



Bangsar Bounces Back

AFTER SOMETHING OF A QUIET SPELL, THE STREETS OF BANGSAR ARE ONCE MORE STARTING TO SWELL WITH DRINKERS AND DINERS. **DAVID BOWDEN** LOOKS AT WHAT ATTRACTED THEM THEN AND WHY THEY'RE COMING BACK NOW

BANGSAR, ONCE THE hippest place in town, has been through a bit of a slump of late. However, new investment in the area has seen it slowly – but surely – beginning to return to its former glories.

I'm told on very good authority that a little over thirty years ago Bangsar was a rubber plantation. This valley that is now known as Bangsar Baru was developed into a 'suburban utopia' by a family-owned property development company that is now called Eng Lian Enterprise.

Taking on that development was obviously a good decision as, more recently, Eng Lian Enterprise became the company behind the massive Bangsar Village II shopping center – one of the key components in bringing the bling back to Bangsar.

It's even harder to believe but about fifteen years ago the now happening end of Bangsar around the various Telawi Streets was little more than an open field used as a car park. This was home to a huge tree that cast shade over half the field (this became Bangsar Seafood Village and now the new mall). Sure, there were the houses and terraces but



not much commercial development. Then the rows of shop lots were developed and tenants started to arrive but the parking under the shaded tree was still abundant and there were definitely no traffic jams like today.

THE EARLY DAYS

In the early 1990s the city's party animals mostly headed to town to bars like the Hard Rock Café (which opened with artificial

queuing outside to create the anticipation and excitement of what waited inside) or Brannigan's, Modesto's and Base. Various karaoke clubs were also established in the city, catering for a new phenomena: a night out for potential singers under the delusion that others wanted to hear them. Sadly, this phenomena has become mainstream but perhaps even more tragic, is that these so called singers still haven't taken singing lessons.

Somehow, Bangsar developed into an entertainment area and this all happened very quickly. Even today I remain at a loss to understand how so many pub licenses were issued for such a small area. Was this by design or default?

When, in the early '90s, it was first suggested to me that I head off to Bangsar for a beer I really had to wonder why. Back then it was not on anyone's entertainment radar. The pioneer pubs were Dinty's and La Cantina and they were, and still remain, quite obscure but with loyal bands of drinkers who would drink nowhere else. They both resisted the temptation to open up their outlets by knocking out the front walls and establishing