



VIETNAM

09-2017

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From Glee Vietnam

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Lights, Camera, Action!



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Director **HUYEN NGUYEN**
Managing Director **JIMMY VAN DER KLOET**
jimmy@oivietnam.com
Managing Editor **CHRISTINE VAN**
christine@oivietnam.com
Online Editor **JAMES PHAM**
jpham@oivietnam.com
Chief Photographer **NGOC TRAN**
ngoc@oivietnam.com
Graphic Designer **LAM SON VU**
lamson@oivietnam.com
Intern **CLARA BONDIS**

For advertising, please contact:

Director of Sales & Marketing **NGAN NGUYEN** 
ngan@oivietnam.com
090 279 7951

Account Managers **QUAN NGUYEN** 
quan@oivietnam.com
0122 277 3538

(MS.) MAN TRAN 
man@oivietnam.com
090 938 0039

General **advertising@oivietnam.com**

Inquiries **info@oivietnam.com**



This Month's Cover

Model **Cindy V, Star of Television Series Glee Vietnam**
Photo by **Ngoc Tran**
MUA **Kim Bi**
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Phường Đa Kao, Quận 1, TP. Hồ Chí Minh
ĐT: (08) 62907317

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản:
Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập
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Datebook

What's on this month...

SEPTEMBER 14

What: Designing a Sustainable Organization

Where: Open University (34 Ho Hao Hon, D1), 2pm-5:30pm

About: A conference on the fundamentals of the WTO and Vietnam: Situation of Vietnam today as regards to WTO principles and rules (the application of the rules during the transition period: liberalization of trade (political and legal aspects), suppression of barriers (both tariff and non-tariff), evolution of Vietnam's foreign trade. What does sustainability mean? How can we design a sustainable organization (based on ISO 26000)?

Contact: Email marketing@solway-ulb.org for more info

SEPTEMBER 14

What: The Chainsmokers

Where: SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7), 6pm-1am

About: The Chainsmokers are an American DJ/production duo consisting of Andrew Taggart and Alex Pall. The EDM-pop duo achieved a breakthrough with their 2014 song *#Selfie*, which was a top 20 single in several countries. Their debut EP *Bouquet* was released in October 2015 and featured the single *Roses*, which reached the top 10 on the

SEPTEMBER 15

What: Coffee Talk - Part 1: Coffee Freshness

Where: PJ's Coffee Sala (14 5-147 Nguyen Co Thach, D2), 10am-12pm

About: This sensorial seminar will cover the importance of fresh coffee to ensure quality of product you are serving as part of the service experience you are providing. The purpose of this seminar is to allow people that produce and serve coffee to understand the importance of fresh coffee. This is a sensorial seminar, so it will involve exploring what happens to coffee as it ages to gain a deeper understanding of what is being discussed. Key points that will be covered: What is happening to roasted coffee after it is roasted? How to identify fresh and not so fresh roasted coffee? What it means to maintain product quality as roasted coffee ages? What steps need to be taken to maintain coffee freshness? What do roasters do to ensure freshness and how does it impact on your end product?

Contact: Email william.sikes@trginternational.com for more info

US Billboard Hot 100. *Don't Let Me Down* became their first top five single there and won the Grammy Award for Best Dance Recording at the 59th awards ceremony, while *Closer* became their first number-one single on the chart. They have also won an American Music Award and five iHeartRadio Music Awards. The duo's second EP *Collage* was released in November 2016, succeeded by the release of their debut studio album, *Memories...Do Not Open*, in April 2017.

Contact: Visit facebook.com/thechainsmokersvietnam for more info




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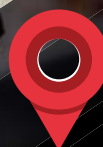
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SEPTEMBER 19

What: A Night of Beethoven

Where: Saigon Opera House, 8pm, tickets start at VND200,000

About: HBSO will present some of the composer's most notable works, with a performance by the ultra talented Bui Cong Duy and international conductor, David Gomez Ramirez, with the HBSO orchestra.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info



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SEPTEMBER 29

What: Carmen

Where: Saigon Opera House, 8pm, tickets start at VND200,000

About: Returning after two years, HBSO will deliver Carmen Suite in its entirety with choreography by Alberto Alonso and staged by People's Artist Kim Quy.

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Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info



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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



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HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILLS WERE CONFISCATED from a Chinese man after he entered Vietnam illegally. The Department of Police in the northern Vietnamese province of Lang Son confirmed the capture of Ly Gia Ky, 26, a resident of Guangdong, China. Ky arrived in Vietnam via the Coc Nam trail that crosses the border between China and Vietnam in Lang Son Province. The cash was separated into several stacks and hidden in his backpack, according to preliminary police information. After leaving the trail, Ky got in a car and traveled toward the northern province of Quang Ninh on National highway 1. Officers in Cao Loc District apprehended him and an examination verified the authenticity of the money.

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DECADES-OLD TREES ALONG TON DUC THANG are set to be chopped down or relocated to make space for the construction of the Thu Thiem 2 Bridge. Of the affected trees, 115 will be relocated to Nong Lam University in Thu Duc District, and the remaining 143 will be felled. The Ho Chi Minh City administration has requested that only unhealthy trees or those that may not survive the relocation be cut down. The first 63 trees will be cut down or relocated in August, while a second batch of 79 trees will be moved or felled in October. The project will resume in March 2018 with 70 trees affected and the remaining 46 trees will be dealt with in May. After the bridge construction is complete, the relocated trees will be moved back to Ton Duc Thang. The cost for the tree cutting and relocation is estimated at VND7 billion. The 1,465m Thu Thiem 2 Bridge over the Saigon River will connect the Le Duan – Ton Duc Thang intersection in District 1 with the Thu Thiem New Urban Area in District 2 and facilitate travel to and from the recently constructed urban area, as well as reduce congestion in the city's downtown area.



45-MINUTE

SAIGON TO CAN THO train service has been proposed by the Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. It currently takes three hours to drive between the two cities. It will have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the two cities, as well as such neighboring provinces as Long An, Tien Giang and Vinh Long. The railway route is expected to run along National Highway 1, passing a series of emerging urban areas, which cover some 11,720 square kilometers and are home to 14 million people. By 2020, about 31.8 million passengers will travel in the area on a yearly basis and some 2.9 million metric tons of freight will need to be transported every year. An assessment showed that the Ho Chi Minh City- Can Tho railway path would cost some USD2.8 billion, excluding the expenditure needed for area clearance. The railway route would cost over USD7.2 billion, of which site clearance accounted for USD2.1 billion.

VND30MILLION-
VND200MILLION



IS THE ESTIMATED COST OF BAIL FOR SUSPECTS, depending on the severity of the crime, and the court will determine the amount of bail in each case. It will be no less than VND30 million for violations with minimum severity and around VND50 million for serious cases. Suspects of extremely serious crimes are expected to pay a maximum of VND200

million for their temporary release. In some special circumstances, competent agencies will be allowed to suggest bail lower than the stipulated amount. Violating any of the conditions will automatically lead to the termination of the release on bail and the money will not be refunded. The draft circular also listed some cases in which a temporary release would not be considered for certain suspects, such as those endangering national security or committing crimes with similar severity, wanted suspects, drug addicts, masterminds of organized crime and ex-convicts.

850-METER



PEDESTRIAN-ONLY promenade opened in the backpacker area of District 1 last month. During the grand opening of the latest promenade in the southern metropolis, visitors strolled along the 850-meter street, from the Bui Vien intersection with Tran Hung Dao-Nguyen Thai Hoc Streets to Cong Quynh Street, with restaurants, bars and street food stalls filling the sidewalks. "As a walking street, Bui Vien will be more civil and safer than before," Tran Vinh

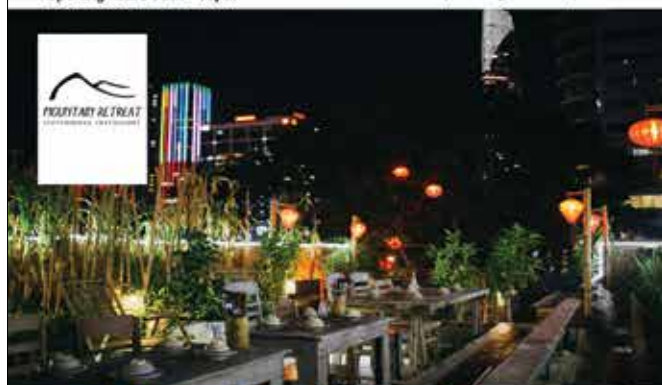
Tuyen, deputy chairman of the Ho Chi Minh City administration, said during the opening ceremony. "We are certain that security and the business environment will be much better than before."

