

INSIDE People > Monica Pang, beauty queen of substance
AudioFile > Small but powerful DIY Paradise Charlize
Music > New chapter in Reshmonu's career

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Tel > 03 7967 1388 Fax > 03 7955 4039
E-mail > starttwo@thestar.com.my

Play SUDOKU
See Page 30

Knack for nuptials

A stalwart in the local bridal and formal wear scene has new tricks up his designer sleeves. > 24



Eric Choong at his boutique.

Below: Flashy, colourful gowns for the girls and new romantic get-up circa 1980s for the guy, from Eric Choong's latest collection.

Bridal tail

By S.S. YOGA

ERIC CHOONG might not be in the media spotlight much these days but his business is booming and he is venturing into new territory.

So, figuratively, his fires are burning bright. Also, there are changes: his boutique, which used to be based in a hotel in the hub of Kuala Lumpur, moved recently to a bigger place in the swanky Bangsar suburb. That has not only pleased his regular clientele, he says, but also brought in new customers who love the convenient locale and the absence of the infamous KL jams.

His clientele includes the rich and famous and many Malaysian artists and even ones from Hong Kong (the late Roman Tam was a customer).

And with the change also comes a new name – no more Eric Choong Couture but Eric Choong Kuala Lumpur.

"It's in line with my plans to expand abroad so there might be an Eric Choong London and so on. Besides it helps my customers – who come from all over the world, by the way – to identify me as a Malaysian designer and also help promote Malaysian fashion," explains the 41-year-old designer.

Choong is famous for his wedding gowns, which are lavish with elaborate embroidery and sequinned details. He also makes made-to-measure gowns and is prepared to accommodate any budget. But when asked if there is a minimum, he coyly replies: "No need to talk about that, lah."

He also provides wedding packages; yes, he is quite the wedding planner, this one. And his customers are prepared to pay for Choong to fly overseas for their weddings there. He says he needs two months at least for a made-to-measure gown. But Choong makes exceptions for



Off-shoulder bridal gown in white with train tied in a bow.

Eric Choong's trademark fusion of fabrics from East and West makes a statement.

● Photos: TIAN XING
● Make-up: TAKI CHEGNE
● Hair: DAVID SHAW and KEVIN TAN

tourists and regular clients who are now based overseas to come in, travel around Malaysia, come back for fittings between their schedules and have their outfit ready in two weeks.

He has the whole works in his boutique including accessories such as shoes and jewellery. In fact, Choong says he is planning on launching a jewellery collection soon.

While he is deservedly noted for his bridal gowns, Choong also designs gowns for formal affairs and evening functions and has ready-to-wear outfits available.

His current collection this spring/summer for both the bridal collection (called Dreams of Fantasy) and evening gowns (called Colours of the Phoenix) sees him deviating from his signature of elaborate designs.

"I am known for my fusion of East and West and I still maintain that identity by

mixing fabrics like batik, songket, Thai silk, Shantung silk sari with organza and lace. But this time, when it comes to the details, I'm subtler. So it could be some batik here or songket there, with some embroidery, beadwork and even (Borneo) Malaysian native appliqué.

"What I do is emphasise the female form and the silhouette, so for the ready-to-wear evening collection I use bustier tops and fishtail skirts depicting the rear silhouette of a phoenix. For the wedding gown collection, there is similar emphasis on the cut and I use bustier and fish tail too but also the A-line and off-shoulder but all in white and there are also tassels and sashes.

"For the Phoenix collection, it's all about the colours as that's the trend. And I have used strong, vibrant yellow, blue, scarlet and so on; and as you can see, my collection also blends into the interior of

my boutique as I'm into vintage and antiques."

That doesn't mean he has given up on his intricate gowns. As for made-to-measure, it is still available if that is what the customer wants.

His clientele base might be expanding as Choong has also come up with a limited men's pocket collection, which is elegant and romantic with a touch of drama. It's not for everyone, right? Choong agrees: "It takes a certain type of man to carry off such attire."

In any case, he promises that anyone wearing his outfits will certainly make a dramatic entrance at any formal function.

For more info call 03-2283 2113, e-mail enquiry@ericchoong.com or visit www.ericchoong.com



Basic bustier gown with lace for the more modest.