

From North

An evening of pomp and grandeur

By CHRISTINA CHIN
Photos by K.E. OOI

THE lords and ladies arrived in style, exchanging pleasantries as they made their way to the E&O Hotel conservatory for wine and hors d'oeuvres served on silver platters. The grounds had been transformed into an English garden, where the George-town Chamber Orchestra entertained guests, transporting them to an era long gone – a time of courtiers, corsets and the Union Jack.

The *Tassels & Bows* – A British Colonial Evening Charity Gala Dinner cum Pinang: Beyond Aspirations book launch, saw socialites and celebrities like UK-based 'shoemaker' Datuk Jimmy Choo and model-turned-TV host Soong Ai Ling attending the do. This function by the Dream Zephyr Foundation (Dreamz) raised RM100,000 from the sale of tickets and auction proceeds.

Dreamz co-founder Angelina Cheong said the funds would be donated to the Penang Adventist Hospital, Enyu Counselling Centre and Asia Community Service (ACS).

"We are fortunate that many were willing to contribute their time, money

and effort towards publishing *Pinang: Beyond Aspirations* and also to organise this event.

"We had a whole list of sponsors, including Texchem Resources, Venessa Diamonds, Asia Cellar, Stella-International and Eng Teknologi, supporting us from day one.

"Big names like Cartier did not even hesitate when we asked them to participate in the auction," she said.

Invited to launch the book, which would be available at all major bookstores by September, Cartier managing director and representative Alan Bernard said this was the first time the international jewellery chain was participating in an event of this magnitude in the northern region.

"Cartier has always been involved in charity events but being such a well-known brand, we are very selective of the functions that we participate in.

"The *Pinang* publication is very impressive and this is definitely one of the Year's biggest events. Tonight is all about Penang, not Cartier, but we are very proud to be associated with such a noble cause," he said.

The function saw France Talpei Bridal House and top designers Randy Goh and Richard Rivalee setting the



Bernard presenting Best Dressed winner Tan with the Cartier watch she bought during the auction.

runway ablaze with the biggest fashion extravaganza Penang had seen in years.

Straying from his usual black and white creations, Rivalee turned to purple and pink flowing fabrics to complement his signature evening dresses.

Despite the feast of colours, the night definitely belonged to Cartier's Kiss of the Dragon Collection.

Influenced by Chinese mythology and culture, the collection of exclusive jewellery was unveiled to an enthusiastic crowd.

A Cartier watch was later auctioned off together with several sculptures, paintings, designer vouchers, jewellery and antique collectibles.

Dinner committee chairperson Gillian Teh said tickets for the event were snapped up within weeks of the dinner.

"When we first came up with the idea of hosting this dinner, the aim was to collect as much funds as we could to help local charitable organisations.

"The glamour and glitter is secondary but I am very grateful to the many individuals and corporations who came together to make this event a resounding success.

"I think it is not an exaggeration to say that there are many Penangites who subscribe to Sir Francis Bacon's famous quote – In charity, there is no excess," she said.

Teh said the costume party was inspired by an important part of history.

"The 'British Colonial' theme was chosen to remind us of a time when Malaysia was still fighting for independence so that we may celebrate this year's National Day with a rejuvenated sense of pride."

Although many were initially skeptical about whether the Penang crowd would 'dress up', the event showed that there were many sporting individuals who were more than willing to join in the fun.

Tassels & Bows saw the women turning up in dresses with long trains and wigs. Best Dressed awards were presented to the three most authentic costumes.

While husband and wife Greg and Kathy Nelson looked like characters straight out of a history book, it was first prize winner Erlinna Tan who blew everyone away with her Queen Elizabeth costume, complete with glittering diamonds.

The only thing she left out was the pasty white make up. Having won the Best Costume award at the recent *Arabian Nights* charity event a few months back, Tan even went to the extent of hiring Penang's top male models to be her footmen!

The function may have come to an end but this gala dinner will surely be remembered as one of the most exciting and successful fund-raising events the northern region has ever seen.



The ladies in their colonial British finery.



Ch'ng Tian Ying, five, and Joshua Lee, seven, presenting the *Pinang: Beyond Aspirations* book.