Since July 15, the District 1 administration has piloted a vehicle ban from 7pm to 2am on weekends, while renovation of the sidewalks along the road had also been carried out. Bui Vien is the second promenade to open in Ho Chi Minh City, following Nguyen Hue Walking Street fronting the municipal edifice. Establishing it as a walking street would help preserve Bui Vien's uniqueness and better manage local business activities, according to Pham Ngu Lao Ward chairman Le Tan Dat.



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Don't Stop *Believin'*

Text by
MeiLee Dozier
Image Provided by
Momentum

Rising star Cindy V opens up about growing up biracial, getting rejected at her first audition and her new role in *Glee Vietnam*

BORN IN HO CHI MINH CITY

in 1998, the second and youngest child of a Cuban-American father and Vietnamese mother, Cindy V Harris ("Cindy V") would grow up and do something few would have imagined possible in pre-21st century Vietnam. In a little under two decades, with her café au lait complexion, cascade of wavy hair and strong, sometimes gravelly, R&B vocals, she would eventually sing, dance, model and act her way to stardom in an industry dominated by skin-whitened, hair-straightened beauties. Ironically, Cindy's exotic Latina-laced, Asian hybrid features are now the *it* look, helping her stand out in an otherwise light-skinned talent pool.

I asked Cindy what it was like growing up between two cultures. "When I go to America they don't think that I'm Vietnamese and in Vietnam they don't think that I'm from America. I'm in sort of a strange limbo but I find it quite fascinating because I get to experience both sides. When I walk around the city there's an open debate whether I'm Vietnamese or not and it's funny because they do it right in front of me."

When she was young, Cindy's mother Ly recalls her six-year-old daughter making everyone laugh with her



Cindy Rachel

funny, spot-on renditions of characters in the popular Vietnamese show *Ngay xua ngay Xua*. By 2009, the hit American musical dramedy TV series about high school misfits—*Glee*—had caught her attention.

“I basically drove my family crazy over *Glee* ever since it came out eight years ago. I collected everything from action figures to soundtracks to sheet music. I know every single line from *Glee* in all six seasons,” says Cindy.

Little did she know that she would share the same passion for *Glee* as one of the founder-owners of BHD, one of Vietnam’s biggest TV and movie production companies. Nguyen Phan Quang Binh had long dreamed of bringing *Glee* to Vietnam. A renowned director, his previous works include *Canh dong bat tan* (The Floating Lives) about a prostitute taken in by a family on the Mekong River and the critically-acclaimed *Quyen*, about a Vietnamese couple that flees Russia for Germany. In his three movies and multiple television shows, Nguyen has been known for taking some risks. In casting Cindy in the lead role of Rachel, he was taking yet another gamble: that a non-typical Vietnamese face would resonate with his Vietnamese target audience.

The Vietnamese adaptation of the original US-based *Glee* adopts local context and scenery and many of the series’ more socially controversial subject matter is modified for the local audience while still pushing the envelope on changing values. Among those changes, though not in the original *Glee*, would be the acceptance of a mixed race Vietnamese girl as any normal high school student. It wasn’t plug-n-play easy—Cindy spent several weeks enduring an itchy straight hair wig before they eventually ditched it in favor of her natural curls.

In the name of full disclosure, Cindy’s mother is a long-time friend of mine and I have known Cindy since she was a spunky little half pint. Now she is recognized by her haute couture fashion as part of Ho Chi Minh City’s young celebrity class, striking model poses on the red carpet with her tall, slender figure. But as I watched her talk to me animatedly about working on *Glee*, I recognize the same goofy, fun-spirited, frizzy-haired girl I first met over a decade ago, with an endearing tendency to scrunch up her nose when thinking about something funny, and then immediately bursting out in laughter.

Land of Milk and Honey

When Cindy was about seven, I had helped to get out the word to students at international schools about an audition for a Vinamilk commercial that a friend’s company was producing. It had to have been one of her first auditions. The company would go on to cast a blue-eyed blond Californian, a freckled brunette Brit and other fair-skinned cuties as woodland fairies and ambassadors of its

milky white goodness. 2005 Vietnam was perhaps not quite ready to sell milk with much color. When I reminded Cindy of that audition her face lit up with the memory and she laughed. We didn’t need to discuss why she didn’t get the part.

While one might assume the plum lead in a high profile production might be a pretty pinnacle moment for a 19-year-old, acting was never Cindy’s primary goal. Singing and music remain her passion. I recall attending her birthday party in her teeny bopper years. Actually, I remember little of it except a mini Miss Beyoncé taking to the stage like a starlet and belting out her favorite pop tunes.

Ultimately Cindy hopes her role in *Glee* will pave the way for her singing career by making her more relatable to a larger Vietnamese audience, a savvy strategy conceived by someone obviously cognizant of how others continue to perceive her, and yet without the bitterness that usually accompanies that awareness. She told me she has to work hard to go from her usual R&B vocals to the enunciated style required to capture Vietnamese tones—*Glee*’s songs were all translated into Vietnamese and she was determined to get it right.

Did she want to eventually reach a more international audience? “Yes, I think that is ultimately the goal of every performer entertainer, we want our work to be received by as much audience as we can,” she replies.

In no other time would this have been more possible than today. On Instagram, Facebook and Youtube, Cindy’s rise is inextricably linked to the evolution of social media. Her *Glee* premiere was advertised broadly through Facebook and Instagram while *Glee* itself will be aired on FPT Play, Zing TV & Danet beginning August 18th and showing a new episode every Friday at 8pm. Ultimately, these shows are most likely going to have a second, permanent online life for anyone, anywhere to watch any time, just as Cindy’s music videos and X-factor performance can be watched on demand today.

As she was filming, I talked to my long time friend Ly, her mother, who while holding down a job of her own, is by her daughter’s side late tonight like so many days and nights over the years. There were modeling contests in New York, countless premieres and auditions, singing and acting for parts in TV shows, and a season on the X-factor. This doesn’t even include traveling back and forth to all the training. “I have had a lot of training over the years and I’m very lucky to say that I have been trained by the best in Vietnam and internationally from Roger Love to John Huy Tran to Travis Aaron Wade and John Robert Powers. In all areas from singing to acting to dancing to modeling and even pageantry,” says Cindy.

Ly told me she felt a lot of pressure from other parents to steer her children to a more conventional track. “With the culture in Vietnam I received a lot of

disagreement from other parents and friends—they think I want my kids in this showbiz for my own fame and money, they keep reminding me Cindy should go to Uni—but I gave my kids a chance to explain their decision to me, and discuss with me how to make it work—and if it is logical I will give them my support.”

I watch them sit close together outside from inside the building as the crew prepares for the next shoot, talking and laughing like best friends. Earlier Ly airily dismissed the long hours and constant travel and ups and downs of auditions and competitions like they were nothing, in that self-effacing, it-was-not-that-bad-really way that is typical of her. But I know it has not all been a bed of roses. Raising two ambitious children essentially alone for two decades in Vietnam is a challenge few can appreciate. Thanks to her tireless support and Cindy’s talent and sheer will, Cindy has already done more than most people twice her age and in formative years that most of us would agree are not easy even in the most boring of circumstances.

Where does Cindy hope to see herself in ten years? “Hopefully I’ll be an established singer actor and possibly own my own company, hopefully a production company. But who knows?” I think it is telling that despite being cast as Rachel in *Glee*, Cindy identified most with a male character named Finn, she explains, “because he didn’t really know what he was doing, he just took it one step at a time. I think a lot of people can easily relate to that.”

Her mother has her hopes as well. “She always got cast in school plays because she was able to remember her lines easily. From the time she received awards from the US until now, opportunities kept falling in her lap. Her big role this time, she got it herself and with the show she loves — I hope this is her time to really shine.”

As a makeup artist dabbled at Cindy’s flawless complexion and long lashes before one of many takes that night, Cindy broke out in a little song. It wasn’t much, just an alluring hum really, but it was as if a musical vibe was pulsing just beneath the surface, barely contained. It is hard to imagine such a songbird could be caged by traditional expectations or others’ antiquated perceptions.

