

# 17 Klué

2008/JULY

ON THE PULSE OF THE KLANG VALLEY  
PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS

16 SHOP AND ROCK STUDIO. SHOP, SPACE1 IS A MUSICIAN'S DREAM 26 HYPE:  
BELIEVING IN THE X MULDER AND SCULLY REUNITED AND IT FEELS SO GOOD! 37  
BOW TO THE BOW MEET THE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE BOW GROUP'S FASHION  
FAMILY 47 NEIGHBOURHOOD NOSHIN' SETAPAK IS BRIMMING WITH GOOD GRUB!  
60 MEAL FOR A DEAL LUXURY DINING AT A BUDGET. WE SHOW YOU HOW!



## THE NEW D.I.Y



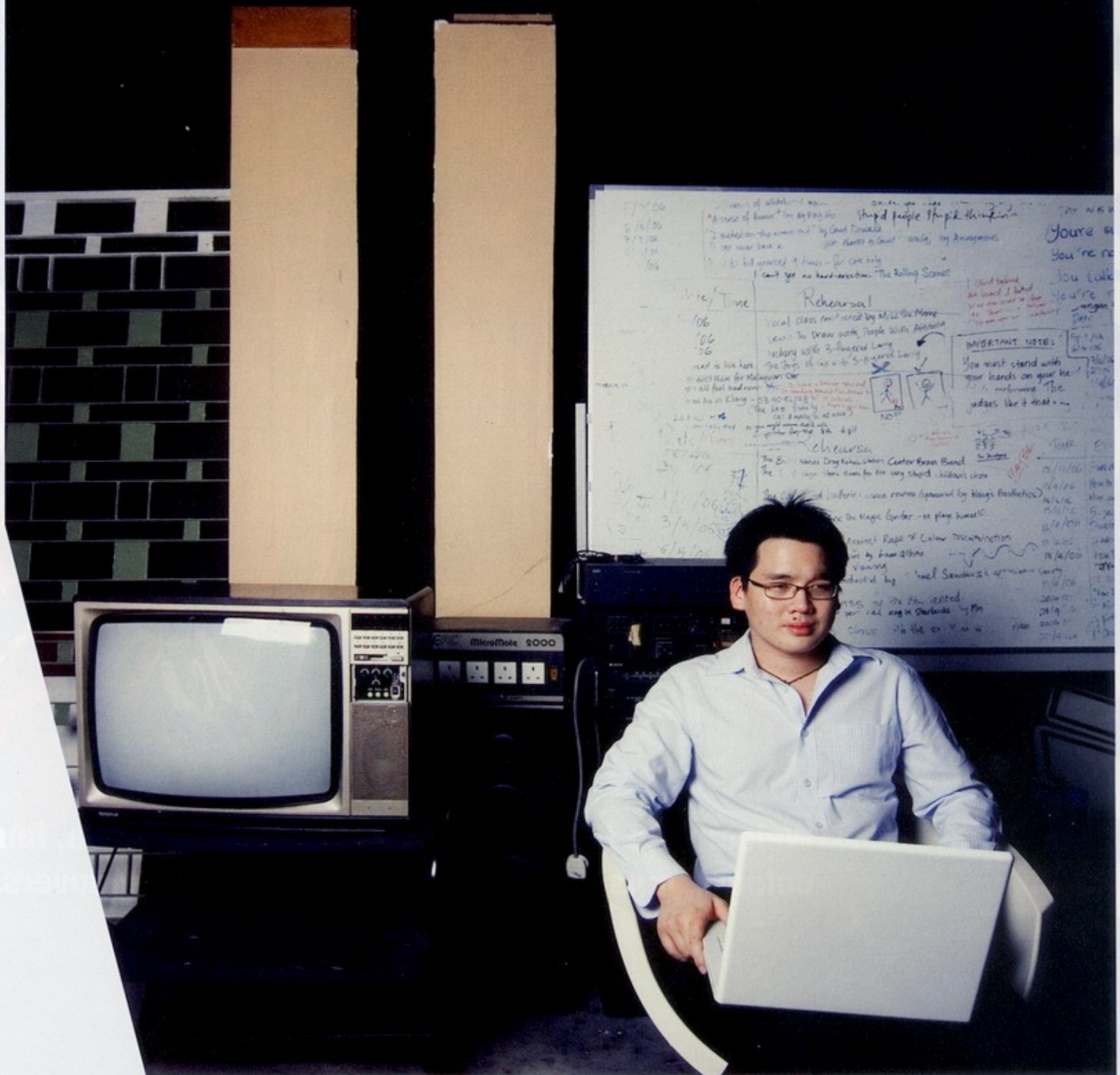
RM5.00



ISSN 1675-0217  
9 771675 021003

# BLOGGING BUCKS

TEXT PRIYA NARAYANAN PHOTO SHERMEN MUKHTAR



**T**imothy Tiah is a very nice man. The type that you would definitely want to be friends with. He is very proper, clean cut, of the striped shirt and cufflink varietal but then I also dare say that he might on occasion match them with a pair of snakeskin boots. His accent is London-Malaysian speckled with a many a lah, a hangover from a British education in a London university. But more than his accent, he speaks at super-speed, but always clear and precise, and always with a smile. We sit down to talk and immediately, it flows.

