning my search, I went to Yahoo and entered, “Total Makeover”. Needless to say I was on the Net for three days trying to narrow my parameters.
During those harrowing hours in front of the computer, it came to me that I couldn’t just slip anonymously into the dark alleys of Nashville and seek out a total makeover artist. I would have to go further afield. This would hit two birds with one stone. After the previous year, obfuscating every issue I have held dear to my heart, I needed to disappear and plumb my roots.

Somewhere in my ramblings through cyberspace, a lazy finger hit the wrong key and Thailand came up. I hadn’t slept for days so I didn’t notice and pushed on with my Total Makeover search. Suddenly I came awake to the sound of chimes. Floating before me was an ad for a beauty salon for the total man, in Bangkok of all places. And what did they advertise? “For a Total Makeover. Come to Cutey & Beauty”. I was electrified. Bangkok had always attracted me ever since my war years in Vietnam when on R & R, I had a little tête-à-tête with a strapping Thai soldier in the back of a theatre in Chinatown. Although I have to admit, his tête was more active than mine.

But even in Bangkok, I might be recognized. So I had to develop a disguise that would not attract the media. Fortunately the wife and kids had gone to the Bahamas and wouldn’t be back for weeks. I went up to the attic and rummaged through various collectibles. I do this when I’m alone. I like a man in a frock and I carry it off well. Lo and behold, I found a collection of old gowns that J. Edgar Hoover had left our family in his last will. We had considering auctioning them off, but by the time we came around to getting up the nerve, Sotheby’s had already got hold of Princess DIs’s collection and J. Edgar’s just didn’t cut it. I found a long, businesslike suit in dark grey. It would cover my ample thighs and in a pair of sensible pumps, a small white hat with veil and of course sunglasses, I just might be able to pull it off. I surveyed myself in a dusty, full-length mirror. A bit dowdy yes, like a middle-aged...
lesbian working in Defence, but totally unrecognizable.

I phoned Thai International and made reservations for a direct flight to Bangkok under the name Jenny Nipplewort (Mrs), a name I’ve used for years whenever I go undercover. Of course I have a forged passport in that very name for emergencies like this one. Next I told my secretary I wasn’t back for three months. “I was going into retreat,” she asked what she’d tell the press. “Tell them…” I said, but stopped myself. Whatever I said could come back to haunt me in the next round. “Tell them I’ve gone to Bhutan,” I giggled to myself thinking of the paparazzi scouring the Himalayas.

My arrival in Bangkok came off with nary a hitch. An immigration lady scrutinized me a bit longer than necessary, but I think she had more in mind than the length of my visa. As soon as I was safely in the Surawong Hotel, I called Cutey and Beauty to book a whole day for my Total Makeover. A very nice young male voice came on. “Oh yes, Mrs. Nipplewort. We were expecting your call.” I broke out into a cold sweat. How could they have expected my call? I hadn’t breathed a word of my plans to anyone. He went on, “We have assembled our entire Sassoon-trained crew to attend to your Total Makeover. Well whatever was going on, it seemed organized. I decided to do what any self-respecting lipstick lesbian does with a free afternoon in Bangkok: I went shopping. Returning to the hotel with a container-load of Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Chanel, I spent the next hours assembling the look I would need. I planned to go out and really test my disguise on Soi 4, Silom. I spent the entire evening poised at a table outside Telephone Pub. A guy who

I thought I recognized from the Secret Service wandered by. I remembered him because of his tight buns. But I think he was too embarrassed to notice anyone else. He had his arm over the shoulder of this muscled Thai guy who was fondling his ass as they both walked up the Soi. I went home to bed, sure my disguise was working.

Next morning after a breakfast of Muesli, I went up to the 3rd floor of Thanyia Plaza, to Cutey & Beauty. My crew was assembled already, looking crisp and professional. Once they saw me, their faces seem to reflect a collective dismay at the project ahead. But they quickly assumed their positions and within moments were alive to the transformation they needed to accomplish. They worked over me like bees to honey. Every corner of my anatomy was scoured. My hair was sparked up with a few highlights. My fingernails were lengthened and polished. My toes were massaged and manicured. After the full day of my Total Makeover, I stood up to survey their work in the mirror. A thing of true beauty stared back at me. Not cutey, mind you. But beauty, yes.

I am now on Koh Phangan Island, preparing for the Full Moon Rave, which promises to be very special, this February. I’ve taken up with a young Swiss hippie who likes the more mature, ample woman. He says I remind him of the mother he never had. And he’s making up for lost time. I am getting into my new role so completely, that I may never return to my former life. Screw manifest destiny. Up yours with dimpled chucks, George. I am woman and I’m proud, and I have only Cutey & Beauty to thank for my Total Makeover.
Virility - The Art of Symon

By Anthony Smith

"Someone's always at home when you adopt a life-size nude," exclaims Bali-based American artist Symon, who's exhibiting oil paintings of the male form in 'Virility' at Dick's Café from February 1 to March 14. And for many rice queens, the prospect of an Asian youth posing naked on the walls of their bedroom is something rather nice to come home to.

Having a studio full of Balinese lads who'll pose naked at the drop of a hat is certainly an inspiration for Symon, who's become best known for his male figures and portraits. Yet there are many other creative sides to this painter, printer, sculptor, jewellry maker, furniture designer and inventor.

One of the paintings on show, 'Springload', is of a pair of 'boychairs', which along with his 'ladychairs' actually exist as items of furniture you can buy from his studios or order over his website (www.symonbal.com). "I have to make my inventions viable and usable. The best thing about boychairs is that they are perfect valets," smiles Symon. "You could give him the keys and they'd always be in the same place, you could stick your beer on his ass and he wouldn't jiggle it, and you can read your book and stick it between his legs when you leave the room-and his legs and the book would be in the same place when you get home. So my boychairs are the perfect boy to have around the house."

Keeping a sense of humour in his art is critical for Symon, who often injects a sense of whimsy—an emotion that society is strangely more coy about expressing than sexuality even. This is made more acceptable by his frequent use of themes from Asian mythology, even though his style might be pop art or very modern. Which partly explains why the male flesh in this exhibition is bright blue, deep red or burnished gold. To find a model with that timeless look of the gods, is no easy task, even in Bali where you can't go anywhere without spotting a perfect 'woodcarving' lounging on the bough of a tree or frolicking naked in a stream by the side of the road. (I'm not kidding; public bathing is a 4pm ritual throughout the island.)