As we part late that night after she spent all day and night filming, I have the urge to pontificate in political science parlance about how she is quite literally a rising two-way, East-West soft power projection phenomenon, single-handedly bridging cultures while simultaneously pushing boundaries on social norms and redefining what it means to be a member of a new generation of global glitterati. Even all of K-Pop can’t claim so much. But I resist. She has enough on her plate already. “Proud of you Cindy!” is all I have the heart to say to the tired young woman, as she walked away to find her motorbike to ride home, like any other teen in Vietnam after a long day on the job. ■

THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



Mapletree renames Kumho Asiana Plaza to mPlaza Saigon

Mapletree Investments Pte Ltd (“Mapletree” or “the Group”), a leading real estate development, investment and capital management company, has rebranded Kumho Asiana Plaza to mPlaza Saigon. The change of name is part of the Group’s plan to rejuvenate the property which was acquired in June 2016. mPlaza Saigon is a prime mixed-use development comprising a Grade A office building, a serviced apartment tower, a hotel and a retail podium in District 1. Mapletree has commenced asset enhancement initiatives (AEI) at the property, which will be carried out in phases, starting with the retail podium. The office, hotel and serviced apartment tower will subsequently undergo AEI over the next few years. Wendy Koh, Mapletree’s Regional Chief Executive Officer of South East Asia, said: “Tapping on our rich experiences in developing mixed-use properties like Saigon South Place, a 4.4-hectare precinct in the affluent District 7 of HCMC, we aim to refresh mPlaza Saigon to give it a new lease of life, and be the place to work, live and play in the heart of HCMC’s central business district.”

After completing the first phase of the AEI, the retail podium will be transformed to a modern space with carved out open concept retail area. The podium will also bring a better tenant mix which includes a cinema, Asian and international dining options, as well as trendy cafes and juice bars to benefit mPlaza Saigon’s residents, hotel guests and office tenants, and its customers.

mPlaza Saigon measures close to 146,000 square metres in gross floor area. Occupancy rates across the 21-storey Grade A office tower, the 260-unit award-winning serviced apartment, and the four-storey retail podium are considered some of the strongest in the market. The serviced apartment and the 305-room hotel are managed by InterContinental Hotels Group. mPlaza Saigon is centrally located along Le Duan Boulevard and Hai Ba Trung Street in the center of HCMC. It is also close to the city’s major landmarks and tourist attractions such as the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica of Saigon, and is accessible to all the districts in HCMC. Mapletree began investing in Vietnam in 2005, and today owns and manages a portfolio comprising office, retail, residential, industrial, logistics, and serviced apartment assets. Including mPlaza Saigon, the Group now has over S\$1.2 billion in assets under management in the country. For more info, visit www.mapletree.com.sg

Pamper Your Pooch

The first pet villa in Vietnam, Bed & Pet-first (14A6 Thao Dien, D2) offers the best care and amenities for your pets. Their 11,000 square feet villa was designed with the best comfort in mind and every little detail was thought of so that your pet can relax and enjoy their stay. Dog owners can receive daily photographs and messages to keep them updated while away, or use the private cameras available to talk to your dogs any time, everywhere you go. To celebrate its 20-month anniversary customers save 20% when purchasing their new editing package.

For more details, call (028) 37 444 178 / 0934 080 186.

Exciting New European Grill and Vietnamese Bistro at Hotel Equatorial

Hotel Equatorial Ho Chi Minh City (242 Tran Binh Trong, D5; (028) 3839 7777) has recently appointed Chefs Donald Pekar and Pastry Chef Pongrat Prasitthimet to create a new dining experience. They are delighted to announce a new bistro concept at Chit Chat at the Café, where diners will enjoy a European grill and Vietnamese bistro all in one. The European grill features a range of imported steaks, meats and seafood. Diners can enjoy the freshest produce such as grass fed Angus beef from Cape Grim in Tasmania, free range lamb from New Zealand, or live Canadian lobster cooked exactly to their liking. Chef Pekar’s home recipe of ‘home-smoked baby back ribs with Kansas City barbecue glaze’ is amongst the biggest favorites. Chit Chat at The Café is a great place to experience authentic Vietnamese cuisine with the reintroduction of some local classics, prepared with the freshest of ingredients, such as steamed chicken with onions & Vietnamese herbs, braised caramel prawns with fish sauce & spring onions clay pot or *Bun Cha* and more.

Pastry Chef Pongrat also brings the very best of irresistible desserts including ‘the finest Vietnamese Marou Chocolate Mousse with sea salt & biscotti’, New York-style apple cheesecake with oatmeal crumble topping & caramel sauce’. Chef Pongrat has also developed a delicious range of artisan chocolates, cakes and pastries available at Etc, located at Chit Chat at the Café.

Flor de Caña Launches A Limited “Legacy Edition”

Flor de Caña announced the launch of a special edition of its Flor de Caña 12 Years and Flor de Caña 18 Years ultra-premium rums under the name “Legacy Edition.” This special edition collection pays tribute to artists from around the globe through painting and poetry. The exterior packaging design features an original painting by Nicaraguan artist Augusto Silva and includes a book with a poetic anthology selected by Honduran poet Rolando Kattan, consisting of 49 poets representing 38 countries in 16 original languages.

In addition to the artful packaging, the “Legacy Edition” contains a poetry book with the work of internationally-renowned poets from five continents. Representing Vietnam, the book features poems from local poet Chan Phuong’s work *Blues of the Sea*.

Leaders Of The Pack

Oi speaks to Mai Thu Ha and Ha Ngoc Thu Hien, founders of Bed & Pet-first Dog Villa, Saigon's first luxury accommodations for furkids

Images Provided by Bed & Pet-first



Tell us the inspiration behind Bed & Pet-first Dog Villa?

When we opened in June 2016, the main reason came from a personal need to take care of my three French bulldogs. I found it quite difficult to raise them correctly in terms of exercising, nutrition and boarding. Especially with dog boarding because oftentimes in Vietnam, specifically in HCMC, most of the boarding places are a combination of clinic and dog boarding, which bring up two issues: health contamination and the pets' needs are not prioritized enough. With the increasing need to travel these days, a reliable pet hotel that provides full services to our furkids is in high demand, this is when our idea of the first high-end pet hotel in Vietnam started. We, the dog lovers, need to feel safe and at ease when we leave our furkids to a strange place because we



all know pets are not just pets, they are family members and carry so much love with them. The name is taken with the meaning that we provide a really good bed for your pet, and everything about them comes first.

Can you describe your services, facilities and the VIP rooms?

Our signature services include:

- Dog Day Care: Drop off your pet during your working hours.
- Dog Boarding: With several room types (basic, superior, deluxe, suites and studio) that include cameras in all the rooms so owners can actually talk and hear their pets while traveling. Music is also provided in the rooms to reduce their anxiety from being away from home.
- Special food prepared if customers request it
- Dog walking (also provides at home)
- Dog pick-up (by car and motorbike)
- Do-it-yourself washing area where owners can come in and bathe their pets
- A photo studio
- We also do grooming, bathing and have a well-stocked pet shop

How do you ensure the safety of the dogs within the pack?

The dogs are separated into similar categories during our playtime. The main categories are size, breed, duration of stay (pet that stay longer with us tend to be more comfortable with us than the ones that are new), and their style of playing (aggressive or passive). The playground area are fenced and under supervision at all time to ensure their safety.

What training does the staff go through to better understand how to handle dogs?

Each staff has to go through a basic training course where we provide knowledge of how to interact and approach dogs. For example, always approach the dog from the front not behind, let them come to you first, ect... They also have all basic knowledge of dog's health and to recognize any abnormal behaviors that need attention.

If there's a medical emergency, what procedures do you have in placed?

We have our in-house veterinarian that is in charge of checking their health twice a day, every day, in order to catch any abnormality early. We will report immediately to the owners if there is anything that needs to be addressed. In cases of medical emergencies, if time allows, we will contact the owners to get their decision. If not, we will bring the pet to the owner's preferred clinic that they noted before check-in. If time doesn't allow, then we will bring the pet to the most convenient clinic that we can find in the area.

Do you also take care of cats?

Yes, we do

Are there any future plans of expanding to other districts or cities?

Definitely, our plan is to make Bed and Pet-first the first leading pet hotel brand in Vietnam.

For more info, visit bedandpetfirst.com or 14A6 Thao Dien, D2. ■



Simme Shelter

Oi speaks to Katie Howard, a volunteer at Animal Rescue & Care, about fostering, favorite adoption stories and their Trap-Neuter-Release program

Interview by **Christine Van**
Images by **Melissa Agustina**

Can you tell us the origin of ARC?

