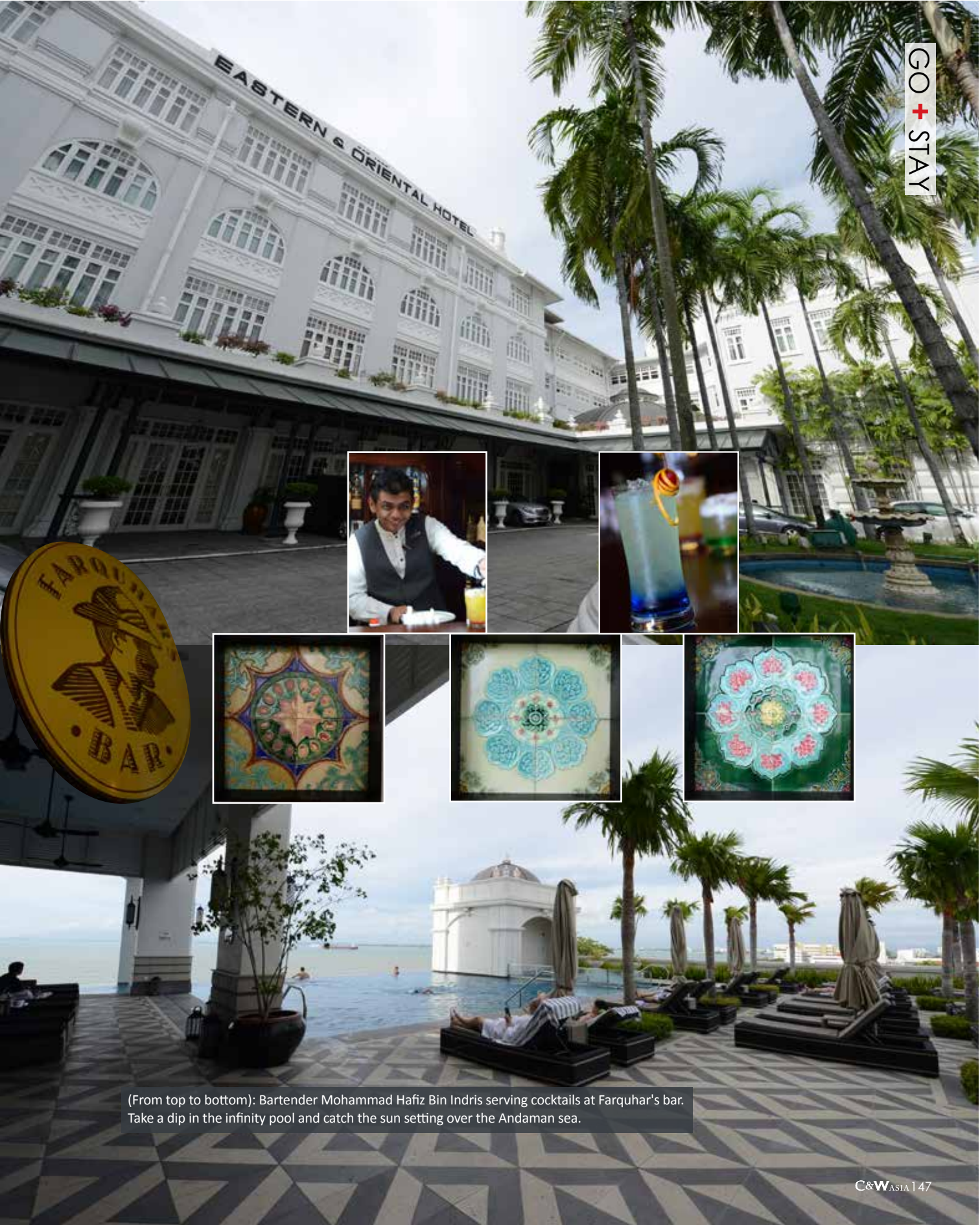


# CHANGING OF

# *The Guard*


Behind the gleaming white façade of the Eastern & Oriental (E&O) Hotel lie stories of glamour and excess (from the 1880s to the 1920s), as well as declines, changing of hands, and transitions. As much as it started as a story of three Armenian brothers, it also mirrors the journeys taken by the forefathers of many Penangites, seeing how it was the Indians, the Malays, and the Hainanese Chinese who served as the hotel's staff through four generations.

