

Phnom Penh Pub Page

Tw's the month of Christmas in Phnom Penh so everything should be getting quite, right? Well no, wrong. Even though December can be quite a quiet month with less tourists about and expats heading home for the hols, it appeared that every bar in town thought it was time to end the drought of live music in town and get a band in. The FCC brought over two bands, the Backslyders and Paul Urbana Jones, The Titanic held a mini concert with three bands on the one night CTN brought over a Korean Girl Band, Sharkys had the new Cambodian bands Thom Thom and the Taxi Boys, plus Curtis King, The Happy Lucky Love You Long Time Band played Talking to a Stranger and The Green Mist played at Pontoon. Holy crap! What a deluge on this normally live music starved town. Now obviously I didn't make all of them, especially considering that many of them were competing on the same night, and most regrettably I missed the Backslyders who are quite highly regarded in their native Australia.

The first band I actually saw were Cambodia's newest rock group Thom Thom. You could basically bill this band as Cambodia's school of rock. Taught by their music teacher at University these students have learnt the ways of rock and are now looking to get out and about and do some rolling. They played two sets at Sharky's, the first a mainly Western influenced rock set, and the second a more Thai inclined sound, both of which sung in Khmer. The first set was good fun, the second not quite my bag. Their sound was pretty clean although they did maybe lack a bit of flair, but lets remember these guys are really still learning and it was fantastic to see Cambodians playing real music. If you haven't heard it you can buy a CD called Cambodia rocks, it features music from the 60s and boy did they know how to rock back then. Lets hope this new band and their counterparts the Taxi Boys, who sing in English, are just the start, albeit a small one, of a revival of live music in Cambodian culture. Anyway they were well received at Sharkys and should be playing some more gigs around town in the new year, so get out and support them. Curtis King also played at Sharky for their big birthday celebration and he brought a big crowd of musicians with him too. These guys play traditional Rock 'n' Roll with the occasional bit of blues, reggae and latin influence allowed to creep in as different artists make cameo appearances. It makes for a lively blend and having seen these guys before I knew I wouldn't be disappointed. Not only was there some great tunes, there was also a chance to win a whole host of prizes in the Hot Ticket. A raffle with prizes ranging from a scooter to a case of wine and many more in between, with twenty prizes there were lots of chances to win. As the tickets were drawn the winners spun a wheel of fortune to see which prize they would get. The Chinese bloke who won the scooter was predictably chuffed. Good fun and if you didn't win there'll be more chances coming up at other special Sharky events next year.

The Green Mist were only the second band to play at the Pontoon following the Happy LLYLTB at Halloween. The venue is more used to DJs than music of the live kind, but it's a surprisingly good place to watch a band with ample space for dancing drinking and chilling. The Green Mist provide a slightly unusual sound somewhere between blues and surf rock. The slide guitar of Julien Poulson, the bands originator, providing it's unique wailing harmonics. I'm sure the people in huts over the river must have been convinced the spirits on the Tonle Sap were crying out for them that night. They played three short sets the final one featuring the more acoustic and Arabian sounding sithern in

place of the slide guitar. Only half the band were actually here, but Davis from HLLYLTB did a good job filling in for Brian Ritchie of the Violent Femmes who normally does the bass work and Stu their drummer whacked those sticks with rhythmic abandon. A good night and as ever good to here original music rather than covers!

That's all I saw of the bands, let's hope that there'll be more to come, but maybe a little more spread out. Another event, that proved to be just as much fun, was a boxing match at the Gym. Staged in the states the Mayweather vs Hatton fight drew a sizeable crowd regardless of being on at ten on a Sunday morning. No chance of waking up in time for that so only one option really. Stay up drinking all night, go to the Green Vespa for a breakfast of smoked salmon and scrambled eggs on toast with as many Bloody Mary's as necessary included in the price, and then head over to the Gym ready to watch the mighty Hatton flatten Mayweather.

The crowd were in good spirits with the Hatton supporters, myself included being by far the most vocal. It looked good for the first few rounds, but as round five finished I'd already lost five bucks on Hatton getting a knock out by then. I went down in one round, but unlike Hatton I got straight back up. Mayweather overcame him with patience and reach and I lost my double or nothing as well. Still, it's not all about the winning and it was a morning well spent since boxing is now so seldom a sport that attracts excitement or a crowd, that's where Hatton's a winner he makes it fun again. Roll on the re-match. Right, it be Xmas Eve now, job done, time to wish y'all a happy Xmas, belated, and a tip top new year, and get ... pissed!!

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