Animal Rescue & Care (ARC, www.facebook.com/arcpetsvietnam) was formed in September of 2009 by a woman named Jodie who was living in Thao Dien. At the time, there wasn't a rescue group in Saigon that you could contact when you found an animal in need, so she put out a call on the An Phu Neighbours Google Group for anyone who would like to help her start one.

From that point forward, the group has evolved and grown. Although we have many more foster volunteers today, our committee remains quite small. There are around 10 of us who organize the administrative, fundraising and daily animal care tasks.

How many volunteers do you currently have?

How can someone become a volunteer at ARC and what areas are most needed?

We usually fluctuate between 30-60 volunteers depending on the time of year, and typically have between 60-70 cats and dogs at any one time.

We have a few different areas in which to volunteer:

- Cat House volunteers
- Morning and evening dog walkers
- Help with events and fundraising
- Volunteers for our Trap-Neuter-Release program
- And most importantly, we always need more foster volunteers

The more fosters we have, the more animals we can accept and help. One great way to start is just to come to one of our daily dog walks so that you can meet our committee



Regine Training the ARC Pack

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The cats and dogs featured are available for adoption. email arccatfostadopt@gmail.com for info.



volunteers and find out how to get involved (while also meeting all the ARC dogs!).

What is the screening process for potential adopters? How do you ensure the person will not adopt to sell later? What traits do you look for in adopting families or persons?

To begin the adoption process, we ask that everyone fill out a detailed adoption form. This will let us know more about your previous experience with pets, your current living arrangement and work schedule as well as your plans for the future.

It's vital that we know whether interested adopters have considered not just the added cost and time a pet requires, but also what they will do with their pet should they go on holiday, move houses or out of the country, expand their family or change their work schedule. These are some of the most common reason people end up giving

away their pets, so we want to ensure they're committed to their pet and have thought about all of these factors before they adopt.

If they pass this screening, the next step to come and meet the animal (or animals) and a volunteer or foster. Meeting face-to-face is a great way for us to get to know the adopter better and gauge their commitment and preparation.

If all goes well - we'll proceed to completing the adoption paperwork and plan a day for the adopter to bring their pet home.

ARC requires adopters to pay a nominal adoption fee: VND700,000 for cats and VND1 million for dogs. We do this for several reasons:

1) This adoption fee goes directly to helping us pay medical bills. When you adopt your pet, we'll continue to cover the cost of vaccinations for the first year and sterilization surgery. On average, for every animal we take in, we pay

VND1.7 million to VND2.2 million for a healthy cat and around VND3 million for each dog. This covers deworming, vaccinations, rabies shot and spaying/neutering. This can be more or less depending on the condition in which we received the animal and whether any special medical treatment is necessary such as skin/eye infections, intestinal parasites, injuries, etc.

2) Giving an animal away for free makes them easier targets for sellers who are looking to profit off a pet. Aside from screening all adopters, requiring a fee makes this less worth a person's time if

ARC Dog Walking Schedule:

Monday to Saturday

8:30am and 4:30pm

Sunday

9am and 4:30pm

Walkers meet at Saigon Pet hospital
(No 33, Street 41, Thao Dien)



Bean
Male - 8 months old



Jasmine
Female - 8 Months old



May
Female - 8 months old



Spotty
Female - 2.5 years old



“
The cats and dogs featured are
available for adoption, email
arccatfostadopt@gmail.com
for info.

Ian Training the ARC Dogs

they're planning to sell the animal.

3) Charging an adoption fee ensures the adopter is able to afford the additional cost of a pet. Pets require food, annual vaccinations and medical care when they get sick. If an adopter cannot afford the adoption fee, how will they afford the added monthly cost of a pet?

What happens when the adoption doesn't work out?

Returned animals are, thankfully, not a common occurrence but it does happen from time to time. Typically, we give adopters two to four weeks to see how their adoptive pet transitions into their family. We discuss beforehand and set an agreed trial period with the adopter.

When it doesn't work out, we'll take the animal back and continue our search for a new adopter. We try to prevent this from happening in the first place by encouraging all potential adopters to first meet and spend time with the animal they'd like to adopt. We also want them to ask our volunteers any questions they may have about the animal so that they can feel confident in the information they've received and with their decision to adopt.

What happens to the ones who are older and/or not seen as 'cute' enough to adopt. Does ARC become their forever home?

From most adopters we speak with, they're more interested in finding a pet they connect and bond with rather than finding a pet that fits their ideal physical requirements. When you meet a pet and have that instant connection, it suddenly doesn't matter what they look like.

That said, it's true that puppies and kittens tend to get adopted faster than adult animals. However, older dogs and cats come with plenty of advantages too. They're usually much calmer, already housebroken/litter trained, and their personalities are predictable. What you see is what you get and that's why we



*Lago
Male - 1 year old*



*Bear
Female - 6.5 years old*



*Biscuit
Female - 1 year old*



*Cleo
Female - 8 months old*



*Ricky
Male - 5 years old*

love sharing an animal's history, their unique quirks, talents and personality traits so that interested adopters can also consider these factors when choosing a pet.

A great majority of animals at ARC get adopted within eight months to a year at the longest. I believe our longest foster was a cat named Patrick who was living with a foster for over two years. He was incredibly smart and playful, but because he was older, had a difficult time finding a home. He eventually found a great home though!

You have a Trap-Neuter-Release program (TNR), how often does the team go out on these missions?

It's one of our goals to develop this program over the next year. Currently, we have just two volunteers who organize TNR weekends, and there's a lot involved.



*Henry
Male - 3 years old*



*Wasabi
Male - 1 year old*



*Molly
Female - 1.5 years old*

First, we need to get permission from the property manager and neighborhood in order to set traps. We also need to organize transport and schedule the surgeries with the clinic. And finally, we need to have the full weekend to dedicate to setting traps, waiting/watching traps, transporting cats to the vet, letting them recover from surgery, and then returning them back to their home.

We need more volunteers to develop this program, so please contact us if you'd like to pitch in.

Where does the ARC get its funding to continue its rescue work?

ARC is a 100 percent volunteer-based organization and all funds we receive are from donations and adoption fees. All of this goes to providing medical treatment, food and care supplies and helps with our Trap-Neuter-Release program.

We have a GoFundMe page (www.gofundme.com/arcpets) where people can donate online, a donation box located at



The cats and dogs featured are available for adoption, email arccatfostadopt@gmail.com for info.



Coco
Female - 8 months old

Saigon Pet Hospital and, of course, our volunteers are always happy to meet with people who would like to donate and visit the animals that they're helping.

What do you wish more people knew about ARC and how can they best help the animals there?

I think a lot of people believe that ARC is an animal shelter opposed to a rescue group, and that we have kennels where you can drop off strays when you find them (or even give up your own pet), similar to the Humane Society or ASPCA in the US, unfortunately, this isn't the case. While it would be a dream to have our own location and more space to house animals, we just don't have the resources to do this at this time.

Therefore, we rely greatly on foster volunteers to function as a rescue group. It's truly a community effort, and we're always in need of more fosters. So, please check with your building/landlord to see if pets are allowed, and contact us for more information about how to be a foster. ■



Louie
Female - 1 year old

Tell us some of your favorite adoption stories.

One of the more popular adoption stories that touched so many of our hearts was the rescue, rehabilitation and adoption of a dog named Lucky. She had escaped a dog meat facility and needed extensive medical care and a lot of rehabilitation training (all documented on the ARC Facebook page). After more than a year of working with her, we're so happy to report she's living the good life now in Germany.

Linus the cat came to ARC at a young age and had lost the use of both back legs. Despite this, he was determined to move around and would drag himself around the cat house using only his forelegs. A wonderful family recognized that Linus' chances of being adopted were very low, and so they brought Linus to their home to meet their four other rescue cats. Linus was tough and determined to play and move about just like their other cats and, month after month, he got stronger and learn how to maneuver his body so that he could be more

independent. Today, Linus has regained a surprising amount of control back in his hind legs. He's still got a funky froggy-legged walk, but he's able to use the litterbox without a mess and walk on all fours again!