Portraits of the three legendary Sarkies brothers (Aviet, Arshak, and Tigran).



(From top to bottom): Bartender Mohammad Hafiz Bin Indris serving cocktails at Farquhar's bar. Take a dip in the infinity pool and catch the sun setting over the Andaman sea.

# 古典浪漫



Suresh A/L Kalangiam in pith helmet and khakis holding the door open for you.



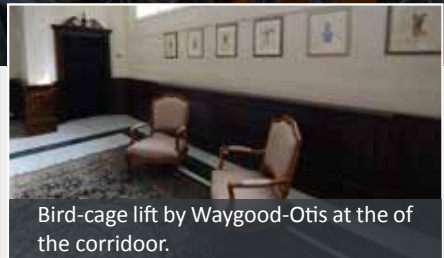
SARKIES  
CORNER



DRESS CODE  
CASUAL



rosewood bench



Bird-cage lift by Waygood-Otis at the of the corridor.

Armenians are believed to be descents of Noah, settling in the highlands around Mount Ararat, where the ark had rested. While they had Jewish features, Armenians were in fact Christians, and the massacres in 1895 and genocide in 1915 carried out by the Muslim Ottoman Empire prompted an exodus of Armenians to various parts of the world. Oldest brother Martin Sarkies escaped the atrocities as he had arrived in Penang in 1885, joining second brother, Tigran, who had arrived earlier. Third brother, Aviet, joined them shortly, and together they embellished the Eastern & Oriental with slender towers, domes, air wells, verandas, columns, and curlicues reminiscent of Armenian church architecture. Even today, if you happen to be standing under the vaulted ceiling in the lobby, and conversing softly with a companion,

you might be caught off guard by the resonant ricocheting echoes of your own words, as though you were in a cathedral. The older Sarkies brothers had been educated in Calcutta, so they might have been able to converse with some of their Indian employees in Hindustani. Indians and Malays were typically employed as bellboys or footmen, and even today, you may encounter them in their pith helmets and khakis holding the door open for you. Up to the 1930s, the E&O was very much a club for Caucasians. Local newspaper man George Bilainkin once unwittingly brought along a Chinese guest, who was about to say 'Hi' to an expatriate he knew, only to be treated as though he were transparent. "This fellow is like the rest of the whiter people," his guest said. "He never sees Chinese or Indians when they are not in his office."

When the hotel came to be in the hands of a local Chinese family, the Choongs, in the 1950s, the younger generation of the Choongs would hold their weddings there. The E&O gradually began to belong to the locals as well. In 1994, the property was acquired by Terry Tham. "You build names like the E&O over a long time," said the heritage lover. "I will manage the E&O as a piece of history, for Penangites." The Asian economic crisis halted the renovation at the hotel, and it was only with Ban Hin Lee Bank's assistance that the restoration could continue. "This bank had sentiment about the E&O and understood the hotel's true value, treasured it," said Tham.