Many of the poses in 'virility' were struck by Widi, his main muse since 1998, who may possibly accompany the artist to the opening party on February 2. "Look at five..."
Yet Symon discovered Widi shovelling gravel on a beach in remote northeast Bali. This, fortuitously, is how Symon found the location for his Art Zoo—a rustic art resort with playful pavilions, a spring-fed pool, galleries, studios and a bar made from an upturned whaleboat. You can't miss this place if you come to Bali, not least because there's often a 4m-high painting of a male figure hung on the back of an 8m-tall chair Symon erected on the headland.

Encountering Symon is to encounter an alternative world—a world of whimsy populated with sensuous Asian men. If you can't visit his Art Zoo in Alas Sari or his other Bali studio in Campuhan, Ubud, there's always his website or the upcoming Symon book. Or you can simply go to Dick's Cafe and grab yourself a life-size nude for your bedroom wall!

‘Virility’ by Symon will be exhibited at Dick's Cafe from February 1-March 14, with an opening party on February 2. Further enquiries, contact 01-855 8986 or www.symonbali.com.

of Widi's brothers. They all have the same lips, nose, ears, and tiny waists with broad shoulders, because they've been paddling boats out to sea every day since they were eight years old. Well, in Widi, his mouth pouts at just a certain point, his nose buttons up just a certain way, his eyes are just a millimetre bigger than the others. He emanates a golden power.

It transpires Widi is also a good musician and a great dancer, who was the star performer in Symon's New Year show, Sy2K staged by a London theatre director Claudia Boulton. "Widi's one of the most popular models, because, just by his nature, he has a face that affects people," says Symon. "He's the showerboy, the blue boy, the red boy in the broken shorts, the Majapahit prince and the star of the Symon movie."
The Banana has opened
New Men’s Fitness Club in Sukhumvit 11

Over the past couple of years Gay massage parlors have proliferated wildly in Bangkok. The aficionados of these establishments (and I count myself as one) eagerly await the next opening to sample the slithering delights of the latest oil or cream massage technique, to check out the facilities; the Jacuzzis, the steam and sauna rooms and most importantly the masseurs, most of whom are a cut above the average off boy. Sukhumvit Road has an abundance of these places, many of which offer interestingly different nuances to entice the punter to enter their portals rather than the one down the street. So when I was asked to wander into the Banana Club and give it ‘The Once Over’ for Thai Guys I was delighted to accept.

Banana’s is at 41/9 Sukhumvit Soi 11, equidistant between two of the most frequented massage places in Bangkok: Alburys and Heros. Just up the Soi on Sukhumvit Road itself is Nice Guys and NoBodies. If any venue has its work cut out trying to entice customers away from their reliably favourite haunt and into the new boy on the block it’s The Banana Club.

The entrance to Banana’s is discreet, unlike many of the competitors—it’s there, out and proud, doors emblazoned with its smiling, peeled banana logos and an illuminated sign advertising its services right on the street. Anyone going in there has nothing to hide. Inside there is a small bar and a café area with bright yellow and pink chairs in ‘heart’ designs around glass tables with cherry flower displays. A brace of TV’s are showing whatever UBC channel, a small Multigym machine is placed as an ornament rather than a fitness enhancer in front of a das where the grinning massage lads eagerly look out like the birthday boy in a Norman Rockwell painting.

When I visited there were 7 expectant faces grinning at me but I was promised that come the weekend, when school’s out, the place has a whole lot more. I chose the one who seemed to be the keenest and the largest of the lot. He was a handsome youth from near Chiang Rai who had a winning smile and a physique that I would have been proud of 30 years ago. We chatted English was not his forte and Thai is not mine but we got along famously. I suggested that we look around and then retire to the intimacy of the massage rooms - grin and double grin!

The tour of Bananas got off to a false start—the room key he had been given was for a room that apparently did not exist. So up, down and up the stairs we went. The locker room is designed with all pine lockers and there’s a large mirrored vanity area with the requisite mouthwash, tissues, hairbrushes, cotton wool buds etc. The steam room leads off from the locker room, as do the hong-nams and the shower area is just beyond by the stairs. Expertly tiled and well appointed were the showers but unfortunately and unlike many other similar places, my masseur did not assist me in my ablutions. No matter, when I finally finished my warm wash cycle, rinsed and spun dry I tottered out to meet him and off we went again to the massage room.

These rooms are clean and spacious, each with an air-conditioner and a larger than average massage bed pushed against the wall. A towel lay on the bed and I clambered up. “Are you going to take your kit off also?” I chirped. “Eh” came the reply.
I tried signing that he should reveal himself
as nature made him and with a sort of
sigh cum whimper he complied. “Hmm,
Nice” I said to myself almost starting an
asthmatic attack and then turned round
to see myself reflected in the large wall
mirror at bed height. “Not quite so nice!” I
thought but reminded myself that at least
he was getting paid for the hardship of
servicing me.

“No Hands” Restaurant

The halogen spotlight in the ceiling
remained at full beam during the duration
of the massage even though there was a
dimmer. By the time my flipside had been
greased, pummelled, slapped and pinched
and I was ready to turn over to have my
‘A side tuned-up,’ I began to suspect that
Khun Grinny might not have done this too
many times before! In most gay massage
establishments the masseur will have done
a bit of judicious ‘touching-up’ of the client
(firm, greasy hand down the crack of the
arse; tickling the willy, etc.) just to see
what the reaction is and to get the drift on
what he might be required to do when the
dessert course arrives. My masseur had
kept it strictly legs, arms and torso-even

though it must have been obvious what
I was after when I asked him to strip off
at the beginning.

Romantic, erotic or even naughty are not
words that immediately leapt to my mind
when the business was finished and we
went on to proceed to The Business! A
Kiss? No. A breath of rampant halitosis
reminded me that he had not followed
me around the shower area and made use of
the Listerine. Since
he was obviously not
into tonsil-hockey I sug-
gested that we proceed
to a different pursuit.
I won’t tire you with what
transpired; save to say
that most guys reckon
that nobody gives you
a wank as well as you
do yourself. So anyway,
he was sat on the bed
with his back to me, my
gland in his hand, shuffling away at my
privates and I asked if anything else was on
the cards. No. No? Ok then let’s stop there
and I’ll spill my aging seed on stony ground
with someone who wants to pretend they
are a bit more interested, adventurous and
competent at the task.

That last bit may seem a bit harsh to
readers but it’s true. I went there happy
and willing to pay for play but the play
was not up to expectations. Come on
Bananas. You have a nice place and it has
a lot of potential but the competition is
very, very fierce so train your guys. There
is much more to running a massage parlor
than you think.