Bi's story is great because it really shows how, sometimes, animals actually choose to adopt you! A young Canadian couple were traveling through HCMC and spent a few days volunteering with the dogs. They were speaking with our dog coordinator, Regine, when suddenly Bi walked over and sat right next to them. Bi was normally quite shy and this was very uncharacteristic of him. They instantly fell in love with him, and took it as a sign that he was the right dog for them. Despite having a flight to catch, this couple worked closely with ARC and Saigon Pet Hospital to arrange Bi's transportation. Thanks to a flight volunteer, Bi joined his new family in Canada not long after. This wonderful couple is actually considering adopting another ARC dog right now!



Bo Chanh, center

25 and Counting

Twenty-five years of helping underprivileged children break the cycle of poverty in Vietnam

Interview by **Minh Nhu Vo**
Images Provided by **Xuan**

CELEBRATING ITS 25TH

anniversary this year, we speak to Dr. Chanh Tran Tien, a French-Vietnamese expat and Honorary Founder of Xuan, les enfants de l'avenir (Xuan), about the INGO's WASH program, achievements and the eponymous Xuan.

What inspired you to come to Vietnam to set up Xuan?

I am a French-Vietnamese doctor with deep respect towards my Vietnamese roots. My family left Vietnam when I was 10 years old. In 1992 I returned to Vietnam to tour with a couple of friends. I recall that we were waiting for a ferry to take us to Cat Ba, a small island to the south of Ha Long Bay. It's when and where I met a little 10-year-old-girl named Xuan ("Xuan" means "springtime" in Vietnamese) at Hai Phong port. Like many other Vietnamese children her age at that time, Xuan had to work after school

and during school vacations to earn extra money to support her family. Xuan was selling paper fans to boat passengers, and she sold one to me for VND500, an extremely little amount of money. I offered her a tip, without any expectation of being paid back. However, what happened next was a gracious surprise that left a strong impression in my heart about the true beauty of Vietnam and its people. This symbolic encounter drove me to found Xuan with the mission of helping and empowering Vietnamese children.

Tell us what Xuan does?

Xuan (assoxuan.org) is a registered French INGO (International Non-Government Organization) operating in Vietnam with the aim to empower underprivileged children, the poorest of the poor, by implementing a variety of educationally-based projects and activities such as scholarship programs,

shelters and WASH (Water-Hygiene-Sanitation) for rural and isolated schools.

The Xuan team deeply understands that children cannot learn well in undignified and unhygienic environment. In undertaking the WASH projects, we believe that a great number of school boys and girls' well-being will be improved. As a result, they will concentrate better at school and share good health-related habits and messages with their families and communities.

In 2017, Xuan launched the WASH-in-school projects in Kon Tun province and the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. In the world, every 90 seconds a child dies from preventable diseases caused by contaminated water sources and poor sanitation. Lack of adequate sanitation facilities and school not only affects children's health and wellbeing but it also prevents them from reaching their full potentials and breaking the

vicious cycle of poverty. The WASH program actions are not only bringing clean water and decent toilet facilities to disadvantaged schools in which toilets potential but also focusing a lot on promoting good hygiene practice and increasing local partners and teachers' capacity. We join hands with local authorities, schools and sponsors at different levels to bring the communities together to create contagious practical, life-transforming and self-sustainable effects.

Since its establishment in 1992, Xuan has supported over 5,000 disadvantaged children plus thousands of indirect local beneficiaries.

How do you ensure that funds and proceeds go to children in need and are not being used for overhead costs?

Xuan's financial resources are efficiently allocated: 80 percent of our budget goes directly to our projects. The remaining percentage is disbursed to cover fundraising activities and operating costs. Initially, Xuan depended on the in-kind services of volunteers. As it grew, there was a need for reflection and we realized that although enthusiastic individuals' contributions are invaluable, Xuan should not rely only on volunteers. It's high time we invested in passionate skilled and experienced people who could dedicate their time and work really hard to implement programs with quality, efficiency and transparency. These team members are held accountable for every single action we take from planning to fundraising, operating, executing and monitoring projects—to both the ones we serve and those who support us. We care very much about operational efficiency, and the investment in employing the team and building up their capacity is based on a gauge to forecast, measure and evaluate performance, progress and impacts.

What are some of Xuan's achievements and learning curves?

Bringing people together to support a cause is easy; working and staying together through years after years is challenging. Xuan is one of the first INGOs in Vietnam with the longest history of supporting children. We are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year.

We have empowered more than 5,000 needy children in Da Nang, Kon Tun, Nha Trang, Hue, Can Tho, Tra Vinh and Ca Mau. This year marked the official WASH ground-breakings of 25 schools in Kon Tun, Tra Vinh and Ca Mau. Besides that, over 1,000 less-privileged children have grown up from "Family 4," a shelter having been supported by Xuan in partnership with Street Children Program in Da Nang City for almost 25 years. All of these achievements could not have been attained without a passionate and committed team and faithful supporters. ■



Share with us some special stories about the children Xuan have supported.

There are so many stories I'd like to share about the children who were living in Tien An Center. Dat studied agricultural engineering and now owns his organic strawberry farm in Da Lat. Thuy Duy entered the University of Can Tho Province and has successfully integrated into society after leaving Family 4. Y Han is about to complete her final year of high school education and dreams of becoming a teacher teaching ethnic children in Kon Tun.

Another outstanding case is Anh Van. He was 13 years old when he stepped through the door of Family 4 for the first time. His single mother encountered many difficulties and could no longer take care of her son at that time. Van was embraced with love and care at Family 4, and he also easily fit in

with the other children. A few years later, he became the big "brother" of the other children in the family. After graduating from high school, he studied French at university and followed an intensive cooking program. I just met him recently at his workplace. He now works as a chef for a four-star hotel and is on his way to pursue bigger career dreams. He currently lives with his mother and cares for her with great affection.

Over the past years, there have been innumerable children empowered by Xuan. Some of them live abroad at present. Many have married and have their own families. "Bo Chanh" (Father Chanh) is their intimate way of calling me, and then I am called "grandpa" now by their children. It's such a special bond!



The Final Four Months

Through first-hand accounts, relive the historic events that led up to the reunification of Vietnam

Text by Michael Arnold



MUCH HAS BEEN SET DOWN ON paper about the historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign that culminated in the liberation of Saigon on April 30, 1975—although few comprehensive accounts have been written from the perspective of the southern administration that fled into American exile shortly before the victory of the northern forces. Tran Mai Hanh's award-winning history of the final four months of the conflict (which was released earlier this year for the first time in English under the title *A War Account 1-2-3-4,75*) attempts the ambitious project of rebuilding the whole drama of the fall of the Thieu regime as it unfolded: The book is largely based on first-hand accounts and supplementary documents that the author personally collected while assigned to the campaign as a special reporter for the Vietnam News Agency, traveling from place to place in the aftermath of the fighting and sweeping up those written materials that

had been left behind.

Present at the Independence Palace at the moment of liberation and witness to the events that took place there on that day, Tran Mai Hanh was the first journalist to cover the triumph, also taking the opportunity then to retrieve numerous secret documents and records that had been abandoned by the outgoing administration. According to the author, it was these documents—combined with those others that he'd preserved from the earlier campaign victories—that provided the genesis for the book.

"I wasn't assigned to do it," explains author Tran Mai Hanh. "Actually, the intention to create this book came to me quite suddenly during the first days of the liberated Saigon, while I was thinking that historic events like this can only happen once, just as people only have one life. I wanted to rebuild the facts that occurred during the days

of the Republic of Vietnam (Nguyen Van Thieu's government) honestly, based on those original and top secret documents—the telegrams issuing war commands, the reliable texts from the other side (the side of the Republic of Vietnam and America). If I were to be successful in this reconstruction, the readers should know what the other side had to confront in their last moments of the war, how they thought and acted, how they managed their war in a way that brought them to complete collapse."

Early on in the writing process, Tran Mai Hanh decided to present his material as a dramatization rather than a documentary work, rebuilding the events as they occurred in sequence as a historical novel. "I realized that if it were written in the form of a journalistic memoir, the work would mostly be a plain record carrying events and documents that wouldn't resonate for very long," says the author. "So, I decided

to build a historical novel instead, with a strict structure of chapters and sections and with typical characters with their moods and personalities reflecting the circumstances of those horrible last days of the end of the war.”

While the resulting work reads somewhat like a war thriller, the author has made a very pointed attempt to rebuild the historical facts of the last months and days of the collapse of the Saigon government with an objective, unbiased, and personal view of the fates of the prominent figures from the other side, so as to preserve a truthfulness in the writing about the events and incidents that took place. “Throughout the nearly 600-page book,” he states, “I never put in my own personal comments or reviews; I wrote as if the author were not there. The whole content and the text, the materials quoted on each page, were left to speak for themselves. To have possession of those precious materials, I was both strangely fortunate and had the support of many people.”

