Sex Change Clinic a First

by Peter Weekes

One of Thailand's leading plastic surgeons will soon be teaching the art of sex change surgery to doctors from around the world if his plan to establish Asia's first sex reassignment clinic in Bangkok proves a success. Dr Preecha Tiewtranon, a plastic surgeon at Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital and president of Thailand's Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, said the centre would also generate much-needed foreign exchange for the country.

He said he was approached with the sex-change-for-foreign-exchange concept by the Department of Export Promotion.

But the centre's focus will be patient care, not a fast buck, when the clinic opens in March. It will be staffed by Dr Preecha, a psychologist and other medical specialists, and will also offer a range of services, including counselling for parents.

"I started doing sexual reassignment surgery because patients were asking me to. I think it is better than having people contemplate suicide - that is no way to live," he said.

When he began operating on the occasional patient 20 years ago, most were locals. However, today business is booming and he estimates that he has done

Bar Work in a Foreign Tongue

Just how do local sex workers communicate with foreign customers across a language barrier? How do they say "no" to unsafe sex?

Questions like these are the focus of research being done by Graeme Storer, working on a Ph.D at Macquarie University in Australia. Storer's approach is to study the discourse of it all, specifically, how the bar-based male sex worker in Thailand communicates with his customers. How does he negotiate customer satisfaction as well as payment? How does he tell a customer that he does not want to have unprotected sex?

Storer says this field of research is important because it

Events This Month

Feb 1: V-Club is sponsoring a trip to Lopburi province.

Feb 14: Most venues will be having fun stuff for Valentines. Babylon will be offering champagne to couples. Sphinx will be having a sit-down. See also Heaven, Colony and V-Club.

Feb 15: Carpediem Galleries will be kicking off "Dream of the Blue Buddha" show till mid-March.

Feb 26: Neng art show to begin at Telephone 7.30pm-ish, wine and cheese.

Feb 28: Super Lex is staging the Happy Man Contest.
Clinic, Cont...

about 650 operations and averages between one or two a week with about 70% travelling to Bangkok from as far afield as the United States.

Pink Ink caught up with Dr Preecha a week after he operated on Terryllyn, a 38-year-old computer technician from Silicon Valley in California. And when he returns from a week's holiday,

three more patients from Iran will be waiting for reconstructive surgery to repair the damage from a botched operation in Tehran.

Terrylyn was skeptical when first told of Dr Preecha's work. Although he had a perfect track record in regard to successful surgery, Terryllyn thought, "he was just too cheap". But after she saw the doctor's work on a friend, the computer technician booked her flight to Bangkok. "This is the happiest night of my life," she said afterward.

Believing that it is a person's right to choose if they want a sex change and the medical profession's duty to ensure it can be done safely, Dr Preecha says he is also planning to establish a training programme in his particular protocols at the centre for overseas doctors.

Bar Work, Cont...

seeks to locate the discourse strategies that the bar workers have developed, which in turn, can provide tools to help other sex workers negotiate these obstacles. He's found that there exist a variety of negotiation responses. For example, when the customer refuses to use a condom, how does the worker resolve it without the customer becoming unhappy and still ensure payment?

One of the common responses to this problem, Storer says, is to turn the tables on the customer and say something to the effect that “How do you know I'm safe, that I don't have Aids?”

These responses can help greatly in intervention efforts.

There are three major components to the sex worker/customer relationship that must be addressed, Storer says.

First, the initial meeting must be managed, either by a "host" at the bar where the worker is being picked up, or by the worker himself.

In less tourist-oriented situations, the worker usually relies on the host to do the management to figure out what the customer wants, and what the worker will do. Secondly, payment must be negotiated, and thirdly, the customer must be satisfied.

Storer says there are, broadly speaking, two types of "off bars" where male sex workers may be found. The first, and more prevalent, serves primarily Thai customers. In these bars, the sex workers sit together in front of the customers, and have little say in the negotiations that take place concerning them. The second is tourist-oriented establishments, where the workers are able to fend for themselves.

With a background in linguistics, Storer says he became fascinated by how workers manage to communicate with foreign customers. - Nick Wilde

(If you would like to talk about your experiences, contact storer@mozart.net.co.th.)