Good luck.
It was dark when the porters came to make our beds on the Special Express Sleeper from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. We had just pulled out of Auvthaya station and the car was filling up with backpackers. Bells clanged, the whistle shrieked and we rattled off into the night as a cute Japanese in shorts settled in on an upper berth, giving me eyes and a friendly smile. Raindrops splattered against the windowpanes, which we scrambled to shut. The young porter lifted his eyebrows flirtatiously. A moment later he was sitting on my companion’s berth drawing the curtain and whispering, “I sleep with you tonight?” He made similar propositions to other male passengers, but never made the promised night call. I sat down next to the Japanese backpacker who had sidled up to me outside the toilets. We exchanged hotmail addresses and made a date to meet in Chiang Mai. A second porter came around and nonchalantly opined about relative cock sizes amongst farangs (white Europeans), Japanese and Thais.

After pulling into Chiang Mai we went to a family run vegetarian restaurant across the street from the station. Our breakfast order was taken by a katoey (Thai drag queen) as mom and pop looked on benignly. After arriving in Bangkok most visitors spend a few days in the capital of the ‘Land of Smiles’, reputed for sex, shopping and golf, before heading to the beaches. For gay travellers it’s usually nearby Pattaya and Jomtien Beach, or Phuket’s Patong Beach. Or they’ll literally head for the hills and Chiang Mai, 700 kilometres to the north.

Thailand’s second city
‘Chiang Mai’s got culture, mountains, hill tribes, restaurants and gay nightlife, but without the traffic and pollution of Bangkok,” says one retired foreign resident. “What more could you ask for?” An ancient walled and moated city dubbed ‘The Rose of the North’, Chiang Mai lies on a plateau surrounded by jungle-clad mountains. It is Thailand’s second city, capital of the old kingdom of Lanna, an area now covered by all of Northern Thailand and much of Laos. Founded seven centuries ago,

Chiang Mai today is a university town of about half a million inhabitants, famed for having more temples per square mile than any other place in the country. That means lots of friendly monks and lots of horny students. The gay scene in Chiang Mai is small, but generally friendlier and much less commercial than Bangkok, Pattaya or Phuket. At 300 metres above sea level, the air is cleaner and fresher than muggy Bangkok, and nights can get surprising chilly in the winter months (December and January). The trade is much less mercenary, and many of the bar boys return to their homes to help out during the rice planting and harvesting seasons.

Most visitors to the north use Chiang Mai as a base for embarking on hill treks, rafting adventures, elephant safaris, and trips to the Golden Triangle and the Mekong River. Chiang Mai also has remarkable architecture and an amazing array of handicrafts including silveware, pottery and paper umbrellas; you can see them being made in little workshops in the city and surrounding villages.

Guesthouses and gay hotels
Backpackers tend to gravitate to the budget guesthouses around Thapae Gate with love-and-peace names like Candy House, Cowboy, Happy Home and Je t’Aime. Ignoring the touts at the station we instead hop on one of the red taxis called sawngtiao, which take you nearly anywhere in the city for only 10 baht, and we get off at the Lotus, Chiang Mai’s oldest and largest gay hotel. We are greeted with a big smile by a fortyish, handsome Lebanese named Mohamad, sporting a black t-shirt that says ‘Male Prostitiute’. While Mohamad himself is not a rent boy,
he is the owner/manager of the Adam’s Apple go-go bar across the road, and his boutique Lotus Hotel is like a plush pasha’s palace. With all the in room facilities of a luxury establishment plus go-go boys on tap, the Lotus is very popular with visiting gays.

The other popular gay guest house in Chiang Mai is Cherry House which is set in a wooded dead-end soi (lane) in the upmarket shopping area called Kad Suan Kaew. Host Khun Sorayuth makes all his guests feel at home: he personally greets arrivals at the station or airport, helps you map out your itinerary and may even take you to some of his favourite haunts. Cherry House guests are well received in the neighbourhood and locals don’t mind coming in for a drink or a trick.

Go-go bars
There are eight or nine go-go bars in Chiang Mai, three male saunas and about nine male massage parlours. The numbers fluctuate: “New places open and close all the time,” says Mohamad, “as every Thai queen wants to open her own place.” Adam’s Apple remains the largest (50 dancers), most popular and best male go-go in the north of Thailand—some would say the best in all of Thailand—no mean feat considering the competition in Bangkok and Pattaya. The dancers, including well-endowed hill tribe boys, swivel their hips and gyrate around poles seductively. Go-go starts at 10pm, and the cabaret at 11:30 when it fills up with a mix of farang and Thais. With a different repertoire each night, numbers including a gang war a la West Side Story, an artist/model seduction number, a vampy katoey and a dripping candle show, all artistically choreographed by Mohamad. To take a go-go dancer or waiter (or DJ) off the premises, customers must pay an “off fee” to the house of 200 baht plus a tip to the boy. Otherwise the boys only get paid a nominal salary and some of the

Thai-owned establishments pay no salaries at all. Although you may be asked, there’s no pressure to take boys and everyone seems to have a good time. If you like go-go bars, this is really the only one worth visiting in Chiang Mai.

Westerners may find Thai modesty strange at first, that a go-go boy will not walk around naked in private, and will even keep himself covered until well under the bed sheets. Even those who modelled for the photographer were extremely polite with no attitude typical of their colleagues in other countries. The bar boys say they generally prefer farangs to Thais and many dream of being kept or taken off to a foreign country by a visiting sugar-daddy.

Men’s saunas
There are three men’s saunas in Chiang Mai. The oldest, Sauna Mae Jo, started by a Thai educated in Australia, is way out of town near Mae Jo University. Catering to the university students, it is busiest in the afternoons when frequented by students on their study breaks who need to let off steam. House of Male, located near the Insect Museum, is set in an old-fashioned Thai house with swimming pool and is Australian run. Their Tuesday night two-for-the-price-of-one is popular with budget-minded Thais.

The more upmarket choice is the Sparoma which is run by a dermatologist who specializes in facelifts. Chiang Mai’s answer to Babylon, the new Sparoma is located on the riverside and the architecture appears more Balinese than northern Thai. There are three levels of relaxation and fun which include a pool, garden, jacuzzi exercise room along with a fabulous steam and sauna room.

Gay friendly discos
While there are no exclusively gay discos in Chiang Mai, there are two popular with gays. The largest one is Bubbles inside the Pomping Tower Hotel, and its crowd
is about one-third gay; check out the toilets and balcony for cruising. Staff wear jump suits with caps and look like cute space cadets. Night Illusion is another, smaller disco that caters to Thais, particularly go-go bar workers, but only fills up after the wee hours when the bars empty out and stays open till after dawn.