A War Account was first assessed and then published by National Political Publishing House in early April 2014 as *Biên bản chiến tranh 1-2-3-4.75*. Over the two following years, the book was republished three times and consecutively won prestigious awards both at home and within the region, including the 2014 Literature Award from the Vietnam Writers’ Association and the ASEAN Literature Award in 2015, based on a number of chapters that had been translated into English. Faced with this positive feedback, the Executive Board of the Vietnam Writers’ Association decided to have the novel fully translated into English “to introduce and advertise literary works on the war for the national defense and liberation and the aspiration for peace of the Vietnamese people.” When released, the translation



was considered to be politically significant following President Barack Obama’s recent comments in Hanoi that “the war lessons will be lessons for the whole world.”

Writing about figures who had been regarded as enemies of the northern administration was a fascinating experience for the book’s author, who sought to deeply understand the mindset and background of these high-profile individuals from the other side. “The main character throughout the book is President Nguyen Van Thieu,” says Tran Mai Hanh. “I even have Thieu and his wife’s ID numbers and issue dates. Thieu went in for military service, then progressed from the military to the Independence Palace where his role was as President. From the Independence Palace, Thieu phoned all the military divisions, and directed the entire battle.

He was an extremely intelligent person; decisive, tricky, brutal, following the United States and the anti-communists until the end.”

The book features an extensive appendix that presents multiple source documents transcribed and translated from the originals, including written military commands, communiques between Thieu and Nixon, written submissions from the general staff and intelligence analysis reports of the Saigon Army and US embassy from the time, among others. The documents lend both credence and perspective to this account, providing an unparalleled insight into the final days of the old Saigon and the staggering corruption and mismanagement of its regime.

A War Account 1-2-3-4.75 is available direct from the author. See goo.gl/PL2Rcf for details.

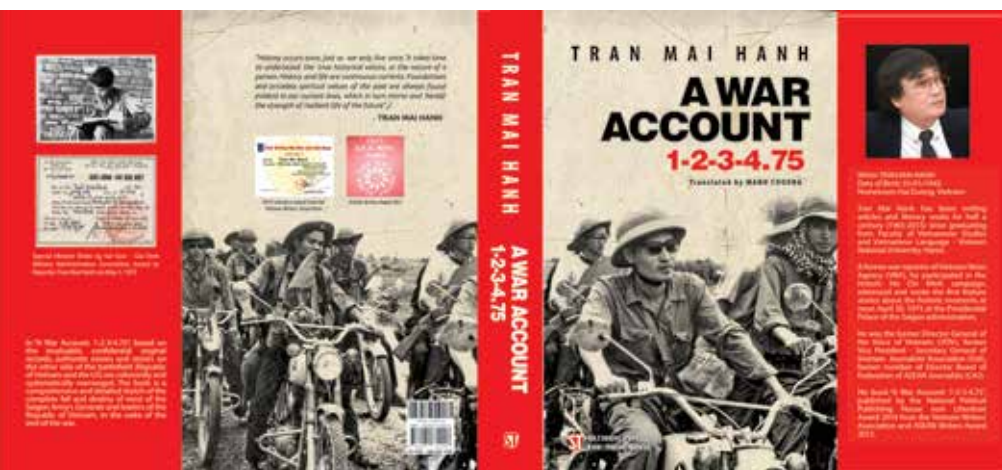
Excerpt From *A War Account 1-2-3-4.75*

On the morning of March 16, the US Embassy was shocked by the news that the Army Corps had withdrawn from Pleiku. General Times flew a helicopter immediately to Pleiku to rescue an American consul, Dao, and staff members of the CIA. Times looked out of the helicopter into the chaos below him: “In just a single night, all the routes converging into Road 7B have become streams of anarchy and fear. It resembles a great colony of ants moving in a whirlpool of petrol fume and dust.”

Fanning out of the destroyed provincial capitals and townships of the Highlands were streams of

frightened people, their numbers stretching back as far as the eyes could see. The withdrawing army was being intercepted at the foot of Cheo Reo Pass. All of a sudden, an AK spat gunfire from the top of the Pass, and Ly felt as if the earth was sinking under his feet. The element of surprise—the one factor of the plan upon which everyone had relied—no longer existed. The enemy was yet to unleash their entire attack, but it was enough to severely hinder the withdrawal operation.

Ly felt that he had to think less and act more. In such a short time since his leaving Pleiku, Ly had witnessed so



much. Roughly half a million civilians, including the residents of Pleiku and others along the route, were being swept into the withdrawal. No order or formation existed anymore. The streets were lined with masses of people and vehicles—a frantic scene. Many died as the crowds trampled over each other to escape. Soldiers neglected their mission to escort everyone to safety and moved to the front of the evacuation. Vehicles were heavily damaged in attempts to manoeuvre the terrible roads. Many of the elderly and children were killed as vehicles ran over them. Soldiers became frustrated at their commanders, including Thieu, and threatened to fire upon them. An artillery Battalion Commander was shot dead by his rangers as they stole his watch.

Cavalry Squadron 18 and Armored Squadron 21, together with hundreds of troops from Ranger Leagues 6, risked their lives to open the barricade, but they were driven back to the foot of the hill. General Tat and Colonel Nguyen Van Dong, Commander of Cavalry Regiment 2, rushed to Ly:

“Colonel Ly, what should we do now?”

“We have to open the barricade!” Ly tensely ordered. “Call air support and use our strike power to launch an attack on the hilltop.”

Tat hesitated:

“This mission was meant to be top-secret, and only verbal commands were to be issued. I fear that we would compromise this if we were to phone Saigon and Nha Trang to call for air support...”

Ly brushed Tat’s concerns aside:

“It’s not a secret anymore, the enemy is already attacking us! We need to do this now or we’ll all die.”

Colonel Dang Dinh Sieu, Deputy Commander of the Cavalry Regiment, also ran away. Ly, Tat, Dong and Sieu, following a discussion on how to move forward, called Phu at Nha Trang to send over the bombers.

When Ly and Tat took small group of remaining troops to a highlanders’ village, the sun had set behind the mountain. The first round of bombs

dropped by General Sang’s Air Force division hit Commando League 6 in the middle of the Pass, as troops were in the middle of restoring the formation for a fresh attack on the barricade. One Commando Company and three armored cars were destroyed. The troops retreated in fear. Commandos and cavalry men also ran for their lives without focusing on opening the barricade. Colonel Dong, Commander of Cavalry Regiment, silently got out of the car, changed into civilian clothes, and disappeared. Ly, Tat and Sieu ran back to look for him and found his car with the engine still running. But only his uniform, hat, stars, shoes and shotgun remained inside the car. The three men looked at each other, shaking their heads in frustration and shock.

The last rays of light disappeared over the forest. The fighting ceased and the Highlands afternoon sky was calm. As rangers and cavalry men freely ran away with their families through the forest to Phu Bon, Ly ordered his troops to take shelter at a village in the Highlands, parallel to Route 7B, two kilometers to the south east of Phu Bon. Out of hunger, thirst and general desperation, the troops robbed and murdered the villagers, leaving behind a scene of horror...

The second bombing raid to support the attack to open Cheo Reo barricade occurred the next morning, decimating another battalion of rangers and some more armored cars. As a wave of tattered evacuees flooded into Phu Bon, the provincial capital immediately fell into chaos. Robbery and shooting became an epidemic in the city. The streets were jammed with traffic and became completely congested as more people and vehicles continued to converge onto them. It was dusk. When the Liberation Force’s first barrage of shells hit the center of the provincial capital, the chaotic atmosphere reached its climax. In the dark night, the withdrawing troops continued to move with urgency, bringing along tens of thousands of Phu Bon residents. Heavy weaponry had to be left behind; it was too late to destroy it. From then on, seven commando

leagues, three cavalry squadrons, two infantry regiments, and the majority of II Corps had been wiped out. Ly and Tat, both exhausted and ragged, ran for their lives among the rebel troops.