Tiah is co-founder of Nuffnang.com (nuffnang means "cool" in Jafaikan, a London dialect popularised by British comedy character Ali G) which in essence is a blog advertising website but, on a deeper level Tiah says, "In a very personal way, it is a community. That is what we very sincerely try to push." Interestingly, he says that it is this directive that is often questioned or misunderstood. A quick glance at Nuffnang's activities would show that a discernable amount of time is spent on developing the blogging community, with everything from movie screenings to pyjama parties. Accepted and



established corporate reasoning would question why so much is spent on bloggers as opposed to the agencies or firms that actually spend money on Nuffnang. Tiah smiles, his answer is simple, "All 15 of us at Nuffnang are bloggers ourselves and it is something we take pride in. We want to bring bloggers together, to expose many new blogs and raise the profile of blogs, altogether. And I think we have done that, thus far."

The story is interesting. Timothy had thought all along that he was going to be an investment banker. And then the unexpected happened, because of two trysts with the world online. His first was through a tuition matching website that he set up with a friend from Malaysia with no more than RM1,700. Whilst looking for advertising, it seemed that it made more sense to look online as opposed to only offline. Of course beyond Google AdSense, there was very little. And so, they approached a host of bloggers and asked them to write about or link the tuition website to their blogs. Hey presto, the website received far more traffic than expected and Tiah saw the power of blogs.

While on another occasion when still studying in London, he and a friend in Coventry set up a blog called *Leng Mou*, which consisted of little more than a self-indulgence, two guys battling out jokes with each other and the loser buying dinner. Their showdowns ensued and within three months, hits on their blog had hit the thousands. With this experience, Tiah was entrenched into the world of the blogosphere. He says that blogs, "...have brought opportunity for expression which in our private society is positive as it can allow for you to rant. Also, blogs can be an alternative source of news, with bloggers highlighting links to news stories or articles. So it can be a good aggregator of news." He came home and fell into the blogger set-up, attending events and gatherings but noticed a dearth of any real community sense or organization. So, armed with all this knowledge, a solid corporate model, a keen business sense and his heart in the right place, Tiah along with his co-founder (Cheo Ming Shen who heads up the Singaporean office) began Nuffnang. A middleman (with none of the connotations) of sorts between, blogger, advertiser and wider society.

And successful, they have been. But not without difficulty. It remains a constant struggle to convince clients that, "...blogs are a viable and profitable medium for advertisement." He cites Nike as Nuffnang's big break and then goes on to explain how a company like that could benefit from the company. In the past, if a firm had decided to embrace blog advertising (which in itself was pretty daring), it meant choosing a high profile blogger in KL and getting him to forward an ad to three to ten of his friends. However, with Nuffnang the average Nike campaign could reach thousands of bloggers with different reader profiles and demographics, simply because of the hub community. It is no wonder that telcos, banks, airlines, and car brands have engaged Nuffnang's services.

They have seen the strength with which blogs can serve to create trends, market new products or just plain spread the word. However, he does say that, "The internet scene is very tough in Malaysia, not only because it is competitive but also because it has not developed to a sustainable stage." He draws a comparison to Singapore which has nearly four times less internet users but is further along than us simply because they do everything from banking, to buying DVDs, to procuring antique furniture online.

Nuffnang is all about the new. Cue Silicon Valley tech start-up quirkiness and perks. For a start, key employees hold stock options. Their offices in Penang, KL and Singapore have the obligatory chill-out areas, where one can crash out and take a power nap. Tiah says, "None of us frown upon sleeping during office hours. We say, if you're tired then sleep for a bit or the rest of your day will be highly unproductive." Working hours are extremely flexible. Some employees do away with morning's altogether and come in after lunch. Needless to say, many outside eyebrows are raised at the work culture but then even a brief glance at the company's revenue growth will quiet even the sternest critic.

We move toward the not-so-serious. And Tim opens up even more, citing that his dream weekend would be to turn off his cellphone, leave his laptop behind and lie on a Hawaiian beach. He then says that on his flight back to KL from London, he decided to write up a 'bucket list' of things he wanted to do before he died, irrespective of his career path. "It is still something that I actively pursue and the good thing is that I have completed nearly a quarter of it, surprisingly!" His life-changing book is *Top Man* by Phillip Green, the fashion retail billionaire. "There was a scene in the book where Green meets with a group of Goldman Sachs investment bankers. I remember thinking, that is what I want to be. And then I paused and thought, wait ... do I want to be the banker or Green? And that's when I started up the tuition website."

Needless to say, he hates KL traffic but, "...loves the people ... people here are far warmer than I have encountered abroad. And I love The Curve. I really love it!" Timothy Tiah could regale anyone with his little anecdotes about life, about his passions, about Nuffnang and about people. He is someone who thinks with his heart but also has head screwed on tight enough to ensure him every success. And along with his bucket list, it is sure to come in bucketloads.

**Find out more about Nuffnang at [www.nuffnang.com](http://www.nuffnang.com)**