Pink Ink is issued monthly and edited by Nick Wilde and Jennifer Blows. Contact information: Pink Ink, MDE Surawong #227, 173/3 Surawong Road, Danggrat, Bangkok 10500. Page (128) 386-201. Email: pinkinky@hotmail.com Web: www.khnet.com/pinkink

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Quotes

"It's one of my most common fantasies. Absolutely, all the time..." - Actress Cybill Shepherd to Los Angeles Times, January issue.

"Once in a while I'm in a situation where I end up having sex with a woman who wants to and I think, 'try it, I can try this,' and it feels good and strangely it's no big deal for me." - Gay record mogul David Geffen as quoted in Dec. 28 Akron (Ohio) Beacon Journal.

"Perhaps our collective inability to talk about moral actions and judgements without feeling like, if not sounding like, the enemy, is the reason why we seem to be having such a hard time speaking out against baaebacking (intentionally fucking without condoms). It's not simply that baaebacking might cause one or both participants to become infected with HIV, changing a life or two forever. Baaebacking purposely increases the number of vectors of infection, thus increasing the chance that other men, women who likely have no desire to become infected, will become infected with a deadly virus. That's immoral." - John Fall, columnist www.ouringforw.com Dec. 29.

"Put that rumour to death. If it's an immediate conception, maybe..." - Actress Anne Heche in an interview that she and Ellen DeGeneres are planning to have a baby, to the Fairfield Journal of Springfield, Va., Jan. 2.

"I remember being in high school and talking with my friends about gay and lesbian issues. If you had told me that six years later there would be a sitcom with a gay character who was confident and happy ('Ellen') we would have said you were crazy. There was no hope for us." - Actor Wilson Cruz (Ricky on 'My So-Called Life') to The New York Times, Jan. 1.

"Indiana becomes the 25th state to bar something that doesn't exist - gay marriages." - From an AP story on new laws that took effect Jan. 1.

Is There a Gay Community Here?

"Is there a gay community in Bangkok? That's a question we've been asking at Pink Ink for some time - and the answer seems to be both yes and no. Yes, in the sense that there are a group of gay and lesbian-identified people who congregate at certain establishments and no, in the sense that the gay community here does not have the same meaning as it does in the West."

The "gay community" rose in the West because of persecution and discrimination. But in Thailand, while the average gay or lesbian does face some social disapproval, the situation is not the same. The Thais are a pragmatic lot with a live and let live attitude that allows homosexuals to exist in relative peace. There is no need to hunker down in the face of overwhelming condemnation.

To be gay, for the average Thai, means belonging to one more group among many groups. In the West, traditionally rejected by most groups like school friends and co-workers, we tend to find a "home" only in the gay group and we put most of our energy there.

One of the goals of Pink Ink was, and is, to build community among gays and lesbians here, and consequently, the gay community question is important to us. But perhaps we're asking the wrong question. Perhaps our sense of what a gay community should or should not be is not in tune with the times and the locale.

So, what is it that we think the gay community should be like here? A gay community should be that - a community, a group of people bound together by shared interests, shared location, or familiarity. Our community shares an interest in being gay. If you are gay, then finding your way to the "gay community" means being able to participate in the business of being gay. Older gay people, after all, have learned many things through a lifetime of experience - things that should be passed down to the younger generation.

As a community, we should provide access to information. Being gay is bewildering, especially when you're just getting started.

Lastly, as a community, we should provide the framework where gays can meet gays.

Bangkok's "gay community" is addressing these concerns in one way or another. There are, for example, about 20 Thai language gay publications and (1 English one - that's us!). And there are gays of all ages, forming all sorts of relationships.

So perhaps we worry the gay community issue too much... what do you think? - Nick Wilde

"There's a lot of talk these days about homosexuals coming out of the closet. I didn't know they'd been in the closet. I do know they've always been in the gutter." - U.S. Baptist Minister Reverend Jerry Falwell, founder of Moral Majority

"...Those who behave in a homosexual fashion... shall not enter the Kingdom of God." - Pope John Paul II

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**Tower of Babble**

by Whirlybird

More venues are opening their doors - and hey, who can complain about that!

First up to the plate: Albury, off Sukhumvit 11, a "Men's Club." It features a gym, restaurant, massage, steam room, and lots more. Gotta pay this one a visit! You can give them a call at 255-8920. They're open from noon to midnight daily.

Next stop, Sukhumvit 23 and Soi Sawatdee. The upstairs to Utopia is now called Top Secret and it's a pub with massage available. Drop in.