Cruising
Huay Kaew Arboretum, also known as Fitness Park, is said to be the most popular beat with locals. This small wooded park on Huay Kaew Road, between Chiang Mai University and the zoo on the way to the famous hilltop Doi Suthep temple, attracts all ages; some are happy just to talk. We got chatted up by a late-thirtyish pharmaceutical rep who wholesales HIV medicine for a US drug firm which he says is doing good business in Thailand. Due to education and counselling, the country's rates of HIV transmission have dropped dramatically. A gay activist named Natee tells us that this park is the only place in Chiang Mai where local men feel free to cruise and meet each other, and is not a money scene. His advice to visitors is not to spoil it by paying for sex.

From the zoo you can take a swing-taco up to Doi Suthep (on the way up there's a waterfall which has a reputation for cruising around dusk). Doi Suthep is one highlight of any trip to Chiang Mai. There, past the seven-headed, snarling naga (serpents) with their ceramic tails forming the balustrade, you can join the saffron-robed monks climbing the 290 steps leading up to the gilded Wat Phra Tat temple and gaze down at the valley 1,000 metres below. Just before sunset the brilliant rays are reflected on the chedi adorned with gilded bronze parasols and gold encrusted tiles. It is a breathtaking sight.

Like Bangkok, Chiang Mai can be visited anytime during the year, but unlike the City of Angels, the Rose of the North has a slightly milder climate and being surrounded by hills instead of skyscrapers makes it more liveable for some. One flamboyant expat says he likes it here, 'because I can be myself without people thinking I'm crazy. You can even smile at young men here. If you do that in America, you'd get beaten up or locked up. Here you get a big smile back.'
Yangon Out
By Durian Gray

The “Ladies Night” ad in the weekly Myanmar Times surprised me with a hunky half-naked guy pictured as one of the attractions for a three-week-end series called “Mr. Body Beautiful 2000” at Yangon’s Silver Oak Cafe. When I arrived and saw some dozen topless, beefcake boys in briefs under a loose robe, I thought I was back in Thailand for a moment. But the audience—very mixed-straight couples, some even with kids, expats (mostly ASEAN nationals) some farang and a number of queens made up the so-called “Ladies” night.

I was waved over by Joseph, a Filipino hairdresser who was holding court at a centre table and who sidled over to share his throne with me. I had met Joseph earlier in the week at La Source beauty salon, Yangon’s exclusive beauty parlour where a facial could set you back $75-95 and a perm, half a c-note, not chicken-feed in a country where many workers labour for little more than 2,000 kyats or about $5.00 a month. Despite his frosted-hair, Joseph was anything but frosty, but rather generous to a fault, especially if he was interested in someone. Next to Joseph sat Carlo, another attractive, young flip expat.

Since the “models” were numbered—it was ostensibly a contest although I couldn’t figure out what the criteria was for judging. Joseph and Carlo asked me to photograph their favorite numbers, 10 and 8. Most of the contestants were part-time models, there wasn’t enough work in the country for full-time ones and they held other jobs like salesmen, waiters or carpenters, dark complexioned (except for the one

Chinese contestant who ultimately won) broad-chested body-builders. After the show, Joseph invited a couple of numbers over to his table for drinks and cigarettes which are automatically dispensed as nicotine seems to be the over-the-counter drug of choice in Myanmar. Phone numbers are exchanged, but one of the salient differences here in low-tech land as opposed to hi-tech Thailand is the absence of mobile phones which, at $2,000 a set are conspicuous by their absence, and conversation is still an art, and quite animated in outdoor cafes.

When I asked Joseph how he adjusted to Yangon coming from bustling Bangkok and all its commercial gay venues, he replied, “At first it was very difficult, and I found myself climbing walls on a weekend. But then I soon made friends, discovered the cruising areas, cafes and discos where you can pick up guys and adjusted. Now I quite like it here,” and how, it seemed, as he inched over to Mr. Burma Beefcake lighting up his 555.

“Eye contact” Joseph had told me, “is everything.” This was easy to find out and, as I also discovered, a raised eye-brow doesn’t mean disapproval, but interest in one thing, no prizes for guessing what. One of my favourite cafes is a yoghurt shop, named after a famous Burmese kick boxer and his photo still occupies pride of place on the grimy wall of the establishment run by his relatives. I sit underneath it one late evening and the young waiter with whom I’ve just had eye-contact hands me a menu and adjusts his hard cock into the crook of my elbow pretending to point out items on the menu—which include avocado toast and banana lassi. Of course the one item I am interested in is the hardening banana, which surprise, he obligingly pulls out from under his lungi (Burmese sarong) obscured by the table and gives me a feel

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as I continue to peruse the menu. After consuming my avocado toast, I excuse myself for the washroom and the waiter is already there obligingly opening the door to the stall for me and steps in to give me a second “banana lassi”.

On another occasion, two other waiters come back to my hotel room for “room service”, one at a time, as the other patiently waits in the dark. One of the charms of the Burmese I discovered, aside from their pleasant manner, is their extreme patience. They would have to be patient to live so many years under such repressive regimes.

One the same night as the banana lassi episode, I’m accosted on the street by a young man in shorts and a tank top. After the proverbial eye-contact, he invites me inside his shop of beauty products and accepts my invitation to come to my hotel room where he dispenses his beauty creams. On other occasions, just walking the street or sitting at curb side cafes, eye-contact or what sounds like a smooching sound (the Burmese equivalent to the Western “psst”) which is used for calling attention but which sounds very erotic, can easily break the ice and lead to hanky-panky.

Travel writer Paul Theroux commenting on the typical Burmese dress (the lungyi) and a white shirt, Myanmar has remained a bastion of resistance against Western dress in Southeast Asia, has called the Burmese, “a handsome race of dispossessed princes”. And despite Myanmar’s low standard of income and lack of democracy, the people seem content and amongst the happiest I’ve seen in anywhere in Asia, proving that money and democracy have nothing to do with happiness.
On my last night in Yangon, I attended the third and final night of the Mr Body Beautiful pageant. All of Yangon’s queens were out in droves, with naturally a large Burmese kaeoey contingent. As in Thailand, transvestites are accepted in Myanmar and many act as spirit mediums for the “nats” or animistic spirit deities that are worshipped and propitiated, as well as other more traditional professions relegated to homosexuals such as hairdressing etc. A queeny hairdresser named Ko Ko, who welcomes Thai Guys readers visiting Yangon, shares the Silver Oak Café compound. On the last night, the venue seemed to be mostly gays or single young men called “loubyo” or bachelors in Burmese, which has a playboy connotation which could swing either way. So if a young man tells you he is still a bachelor, it usually means he’s willing to play. Although the g-word is neither known or mentioned, euphemisms abound and one young man, after I felt his stiffening member under

his lungyi, asked “do you want to give me pleasure?” Such invitations are not uncommon and even at the airport, eye contact at the departure lounge led to a final men’s room encounter minutes before my flight was called.