If Route 7B was “the Route of Hell,” Song Ba Valley was “the Valley of Death.” Later at noon, Ly was shocked when he arrived at the river. The 300-meter-wide river had no bridge, as previously promised by the engineers. He could only clutch at his head and scream. Ly’s squared-shaped head was covered in sweat, hot under the burning sun. He wiped the beads of sweat off his eyes. Behind Ly, tens of thousands of evacuees were huddling together. In front of him, the Ba river was flowing swiftly like a gigantic white ribbon stretching endlessly. Standing shoulder to shoulder with Ly was Tat. Colonel Sieu, Deputy Commander of Cavalry Regiment 2, had also taken unauthorized leave from Phu Bon. While Ly called Phu over the phone for reinforcements, Tat flung himself along the edge of the river, waving his hands as he cursed: “Damn you, engineers! Damn you!”

The Chinook helicopter transported perforated steel planks for the engineers to bridge the river. A swarm of other helicopters were trailing each other to search for Song Ba Valley, throwing down bread and dry provisions in attempts to save the tens of thousands of people suffering from hunger and thirst. The living had nothing to eat, and the dead had nowhere to be buried, while the dying were left curled up on the earth to breathe their last few gasps of air. Some mothers could not fathom leaving behind the dead bodies of their children. They walked around confused, maddened by their sadness, carrying in their arms the cold, pale bodies of their sons and daughters who had passed away days earlier. During the day, the sun was like a huge cast-iron stove spitting fire onto the earth; at night time, the smell of the soil and mountain mist rose and penetrated the air. Song Ba Valley became a gigantic cemetery of death—death by hunger, by disease, and by murder, as people were reduced to fight like wild beasts in order to seize the last of the available provisions.

An exhausted Ly fainted as soon as he boarded a helicopter. The HU-1A, sent by Phu, took a giant risk by landing in the middle of a frantic crowd to rescue Ly. Tat was nowhere to be seen. When the helicopter took off, the makeshift floating bridge had just been completed. Tens of thousands of people rushed across, although hundreds of them fell and were thrown into the deep river.

The next day, the valley echoed with the frightening cries of hungry ravens. Hundreds of dead bodies were floating on that long section of the river. When the ravens smelled the rotting flesh, they arrived in flocks. Streams of people continued to cross the bridge...



Dr. Anna is one of the Veterinary Surgeons at Animal Doctors International. Anna's special interest is neurology in which she gained experience in referral hospitals in Germany and Switzerland. Anna has moved to Vietnam following a successful stint as senior veterinarian for an animal charity in Thailand.

Cat Corrections

Common feline behavioral problems and how to solve them

Urinating And Defecating Outside The Litter Box

It's the one of the most common behavioral issues reported by cat owners. The following problems might cause the cat to eliminate outside the box:

- Litter box is not clean enough. Cat toilet should be checked daily. Cats are very sensitive to dirt and odor.

- Not enough litter boxes in a multi-cat household. For each cat there should be at least one litter box. If there is one more extra – it's even better.

- Litter box is too small, too hard to access or is placed in the area that is not comfortable for the cat – where it can be easily disturbed during toilet time.

- Not enough litter, strong smell of litter or new litter, which cats don't like. Cats can be quite picky with their litter.

If all the causes mentioned above are eliminated and your cat is still defecating and urinating outside the litter box you should see the vet, as it might be connected with stress-related issues or various diseases, for example cystitis.

Never punish your cat for urinating or defecating outside the litter box. It's never just being naughty, by doing this the cat has a message to tell you.

Urine Marking

It's one of the ways for them to communicate with each other, so this is not an abnormal behavior, but it can cause a lot of inconvenience for the owner. The important thing is to differentiate urine marking from urinating outside of litter box. In instances of urine marking you will

observe the following:

- It usually occurs on vertical surfaces, for example sofa or wall. The cat usually backs up to a vertical object and sprays the urine while the tail and body is twitching.

- Amount of urine sprayed is way smaller than its regular urination and the smell is stronger.

- The issue occurs usually in intact males and in multiple-cat households.

The easiest way to solve this problem is castration. It's better to perform it at a young age, however, if the cat has already started spraying it can become a habit and castration might not resolve it.

Scratching

It's another physiological behavior of cats. They sharpen their claws, play and mark their territory by scratching. How to redirect this behavior to avoid damages to your furniture?

- Provide scratch posts with various surfaces to check which surface is your cat's favorite. The scratching post needs to be stable, if it moves or falls down then the cat will pick the sofa or the wall, as it's just more comfortable.

- Clip their nails regularly.
- If the cat is intensively scratching the furniture you can cover it with foil, which will discourage the cat from scratching. You can also use repellent sprays.

Surgical removal of the nails is not a solution for scratching, if you cannot discourage your cat from destructive scratching contact your vet for advice.

Aggression

There are many causes that make cats display aggressive behavior:

- Defensive: When the cat feels threatened and there is no way to escape the only remaining option is attack. In that case, understanding the cat's body language is very beneficial and will let you avoid these kind of situations.

- Petting-induced: Some cats like to be pet in certain ways, some don't. Listening to the cat's body language also helps to avoid this kind of aggression.

- Territorial: Usually occurs when the cat is at the age he/she is reaching sexual maturity, when a new animal or person is introduced to the household, or when there is a major change in the cat's environment.

- Maternal: Can occur when the queen and kittens are approached by a person the cat can't fully trust.

- Redirected: When the cat cannot approach the cause of its agitation (for example, stray cats or birds seen through the window) it can redirect it to the person or other animal in the close environment.

- Pain-related: When your cat feels pain caused by an injury or a disease he/she can turn out to be aggressive towards the owner or other pets in the household.

If you cannot determine the obvious cause of the aggression in your cat, visit your vet to seek medical advice. It's likely that the kitty is behaving oddly due to some medical condition. ■



A member of the Paris Bar, **Antoine Logeay** has been practicing law first in France, mainly in litigation and arbitration, then in Vietnam for three years as an associate of Audier & Partners based at its Hanoi office. Audier & Partners is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

Checking In On Clocking Out

What you need to know about working overtime

Dear Antoine,

I work for an international school as a teacher and they require a lot of overtime work. Does Vietnamese law allow unpaid overtime work? Can I refuse to work overtime? And if I agree to work overtime sometimes, should I get paid? During lunch breaks or free time I prefer to go outside the school to handle personal business but the HR people don't like it. Do I need to stay at the school even when I'm not teaching?

I RECEIVED MANY QUESTIONS about labor laws in Vietnam and how to deal with “unreasonable” requests from employers. Although labor laws are not always clear, it is protective of employees—which is good for you. Let's see what the law says about your questions: working overtime and breaks during working hours.

Vietnamese laws do allow overtime work but limit them under strict circumstances. Most importantly, any overtime work requested from the employer must have the employee's consent. This regulation of the law does help answer your question: “Can I refuse to work overtime?” Yes, you can refuse to work overtime if you do not want to do so.

According to the current Labor Code of Vietnam and its regulations, the maximum regular daily working time is 8 hours and the maximum regular weekly working time is 48 hours (save exceptions). Any time for meetings and training due to the requirements of the employer (or under the employer's approval) shall be included in the working time. “Overtime” means the period of working time that comes

in addition to your “regular working hours” as they are defined in the internal labor rules or collective labor agreement, or as stipulated by law.

However, your employer cannot request you to work overtime for more than 50% of the regular working hours in a day, or more than 30 hours a month or 200 hours a year, except for special cases in which 300 hours of overtime a year are permissible.

If you agree to work overtime, you will be entitled to overtime compensation. Your employer will have to grant you compensatory leave or pay you increased wages as follows: 1) for week day overtime, 150% of your hourly wage; 2) for day-off overtime, 200% of your hourly wage; and 3) for overtime worked during holidays and full-paid leave, 300% of your hourly wage.

Regarding your question about breaks during working hours, under Vietnamese labor laws, you are entitled to a break of at least half an hour during the eight consecutive hours of a regular working day. These 30 minutes should be counted as actual working time, which means that they are included in the daily 8 working hours.

This does not help you so much I guess, as it seems that you do not actually work between classes. You had better read carefully the clauses about working time in your labor contract, the internal rules of the school and the collective agreement (if any). In addition to the 30-minute rest break required by law, your school may have also organized breaks for the teaching staff between class times and recorded such provisions in one of those documents.

If no such provisions are provided in your labor contract and in the internal labor rules or collective agreement, you need to stay at school during the agreed working hours. For example, if your labor contract says that working hours are from 8am to 5pm, then you have to stay in the school all day. If you need to go outside the school for personal issues, you need to inform the school and get approval. Otherwise, you may be considered to be violating the school's labor discipline and subject to sanctions.