Whirlybird caught Lee and Friends at Cyberia on the corner of Sukhumvit 24. Cyberia is an Internet cafe, but don't let that stop you. They feature live music, free movies on Sunday and much more. Lee and Friends play every Monday evening starting about 9pm, doing a wide range of stuff from the 60s, 70s and 80s.


The Long Yang Club had a fab to-do late last month and they've changed their phone number to 679-7760. Coming up this month down Soi 4 way will be lots of music in a massive effort organised by the Roma Club. Towards the end of the month you'll be treated to live shows on the stage of the Roma Club and big discounts on tapes and CDs. Lots of major music companies and artists will be on hand. And in March, look out for "Las Vegas" every Wednesday night which promises to be fabulously outrageous with mile-high hair and massive camp. More on that later.

Telephone will be featuring an art hanging by Neng (probably upstairs) to be kicked off last Thursday of the month.

Carpediem Galleries on Sukhumvit 55 will be staging a hanging by S synonym called "Dream of the Blue Buddha." Along with pottery from Manan Karanatana beginning on the 15th. Call 714-9903 for more information.

WONDERING WHAT TO DO FOR Valentine's Day with your lovey-dovey? Sphinx will be having a sit-down in the evening. Check out the great new artwork.

Khun Chompuu has taken over Guide of Bangkok's Pink Page, and graciously took note of Pink Ink though she did say we could be "improved graphically." We'll forgive her for that and wish her well in her tenure as the Pink Page Correspondent.

Chompuu, by the way, apparently missed our first issue which carried an interview with Manuel Pinedo of the Roma Club, who apologised profusely for the goings-on that took place in his absence. Rather than boycotting the Roma Club, she should, perhaps, live and let live.

Was that J.W. chatting up a bevy of beauties in Sphinx when his old Japanese boyfriend walked in and took a seat at the next table? Or J.B. who received a visit at work from her rather young lady friend who just happened to be wearing her school uniform. Or one of our glorious editors taking a nosedive off a bike out in front of Utopia for falling to see the pot hole? Hm...

Whirlybird picked up "Sex, Longing and Not Belonging - A Gay Muslim's Quest for Love and Meaning" which promised to be a good read but the writer turned out to be vacuous. The author seems to draw no conclusions from his life, and doesn't even address the issue of Islam and homosexuality. Very disappointing. Oh well. Happy Valentine's!

---

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Jennifer Bliss

If you want to meet a "high class tom boy", the place to go is Thumb Up pub and restaurant - look for the sign with the big thumb - on Sukhumvit Soi 31, just around the corner from Utopia, on Friday nights. No one's saying there's sugar daddy there for the taking but, apparently, they really know how to treat a lady. BYO mobile phone. Karaoke.

If you do manage to scare a sugar daddy, maybe you'll be able to afford one of the lush array of lesbo holidays abroad. There's the infamous Dinah Shore Weekend from March 26-29 when 15,000 of the hottest women on the planet converge on Palm Springs, California for pool parties, shows, dances and comedy. O yeah, and golf. More info at www.girlspot.com. Then there's Olivia Tours which organises women-only vacations to exotic places like the Caribbean, Greece and Hawaii. Check out www.oliviatriavel.com.


A bit closer to home, those lovely Anjarae gals organised a Sunday bus trip to the coastal town of Sattahip last month. About 30 members and friends visited Wat Yannasangwararam and the Chinese museum before heading off to frolic at Nang Run beach. More trips are planned. Check out the message in Thai at 477-1776 for more info.

Fake lesbo videos to watch out for: Chasing Amy. The premise of this crap film is that all a lesbian needs to set her back on the straight and narrow is a good "deep dickin'. It's an angst-ridden straight man's fantasy in which the lesbian succeeds in finding a "normal" relationship. Her experiences with women are written off as "experimentation" while she was waiting for the right prick to come along. Don't waste your money.

EUROPEAN professional, mid-40s, living and working in Bangkok. Interested in meeting student/professional gay 18-23 years, for friendship and perhaps more - who knows? I enjoy reading, music and island holidays! Looking for someone who speaks fairly good English and has plenty of spare time. Let's get together and see how things work out. Rasamphron area. Call 917-4/10 or BOX 15.

ME: Mature, active, straight acting European, easy going, living and working in Bangkok, enjoy body building, golf, nature and much more. YOU: Athletic, straight acting and good looking Thai, open for new ideas, need strong partner, sincere friendship, bored of going to pubs only. You want to have lots of fun with me? Can you share my hobbies? All letters will be answered. Please send me a short note with telephone number and with a nice picture. BOX 18.