### Merry-making At The E&O

A 1900s bird-cage lift by Waygood-Otis remains in the lobby, while Straits Chinese ornaments from Malacca and Penang adorn walkways. Thai jasmine groves by the waterfront scent the night air. The new ballroom is constructed with a timber flooring and without pillars, so that ballroom dancing may resume. In the 1950s, when a hundred couples might be found on the dance floor of the ballroom, music was provided by Albert Yeoh, 23 at the time,

and his band. Consisting of two trumpets, a double bass, guitar, drums, and piano, the band would play tunes perfect for tango, waltz, and foxtrot, such as 1940s Mandarin song, "Rose, rose, i love you", and 1960s show tune, "Edelweiss". One night, when the regular vocalist didn't show up, Yeoh's wife, Nancy, was asked to help. Known for her hand-beaded dresses and her eye shadows (which changed nightly), she would serenade with the soulful tunes of Ella Fitzgerald, while Yeoh would croon in the swing style of Frank Sinatra just as well as he would delight with the humorous, folksy Caribbean music of Harry Belafonte. They played together till the 1990s, and subsequently it was their son, Philip Yeoh, who would continue the legacy, playing the piano on weekends for a further decade.



Traditionally, the reception was staffed by Chinese clerks who spoke excellent English.

If you look back in history, the Eastern & Oriental Hotel has been to Penang what the Raffles was to Singapore.  
Terry Tham

The corridor connects the Victory annexe and the heritage wing.

古典浪漫



Liza Binti Mad Yunus sets the table for your afternoon tea.



Deftly crafted dishes by French Chef Michel Camy



(From left to right): braised New Zealand lamb shank with pea mash & mint miso. warm duck salad with baby gem lettuce, plum, & sesame dressing. lightly salted cod loin with black olive purée & marinated vine cherry tomato



I HAVE EATEN CURRIES OF THE RAREST AT THE ORIENTAL AT PENANG.  
RUDYARD KIPLING



1885 is perfect for an intimate tête-à-tête with a special someone.

## A Taste Of Yesteryear

At 1885, the afternoon tea served features smoked beef brisket finger sandwich with mustard mayonnaise and gherkin slice and smoked salmon with parsley butter on poppy seed roll. There is also egg mayonnaise in mini croissant, chicken with celery and horseradish cream in puff pastry case, and scones served with clotted cream and strawberry jam. The fifteen choices of tea leaves include Irish whiskey cream, a malty assam tea with cocoa husk aroma, earl grey, a darjeeling with the scent of bergamot, and tarry lapsang, which is smokey and spicy from drying over burning pinewood.

Today, the E&O's dining options are helmed by French Chef Michel Camy, assisted by Chef Partiben Muniandy. In the past, though, the cuisine used to be in the hands of Swiss chefs. When the E&O ballroom was first opened in 1923, a special dinner menu was called for: julienne soup, fillet of senangin threadfin, grilled lamb chops, pigeon and pâté de foie gras en aspic, roast turkey with truffles and ham with cranberry sauce, local asparagus in vinegar sauce, trifle, Coupe Saint Jacques ice cream, dessert, and coffee. Today, you will find dishes such as escargot with garlic butter and parsley crust,

warm duck salad with baby gem lettuce, plum, and sesame dressing, lightly salted cod loin with black olive purée and marinated vine cherry tomato, braised New Zealand lamb shank with pea mash and mint miso, Malibu parfait with coconut jocund biscuit and mango chutney, and pistachio opera with butter cream, chocolate ganache, and coffee reduction. In the 1920s, the E&O had Hainanese chefs, and till as recent as 2001, a Hainanese by the name of Foo Hee Seng was still working in its kitchens at 82-year-old. The menus printed in the 1970s detail the hotel's 'nostalgia' dishes, such as old-fashioned English baked crab, Bombay steak, and 'Ai-Yah' steak.

Apparently, in a colonial household where an elaborate dinner was being held, guests were so taken with the steak served that they asked for its name. So the master called for his cook. Not knowing why he had been called and assuming the worst, the first thing the cook saw was that the wrong sauce, made with garlic, spring onion, ginger, and sherry, had been served. So he shouted, "Ai-yah!" With that the Englishman turned to his guests, and said, "Well, yes, it must be Ai-Yah steak then!" Today, you'll still find Hainanese chicken rice, with fresh chilli and ginger sauce, on the menu of the E&O's Farquhar Bar, along with other local favourites such as beef or chicken salad with peanut sauce, onion, cucumber, and rice cake, Hokkien prawn mee, with beansprouts and prawns, as well as British fish and chips, with lemon wedge and tartar sauce, and American beef burger, with cheese, tomato, and sunny-side-up.