In the Burmese economy where typical salaries could be in the range of 2000-10,000 kyats, a tip of 500 kyats (about 50 baht) would be considered very generous for sexual favours, while 200 kyats (20 baht) would be standard.

Ko Ko Beauty Salon & Silver Oak Café, 83/91 Bo Aung Kyaw Street (lower block), Kyauktadar Township, Yangon Tel. 299993

Pattaya Gay Festival well under way

Kick-off party in Boyz Town February 14, 2001

The Gay Capital of the Eastern Seaboard (perhaps Thailand) is to host her own Gay Festival. Preparations for the Pattaya Gay Festival (PGF) are well under way. A second general meeting approved all proposals made by the steering committee and decided the date. The PGF will take place from November 29 till December 1, coinciding with the World Aids Day December 1, 2001.

There will be many exciting events all year round culminating in the four-day festival. The kick-off party will take place soon, on February 14 in Pattaya land Soi 3, better known as Boyz Town. All venues in the Soi are asked to participate with a big party ending at Boyz Boyz Boyz. The March event will take place at Icon, March 3, with a Pool Party. Thereafter there will be parties every month, the locations to be announced later (watch this space). There are also monthly Food & Wine as well as Sports events planned.

A logo contest was held, but the winner was not known when TG went to print. A Website will soon be established to keep you updated on planned events and competition results.

The PGF has a double goal: It wants to be a fun event and it wants to generate funds for charity, particularly for an Aids and a Drug Rehabilitation Project. In order to organize PGF, a minimum of 500,000 Baht is needed. Sponsors are being approached at this time with minimum contribution being 10,000 Baht. Jimmy of Ambiance Hotel has already pledged 50,000 Baht, other big venues are expected to follow suit. Thai Guys will certainly be a sponsor.

In order to exclude unwelcome elements, a PGF policy statement was issued to ensure that only lawful sponsors participate. “The participation of any business which is employing under-age staff and offering the same to its customers is unacceptable. The PGF does not want this type of business participating in or sponsoring any festival events”.

Anyone interested in sponsoring can contact any board member or communicate through Thai Guys (pgf@thaiguys.org).

Fun times are coming. Enjoy!

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Topless in China

by Durian Gray

"During the hot summer months," complained an editorial in the Beijing Morning Post with unaccustomed understatement, "topless men have not been a rare sight around public places in Beijing." Striding through the crowd or along the roadside, even on buses and in public eateries, topless men are said by the newspaper to be "causing quite a stir in the capital where some senior residents (no doubt frustrated party apparatchiks) have called such behaviour a "pollution". "Traditional habits of cooling off by going shirtless in small lanes have grown unkind for the civilized capital let along going to public places in such array" one taxi driver was allegedly quoted as saying, although it sounds more like it was made up by the editorial writer.

The prudish editorial continued, "Many Beijing residents are worried that such impolite behaviour in public places will tarnish the image of Beijing and have a bad influence on the city's petition to host the 2008 Olympic Games." Not to worry, if Beijing doesn't succeed in hosting the next straight Olympic Games, at least it can follow Sydney's example by hosting the next Gay Olympic Games, after Sydney's in 2002. With all those topless hunks parading around Beijing with nothing to do, at least let them start training up now.

Bangkok newspaper readers recently got a treat when The Nation ran a photo of those topless Chinese hunks in swimsuits showing off their bodies in preparation for an International Manhunt contest to be held in Singapore. During our summer travels in China, we never made it to Beijing, but we did get an eyeful in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, known, like Thailand, for its fiery cuisine, but with climate certainly no hotter or sultrier than Bangkok. Aside from the tasty food, there was a lot of eye-candy roaming around town topless, both on foot, on bicycles and in the many local eateries. In Chengdu, we checked out one of the major discs which, although predominantly straight, did have a little activity in the men's room which was worked by a few friendly locals who either just wanted to get their rocks off or make a few extra renmenbi.

The main difficulty in China is the language, which could be a problem for foreigners unless you speak Mandarin, as English is little spoken or understood. Luckily we stayed at the Amara Chengdu, a Singapore-run five-star hotel where the eager-to-please (and handsome) staff were more than helpful and one of the waiters took us to the disco after hours.

Although in China there are no gay venues per se, there are said to be a few where gays predominate in Shanghai, a city long known for its vice (thank God for that), but even in Shanghai there have been some recent crackdowns. As one expat confided, the further away you get from Beijing the more relaxed, as he sat there nursing a Tsingtao beer after smoking a joint in a student cafe in Kunming.
Grand Opening at Studio Group. Good luck boys!

Nightclub Filiou
the playful boys
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"From The Balcony Chalkboard"

I love every bone in your body - especially mine.

If you can piss above this line... join fire brigade.

When I die, bury me upside down so the whole world can enjoy my bum.

Here I sit broken hearted, tried to shit but only farted. But this is a URINAL stupid!!

I'm not picking my race. I'm pointing to my brain.

Virginity is curable.

Wanted:

Meaningful Overnight Relationship

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It's easy to be sleasy.

Fancy Dress Party
Come in Period costume!

Dress as a tamapax.

My arse is a fish fillet & batter it.

I'll show you mine

If you show me yours.

Damn - I'll show you mine anyway.

Sorry ARSE

Life is like a prick.

*When it's soft, you can't beat it.

*When it's hard you get screwed.

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Collect the whole set.
slut2001@homing.com

 Riyed Big Boy

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5 Films 2500 B
10 Films 3300 B

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Do's and Don'ts:

Don't wank in public. Don't be a pervert.

1. We don't want to know your 
    address. If you are not a Thai national you need to go through local channels
    (Embassy or tourist office) to get a Thai visa.