Fun-loving, good-looking, successful GWM, mid-30's, looking for special GQM or GWM of similar qualities for more than a one-night-stand. Like me, you should be educated, spiritual, financially solvent, at peace with yourself ready to love and be loved. Experience is a must! All serious replies answered. Box 1Q.

GWM, 42, living in Bangkok, would like to meet GWM only, prefer over 56, for dinner, movies, local trips, etc. as well as unusual, passionate sex. French A/P, Greek A/P. Married OK. Box 1P.

Australian GWM seeks masculine, non-dominant Thai boy 20-40 for friendship, maybe relationship. Male 46 years old, straight acting. You sensitive, caring, non-financial opportunities BI-sexual or first timer welcome. Box 1N.

Australian Dyla, 35, Scoopic worker in Bangkok, seeks single lesbians interested in the pleasures of leather. Genu- ine ad. All letters answered. Box 1M.

Accommodation: Sukhumvit 4 Storey, 300-square-metre townhouse near Ekamai. Share with Canadian. Your share is 10,000 which includes utilities, cable TV, maid service and more. Call Daniel 713-3438. Box 1L.

Blood, blue-eyed Scandinavians just arrived in Bangkok. Want to meet nice Thai boy for fun and relationship. I am young (late twenties), athletic and enjoy good companionship. Box 1K.

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COLONY SAUSA: www.aprisia-
asia.com/colony.sheryl
DIJATION: http://dij-station.com
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www.dreaded.net
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Organisations/S.E.Asia
ANAREE is Thailand's lesbian
organisation. Their limited resources
are aimed at Thai speakers, but they
occasionally hold social, educational,
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women. They also put out a Thai
language newsletter. Contact them at:
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91710. www.sgroup.net.
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Malaysian gay and lesbian group. 23
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51, 239-6660. Food, drink and karaoke
in a warm setting.
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Tower, 119 Soi Mahasek. Silom (Soi
opposite Holiday Inn, take right hand
elevator as you enter building), 266-
9902.
HISTORY CLUB (gay) Silom Soi 2
Hosts. Used to be called Harleens.
Popular, A-1 service, go go go.
J-J PARK (gay) 3-3 Silom Road Soi 2,
233-2127. Popular with older Thai
crowd, this pub features singers from
Hollywood doing pop and Thai folk
songs. Sandu! JUPITER (gay) 31-13
Sarawong Road (next to Bangkok Bank),
237-4050 ext. "Jupiter" Popular go-go,
nightly, elegant, one of the best.
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at the Pink Ink Web site www.khnet.com/
Printed or at Utopia www.storia-asia.com
and www.dreaded.net.
Read these for comments, tips, prices
and comments on the venues, plus lots
more. Also see "Men of Thailand" (guide book).

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) once
classified to prefer lower-class
boys because their passion was all
body and no soul.
He also bragged to a friend of
having made love to five
different boys in a single night.
I kissed each one of them in every
part of their bodies," he said.
"They were all dirty and appealed
to me just for that reason."
Wilde was arrested on a moral-
ars charge and sentenced to two
years hard labour.
He died in Paris in 1900 and
50 years later the remains of his
longtime friend Robert Ross -
"The first boy Oscar ever had"
were placed in his tomb.
- The New Gay Book of Lists

Brickwall Southern Us gay term for "shut the hell up and get out of my
face!" used in conjunction with the "stop" hand gesture. (He's heard
enough Brickwall!). The counter move to the Brickwall is called "Free
Willy". If you are Brickwalled, immediately make your hand jump over
the person's "stop" hand gesture and say "Free Willy" (see in "I'll say what
I want, when I want!"). - When Drag Is Not A Car Race
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The Legendary Extraordinary Rome Club Membership is open - get into the groove in the heart of Bangkok. With our special offer, the first 500 members each receive a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label, a bottle of Freixenet Champagne on top of a 20% discount. It is an excellent deal, isn't it? So, join us now and get your money's worth. And all for only 4,000 baht for 12-months membership. Not only will you receive the above right away, but you can also bring up to three guests with free admission to help you celebrate the hot Bangkok nights as only the Rome Club knows how.

If this sounds fabulous to you, why wait any longer? Visit us at the Rome Club, 94 Silom Road, Soi 4, Bangkok 10500 or call for more information at (66 2) 233 88 36, 266 48 21-2. We guarantee you a good time!