Chef Partiben Muniandy whipping up delectable local favourites.

古典浪漫



The claw-footed bath can be found in the "straits and writers" suites.



### Refinement From A Bygone Era

The suites, which could face the city, courtyard, or the sea, come with a separate living area, bedroom, and a luxurious bathroom. The bell beside the bed sends for the butler. With the Straits Suite, you will even find two bay windows, with a writing desk and dining table overlooking the Straits of Malacca. The opulent bathroom includes a claw-foot bath, a shower stall, and 'His' and 'Her' hand-basins. Other suites might feature a balcony or a garden terrace. The hotel is also equipped with a spa, known as Pañpuri Organic Spa. The range of therapies include traditional Thai massage, Indian ayurvedic massage, Indonesian Balinese massage, and Japanese shiatsu massage.



## Reaping An Undeserved Harvest

Times have changed and today, if we wanted to, we could hop on a plane and traverse the oceans for a dip in a bioluminescent bay in Puerto Rico, or head to Norway or Finland and chase auroras (Northern lights). Four generations ago, however, when our great-grandfathers voyaged to the Straits of Malacca from India, Java, or China, it had been to flee war and famine. Like the E&O, their fortunes had risen and fallen along with the times, with their hopes and dreams ultimately coming to rest in the hands of a privileged generation. The next time you visit the E&O, aside from a walk by the tumultuous waves and a treat of three-tiered silver trays, perhaps it will be the walk down memory lane and the visiting of a golden era past that will be truly meaningful and something to be cherished. QL

### 世界三大古董酒店之一《檳城东方大酒店》

檳城东方大酒店可说是一间历史悠久的“古董”酒店，这栋一八八五年落成的酒店，走过了两次世界大战，也见证了岁月的痕迹。当我们一走进酒店大厅，就被这具有英皇气派，又充满着古色古香，极致奢华的装潢所吸引。大堂中的那个圆顶回音廊也是大厅中的一个“卖点”。走廊旁挂着了让后人追忆的“祖先照”，让我们不会忘记：前人种树，后人乘凉的意义。目前名列世界前三著名的古董饭点之一的东方大酒店的设计能够让你有种走入时光隧道的感觉。酒店门口的服务人员是穿着英国传统服饰鞋帽为你开门，让你有种置身于英国的尊宠。从大厅回到自己的房间会穿过一条长廊，长廊上挂着美丽的古典吊灯，客房的房门是殖民时期英式猎装的设计，还有一台镂刻着美丽凋花的铸铁“百年电梯”，依然在载客使用（虽然载客量不多），但坐一趟百年老电梯，必让你有更深刻的体验。

一供有一百零八间套房，打开房门，你可以看到古典风格的卧室，房间里的“现代”电器用品，例如电冰箱，电视，咖啡机等，都尽量“收到”橱柜里头，不让这种现代科技产品破坏了这精典的装潢。而且电视柜和书桌也是採復古的风格，浴室的黑白色地砖真的很有特色，简洁大气，让你有置身百年前的感觉。我个人觉得整个房间最加分的地方就是阳台了，在阳台品尝着刚泡好的咖啡，加上一些小点心，再看看无敌海景，倘若旁边再坐着自己心爱的人……哇噻，这才是人生。如果你喜欢在更有情调的咖啡厅享受下午茶，酒店的附属餐厅1885必然是你的最佳选择哦！在美轮美奂的古典装潢，边品茶，边闲聊，必能成为相聚的“调味品”，不计较时间的快慢，让下午茶成为一段慢时享受时光。名厨Michel Camy也为我们这次的采访锦上添花，不同国际的料理，让你越吃越幸福。志偉