2. We would like to be kept up to date on your activities in Thailand.

3. You can't pay for sex.

4. Be aware of your rights.

5. Don't fall for a scam.

6. Don't get involved with people who have a criminal background.

7. Keep your money safe.

8. Don't get involved in drugs.

9. Don't get involved in gambling.

10. Don't get involved in prostitution.

11. Don't get involved in any kind of violence.

12. Don't get involved in any kind of illegal activity.

13. Don't get involved in any kind of sexual activity.

14. Don't get involved in any kind of financial activity.

15. Don't get involved in any kind of social activity.

16. Don't get involved in any kind of legal activity.

17. Don't get involved in any kind of political activity.

18. Don't get involved in any kind of educational activity.

19. Don't get involved in any kind of medical activity.

20. Don't get involved in any kind of religious activity.

21. Don't get involved in any kind of humanitarian activity.

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Silom comments

Balcony Club (4)
Lowest price drinks and food in Silom Soi 4. Early evening and late night happy hours every day. Bar, Restaurant and Karaoke with large street terrace. Talent nights 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month and lucky draw every Tuesday. Very popular.

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.

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

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

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

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.

and group tours throughout Thailand and the region. Located at the Tarntawan Place Hotel.

Blue Star (25)
Funny sexy shows. Totally renovated.

Aqua Spa (41)
Young at heart and age. But a real icon of Bangkok's gay life already. Who never gave it a try has nobody to blame but himself.

Tower Inn Hotel (39)

A & F Tour Travel (47)
The friendly travel agent in a very convenient location. Check their new website: www.gayasiantavel.com

Cutey & Butey (46)
Hairstylist Cutey & Butey has finally come into its own. They have moved from Robinson's Silom Rd. to Thaniya Plaza 3rd Floor (between Silom Soi 2 and 4). The changes did not stop there. It is aimed specially at the gay community and is willing to offer their clients the very best in cuts, coloring and service. To ensure this, the staff have been trained at Vidal Sassoon, Toni & Guy and the Loreal Academy. Prices however have not gone up and now their service offers great value.

Facial cleansing & massaging has also improved and includes an oxygen spray. You should go see for yourself the NEW Cutey & Beauty, even if only for a cup of coffee (free) and meet the very charming staff.

The Phuket Gay Festival News is at:
www.gayphuket.com

THAI GUYS is online now!
www.thaiguys.org
No, no, no: org does not stand for orgy!
Sukhumvit Map Legend

1. Man's Club
2. Big Boy
3. Aburi
4. Inter Mustache's House
5. Crepes & Co
6. No Body
7. Nice Guy's
8. Jet Set
9. Damnak Mae Sal
10. Rasi Sayam
11. Turning Point
12. Body Line
13. Mercury
14. Ebony
15. ChurNick
16. Mambo
17. Zone 22
18. Utopia's executive hotel
19. Smart Fashion
20. Colony
21. Hero
22. Le Bordeaux Restaurant
23. Cat
24. Banana Club

Sukhumvit Comments

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

Le Bordeaux (22)
Excellent French cuisine in a stylish atmosphere.

Banana Club (24)
The newest gay massage parlour and fitness centre. Stylish interior. Cafe and "no hands" restaurant. Meeting place. The owner prides himself on discovering and hiring new faces from all over the country.

Body Line (12)

Thai GUYS is online now!
www.thaiguys.org
No, no, no. Org does not stand for Orgy!
Chiang Mai Map Legend

1. Darling Wine Pub
2. House of Male
3. New Connection House
4. Ba Rai Thai
5. Classic Touch Restaurant & Pub
6. J.J. Bakery & Restaurant
7. Amazing Sandwich
8. The Circle
9. Fan Club
10. Dai Dai Pub
11. My Way: Two of Us
12. Torpedo Club
13. Man Thai Massage
14. Best Time
15. Lotus Hotel
16. Adam's Apple Club
17. Cherry House
18. Spa Roma
19. The Coffee Bay
20. Bubbles Disco
21. Cruise Bar
22. Happy Happy Bar
23. Dragon Bay
24. Jungle Bar
25. Kit Cat Club
26. Sor Son Club
27. Adam's Apple Club
28. Amazing Sandwich
29. Ba Rai Thai
30. Best Time
31. Bubbles Disco
32. Cherry House
33. Circle (the)
34. Classic Touch Restaurant & Pub
35. Coffee Boy (the)
36. Cruise Bar
37. Darling Wine Pub
38. Dai Dai Pub
39. Dragon Bay
40. Fan Club
41. Happy Happy Bar
42. House of Male
43. J.J. Bakery & Restaurant
44. Jungle Bar
45. Kit Cat Club
46. New Connection Beshouse
47. Lotus Hotel
48. Man Thai massage
49. My Way: Two of Us
50. Sor Son Club
51. Spa Roma
52. Torpedo Club

Chiang Mai Comments

Adam's Apple Club (16)
Biggest bar in town with karaoke, pub, restaurant and somewhat raunchy shows.

Night Bazaar Bars (21-26)
Great central location. A row of drinks bars frequented by freelancers and a very young chanteuse. A favorite with out-of-towners and resident forangs.

House of Male (2)
Popular, very friendly sauna. Centrally located in a renovated Thai mansion. Pool, garden, gym and other amenities.

Spa Roma (18)
Luxurious sauna popular with yuong professionals. The ambiance and tasteful décor of Bangkok's famed Babylon sauna. Recently opened at a new location at beyond the airport.

Fan Club (9)
Serenading host boys and "special" show.

The Circle (8)
Congenial "off" bar with imaginative nightly non-ladyboy shows and a friendly ambiance.

Lotus Hotel (15)
The comfortable and inexpensive Boutique hotel of the Rose of the North. Near to Adam's Apple.
Phuket Comments

**Boat Bar (14)**
Continues to be absolutely the No.1 in-place for the gay crowd on Phuket Island, and will increase its popularity with the high season. It remains the gay anchor for Phuket, with great shows, professionally presented. Stylish, friendly, reasonable prices for the drinks.

**Club Bamboo (33)**
A very gay-friendly resort type setting 800 meters from the beach. It has fine rooms in a small intimate hotel and separate bungalows, a larger pool and restaurant. An excellent place to get away from the town, sitting in the foothills, and still be minutes away from Patong.

**Rendez Vous Hotel (27)**
Right in the heart Royal Paradise Complex, which is Phukets gay area. Boutique hotel with very moderate prices. Not far from the beach.

**Kenya’s Restaurant Hotel Bar (37)**
The latest and newest Gay Restaurant in Patong Beach. Kenya’s is intact a whole building with Restaurant, Hotel and Bar. Khun Kenya who also owns the famous Restaurant SEA HAG has the best sense for very high quality in all he does: Foods, Interior Decor and Service. As SEA HAG is mainly for Thai Cuisine Restaurant Kenya’s is mainly International Dishes but the Thai food is not left out. Inspite the high quality the prices are still surprisingly low. Open for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. Tel: 345 783.
### Map of Pattaya Legend

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**Note:** The above information is a simplified representation and may not reflect the actual content available in the original document.
Pattaya comments

Ambiance (53)
The first gay hotel in Pattaya. Well decorated rooms with all necessary amenities. Conveniently located in the heart of Boyz Town.

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)

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

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

Patta Patta (51)
Newly updated pub with traditional food by Butcher Hans.

Le Café Royale (3)
A popular gay hotel located in the heart of BoyzTown. Rooms recently renovated and all fully equipped. Open 24 hours. Coffee shop, restaurant and Terrace-bar-restaurant open 24 hours for breakfast, lunch and dinner. A wide range of European and Thai dishes available.

Piano Bar & Restaurant (3)
Piano Bar open 7:30 pm daily at Le Café Royale, with full range of drinks and food. Live entertainment with pianist to midnight, a singer and group to 4:00 am or later (exclude Sundays).

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

Crazy Pub (44)
The first to open in Sunee 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.

Boy Café Boy, Joe Massage (43)
New gay complex and the only male place in Nakhla. Thai, foot, oil and cream massage by handsome boys, a café bar on terrace. A Go-Go dancing starting.

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

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

Amor Restaurant (10)
Richards well known restaurant is located right in the heart of Boyz Town. The only 100% gay restaurant in Town. But you can also bring your mother since they are hetero-friendly or at least hetero-tolerant (they pretend). Even if you are overweight already, try the desserts!

Jim’s Tailor (68)
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PATTAYA
PHUKET
Funny Boy

by Shyam Selvadurai


‘Nuff said as Bernard Trink might put it. But this will not be on Mr. Trink’s list. It is set in Sri Lanka and is a hauntingly written account of a boy’s passage into adolescence surrounded by growing ethnic tension and civil unrest.

Arjie, the hero is “funny”. He is a member of a very extended upper middle class family but hates sports, the “normal” preoccupation of youths his age. Instead he dons saris and plays with the girls. But it is his passage from the simplicity of childhood theatrics to the gruesome seriousness of adulthood that this novel renders so well. Through his eyes we are introduced to an exotic panoply of characters: the grandmother, matriarch formidable; the cousin, “her Fatness” who moves to alter the game of “bride-bride” putting herself as bride instead of Arjie; the father, distant, unmoving, whose sense of honour is challenged by the spiralling events around him. And Shehan, through whom Arjie learns of his homosexuality and capacity for love.

The novel has a grander message. It portrays a family as told through the eyes of a young gay member. The prose is spare, vivid and gently humorous. It is truly a remarkable first novel. The author was born in 1965 in Sri Lanka. At age 19 he emigrated to Canada with his family after the 1983 riots in Colombo. Funny Boy spent four months on Canada’s bestseller list and won the Smithbooks First Novel Award. It has been published in seven countries.

Funny Boy, by Shyam Selvadurai, William Morrow & Co., NYC, 305 pg. Available at all Bookazines.
Surabaya and Java Johnnies

By Durian Gray

Surabaya Johnny,

Why are you such a heel?

My God, but I still love you so!

Berlioz Brecht

Staying at the ninety-year-old grand, and recently renovated Majapahit Mandarin Oriental in Surabaya, East Java, I escaped the languid heat of the Art Deco lobby, redolent with the smoke of the ubiquitous clove-scented Indonesian cigarette, the air stirred by slowly-moving overhead fans, and slipped out into the night to the modern air-conditioned shopping mall, Tunjungan Plaza, down the street.

Despite the sluggish economy, the mall seemed bustling and was quite crowded, especially with eligible young men who appeared to be furtively eyeing each other. I paused over a railing overlooking an ice-skating rink and couldn’t help admiring the talent pirouetting below. A couple of bleach-blond Chinese guys gave me a friendly smile. In fact, unlike in Thailand, being one of the very few visible foreigners, I received many inviting smiles from guys all too eager to make friends. As I window-shopped looking at merchandise both wearable and human, one guy came up to me in front of the Matahari department store to make small talk.

“Where you go? I go with you?” Naively, I thought he was just being friendly, so I innocently asked (meaning his occupation).

“What do you do?” “I suck your dick, ok?”

I looked him over, then at the other more attractive-cuter and younger talent surrounding us, and after a moment’s
who wrote about it in his novel “Victory”, is not a centre for tourists who generally flock to the neighbouring Hindu island of Bali. Tourists, if they come to East Java at all, come mainly to see the spectacular sunrise over Mt. Bromo, an active volcano, as we did. There after a two-hour climb up from the hot plains of East Java to the volcanic heights, we checked into a hotel appropriately named, Lava View. But despite the campy name, the decorator, obviously not gay, neglected the bedside lava lamps. Here, in this least likely of places, we were again pestered by another queeny type who preyed on tourists and kept squeezing my ass. I suspected he deliberation, declined. He followed me with another entreaty, then walked away. Later, I met up with the two, less queeny, Chinese bleach-blonds who were trying on bracelets and they invited me to join them for a coffee/avocado shake, delicious concoction of cold coffee, blended avocado, chocolate shavings and ice-cream. Their treat. The kids, 18 and 20, who were obviously from rich Chinese families (which control most of the economy in Indonesia) drove me home in their family Pajero, and snuggled up in my hotel bed as we watched TV, but there was no cock-sucking on the agenda.

Surabaya, East Java, a major seaport since well before the time of Joseph Conrad wanted a view of something other than flowing lava on my volcanic ash.

My companion and I duly wakened at 4:30 am, took horses across the sea of sand

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The other organization is Marcel Latulidhamelo’s Yayasan Mitra Indonesia, an HIV prevention and educational resource centre that has grown to become an important contact centre for the lesbigay community in Jakarta. Marcel frequently gives lectures to the public, professional and business groups about HIV and Mitra services such as anonymous HIV testing, counselling and referral services for medical, social and legal aid.

When interviewed about what being gay means in the world’s most populous Muslim country with strong Buddhist and Hindu influences, Marcel replied, “It’s considered a bad way of life, but there is no bashing here. People see it like prostitution. But historically, homosexuality was more accepted until the Protestant Dutch colonizers arrived and stigmatized it. Today, there are no laws against homosexuality, except for pedophilia. There is no age of consent because...
dub katoeys to the more straight-acting macho types. From our observation in Surabaya, most men we met were straight-acting but willing to turn a trick. At the Majapahit Mandarin Oriental, there were several apparently well-hung Muscle Marys working out in the gym and preening around the poolside as they were getting ready to enter a body-building competition in Jakarta. And the American general manager of the hotel, apparently a friend

homosexuals do not have any legal existence, in religious law or civil law. Gay life here is generally subdued even though there are places to go (mostly in Jakarta on certain nights).

In Jakarta, being the capital, there is generally more variety of gay life ranging from trannies or “waria” as the Indonesians

of Dorothy, had arranged a very camp daily duck parade through the Art Deco lobby that would have been at home in Miami Beach.

Java may be far from Kansas, but I got a shock when walking down the street in the quaint, former Dutch hill station of Malang about a two hour train ride from Surabaya. Fluttering above me on a banner spread across the street was an advertisement for a popular brand of cigarettes that said “Welcome to Kansas!”

Thanks to Richard Ammon for his input on Jakarta, and for their extraordinary hospitality thanks too, to the Hyatt Regency Surabaya, the Majapahit Mandarin Oriental, and Tugu Park Malang hotels.
January, 2001 - Patong Beach might be an indicator of how many gay things can go on in Thailand, with strong international influences working with the resident Thai gay business leaders that are creating and importing fresh ideas and concepts quickly. Time Bistro and Pub is a good example, a small and well respected club in Patong on Phuket Island that has been open for a little more than a year, and represents the interesting way that straight crossover participation exists in the gay business community. Time is owned and operated by Khun Dan and Khun Jessica, a married couple with two children, one in school, who are good, progressive thinking citizens, here on Phuket Island. And they have rapidly become one of the anchors of the gay businesses on Soi Five in Patong.

Jessica is a former travel agent, and Dan is a former manager of My Way Cabaret on Phuket Island. Like many of the entertainers and employees in the go-go bars, Dan is straight, a frequent minor heartbreak for some of the customers, but that is life. He has many gay friends and knows all of the necessary jargon and is totally part of the gay picture in Patong and the Paradise, young and handsome and with a good business sense. Jessica is a very attractive wife and mother, and a very unlikely figure to be filling the role she does on Soi Five. She is rapidly becoming the Gay Mother of the Paradise with so many gay friends in and out of her bistro. She recognises, understands and helps fix some of the problems and issues presented by visitors and guests to the bar, most of her fans call it Jessica's "gaydar".
Do you wish your company to appear professional?

Do you wish your company to appear professional?

Jessica and Dan designed Time Bistro to match the style that they would like to serve people in their own home, clean and welcoming, a pleasant spot to have some drinks and talk with friends and their guests without the noise and hustle one meets at a lot of the clubs. Good solid music that is never overwhelmingly loud is the trademark of Jessica, who serves as the DJ and cashier. Dan is the host and greeter along with their staff of about four waiters, all attractive and great to talk to.

TG: Where did you two meet, and how long have you been in Patong?

Jessica: We met working in a travel agency in Phuket Town. I had been working there for a few years, and Dan had left My Way and started in the travel business, and we just seemed to get along so well. That was several years ago, we made our decision, and now we have been in Patong at Time since December of 1999.

TG: Jessica, does it make you a little crazy when so many people are giving Dan so many looks and occasionally other offers?

Jessica: No problem, really. I'm proud of him because he is so good looking and so many people like him. We both smile about it, and I make jokes with him, and we just hug that much more on the way home at night.

TG: Jessica, how do you feel spending most of your time with guys while you are working? What about your straight friends asking about your business?

Jessica: I had many gay friends in the travel business, and I'm really happy with the gay crowd in the bar. My friends wonder, but mostly with approval, how I can stay around the gay business so much.

I tell them I feel it is normal. I'm happy that I have good friends, all of them.

TG: Dan, what motivated you to start this business, and bring Jessica into it? Who's idea was this?

Dan: This was my idea, it was really my dream to have a business of my own like this. About Jessica, wherever we go, we go together, and it works. Jessica started out as the manager of the business things, and I think the customers enjoy talking with her more than the staff or me. A total bonus.

Jessica: I trust Dan to have this business, and I will work at it 100 per cent. I'm good with the business side of Time, and you know what, here I am, and I love it. I love the visitors, the boys, the music, all of it.

To subscribe to Thai guys in Thailand just issue a cheque to CPQRS Co., Ltd. for 500 Baht (12 issues) and send to: Fortune Condo Tower 2, 315/293 Satudradit Road, Yannawa, Bangkok 10120, Tel: 01-844.1396, e-mail: subscription@thai-guys.org

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TG: To Dan and Jessica, what are your best and worst moments here at Time?

Dan: There never have been any really “bad times”. Maybe a misunderstanding with a visitor or a neighbour, but we work things out. The best times are in making new friends and watching them really enjoy what we offer. Sometimes just smiling watching affairs develop, when people come here to drink and talk and make plans because Time is a relaxing place.

Jessica: I used to worry that our business in Patong was going to be too slow. But it always gets good before the night is over. We both know you earn friends, and when we see people coming back and coming back, we know we did our work and this is the happiest time.

TG: You are in the middle of one very competitive area, with My Way and Boat Bar and Young Shark in front, across and along side of you. Is this a high-pressure situation for you, just starting against these bigger businesses?

Dan and Jessica: We think it’s very exciting, and it’s a good reason for us to be more alert, and all the more reason to make the bar beautiful and with changing features. We have the photo show of the Gay Festival hanging on the walls now. In a month we will have something different up, things that make our club better and noticed. The customers feel it, when you have something good going on. Patong moves fast, and this soi is the quickest.

TG: How did you decide to not have entertainers or off-boys working at Time?

Dan and Jessica: When we think about our business for tourists and people coming to Thailand, we want them to have a good experience, lots of fun. Everyone is welcome here at Time, for sure. Patong is pretty open with sex and GoGo’s, all this can be beautiful. But when tonight or this week’s true love is finished, or better if it continues, we want to be remembered as the place where you made some good Thai friends, beyond handsome young men and a blur of GoGo’s.

TG: How do you feel about the Gay Festival? As small as your club is, you had a truck/float and were right in there.

Jessica: Hey, the Gay Festival was fun. Queens everywhere, one million colours of hair and makeup on the pretty boys and big men. Wow. We know we have an obligation to contribute to the Festival, sort of pay back, as it is our home and these are more than just our friends, we are part of it. Better than a movie, about eighteen hours a day. And it is the one time gay people can really join together and be who they are, hiding nothing. Proud to be part of this.

TG: Where do you want to be in five years?

Dan and Jessica: In Phuket, probably in the Paradise. We have ideas for a much larger bar and restaurant. Maybe more than that. And more about the culture and people of Thailand in our business. We will do it, watch us.

Time Bistro, (www.gayphuket.com/time) serves a full bar and light food, located on Soi Five in the Royal Paradise Complex in Patong Beach, seating inside/outside, open from 6:00 PM until late.
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