We hope the above is helpful and that you are now ready to start the new school year with more information about your rights and obligations. ■

Real at Stake



Sven Roering is a Managing Partner at Tenzing Pacific Investment Management. He holds an Economics Degree from Rhodes University in South Africa, and is a candidate in the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) program, having successfully completed level 1 and is currently working towards the level 2 exam.

Five perilous myths of property investment

YOU WILL HAVE HEARD THE term “safe as houses”—this is exactly how many people describe their attitudes towards property investing, believing that it’s the safest haven for their money and an appropriate platform to shelter long-term savings.

Indeed, property can be a worthwhile investment. Owning a number of properties, mortgage free, in a robust market, with all your rentable space filled could make you incredibly wealthy. Such a venture would be perfectly suitable as an income platform and savings vehicle, but very few of us would ever find ourselves in the investment utopia described above. For the average person, it is important to consider why property is not always a suitable platform for long-term investing, and why the term “safe as houses” does not always ring true.

Myth #1: Property Investing Is Risk-Free

The most common fallacy when it comes to property is that it is a relatively risk-free investment compared to regular paper-based assets, such as stocks and bonds. Physical property gives the buyer tangible value, and is thus preferred to stocks and bonds, whose values are observed and perceived often only from numbers on a computer screen.

The inconvenient truth, however, is that property prices can fluctuate just as much as stocks, bonds and mutual funds. Another element of risk one should consider when it comes to property are the chances of your investment being destroyed or damaged by natural disasters or accidents. This not only puts your property at risk, but all assets held inside your property as well. To mitigate the potential loss from the aforementioned risk, insurance would have to be purchased and, depending on the geographical

location of your property, this can be a very expensive endeavor. Finally, it’s important to note that the financial crisis of 2007/2008 was directly related to a collapse in the property market and the assets derived from it.

Myth #2: Property Becomes Your Asset Immediately

The second most common mistake people make when it comes to property investing is the belief that when real estate is purchased on credit, it becomes the purchaser’s asset. Remember: Property is only an asset to those who lend you money.

Similarly, property has formed a historical platform for unsustainable institutional lending to consumers. Obtaining loans against one’s personal property can often lead to financial downfall, especially if the ‘owner’ were holding their property ‘asset’ to finance long-term savings goals, such as retirement income. The moral of the story is: property does not give you security, it gives your creditors security.

Myth #3: Property Always Means Profit

Another error many consumers make when it comes to property investment (and investments in general) is that they will often start investing without a specific purpose or goal in mind.

I believe that something can only be considered an investment when one plans to profit from it. For example, if you want to buy property to let, to produce some additional income or to finance an idealistic lifestyle, that could be profitable. But if you want to buy property with the idea of residing in it for the foreseeable future, you cannot consider that an investment in the truest sense, because it will form part of a personal, emotional attachment, and might be very difficult to dispose of in the long run to realize profit.

Myth #4: Purchasing Property Can Fund Your Retirement

Purchasing property for the specific purpose of funding retirement is problematic, as it is extremely difficult to forecast the price you will be able to sell for at a specific time in the future to have enough money to fund a comfortable retirement. Regular, disciplined, long-term savings plans would be most suited to this purpose.

Myth #5: Owning Real Estate Is Cash In The Bank

Finally, it’s important to remember that property is not a liquid asset, i.e. you will not be able to sell your asset and receive the cash proceeds very quickly. Any homeowner who has disposed of their property in the past will tell you how painstaking it can be to find a suitable agent who can match your home with a suitable buyer at a suitable price. Not to mention how much processing transactions can cost on top of the management and maintenance fees before sale, which can pile up and eat away at the return on your investment. The process can often take many months and you may not sell your home at the price you hoped for.

In property-owning democracies, it can often be difficult to turn down the temptations of owning your ‘dream home’ as soon you start to enjoy some form of wealth. Think how often many of your friends and loved ones fall victim to the mantra of prioritizing marriage, home purchases and children over making regular, disciplined contributions to long-term, interest-bearing retirement or savings plans.

Just like any other investment, property can be profitable when paired with a specific purpose and goal. Make sure that the purpose of your investments fit the goals that are most important in your life. ■

In That Summer Girl

Ann by An Nhien designer Le Nguyen An Nhien is a graduate of the HCMC University of Architecture, majoring in fashion design. She has won a number of awards, including third prize at the Pure Fashion 2009 Contest and one of the Top 19 contestants in the final Vietnam Collection Grand Prix 2008. An Nhien appreciates creativity and goes for new trends. Her designs mainly focus on feminine charm with dresses and trousers aimed at flattering the womanly figure. Materials such as silk, linen and cotton are used to add comfort and fluidity.

Photographer: **Louis Wu**
Make up artist: **Trung Lac**
Model: **Nie H'Hen**
Clothes: **Ann by An Nhien (59 Mac Dinh Chi, D1)**









On Set in Vietnam

In the early 2000s, making a list of top grossing Vietnamese movies would be a laughable (like the movie genre that dominates the local market) idea. The local box office back then was completely dominated by Hollywood blockbusters, and sometimes Korean and Chinese films, leaving a very small window for a small number of homemade productions. But things have begun to change in recent times; the local film industry appears to have come of age, releasing hit after hit that have forced even the most sceptical of fans to change their mind to sit down and watch.

IMAGE PROVIDED BY CREATV



The Director's Cut

Vietnam's film industry: past, present and future

Text by **Wes Grover**
Images Provided by **Othello Khanh**

IN OCTOBER OF 1995, Othello Khanh landed in Saigon armed with a Hi8 camcorder and Walkman, a tripod, and a revolutionary attitude. Having just completed a documentary about Mexico's Zapatista Uprising, which had him living there amongst the rebel forces, the young guerilla filmmaker's arrival in Vietnam coincided with the lift of the US Embargo, which effectively marked a new beginning for Vietnamese cinema.

Over the past 22 years, he has played an integral role in the development of the local film industry, from producing a mere two films a year to over 50 films with more than 300 screens across the country. Much like the industry itself, Othello's means of production have grown considerably and we recently met at his studios in Binh Thanh District, where he stands as the founder of The CREATV Company, to discuss the emergence of Vietnamese cinema and the obstacles overcome along the way. As Vietnam's longest established private production company, CREATV has produced and directed award-winning films, as well as provided consultation services for Hollywood movies filmed in the country, such as *Kong: Skull Island* (2017) and *The Last Airbender* (2010).

"Only Vietnamese state-owned studios had the rights to

production at the time I arrived,” says Othello. “But as the country was opening, the studios needed foreign expertise to operate their services, because on one side there were foreign productions coming to do projects in Vietnam and on the other side, advertising agencies with major clients like Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Unilever all had to set up shop and needed services.”

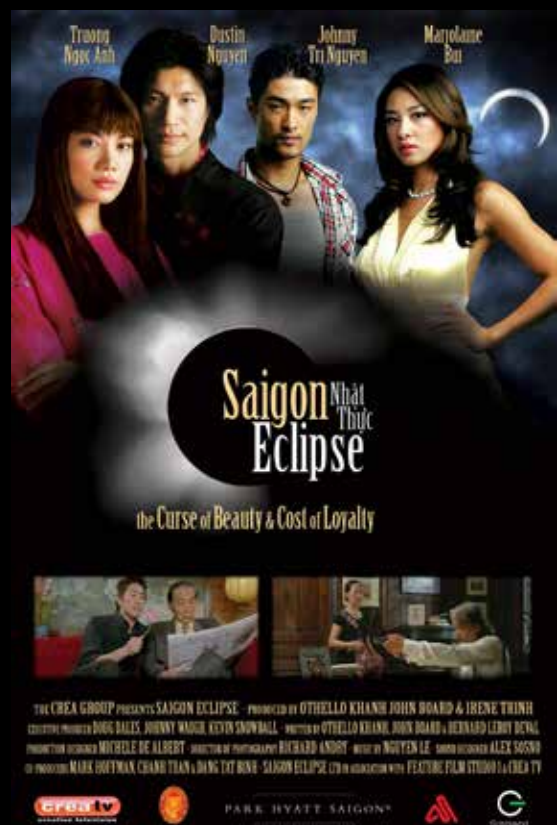
Told that his skillset would most benefit the country in advertising and commercial work at the outset, it was at this point that he was introduced to the technical challenges of early filmmaking in Vietnam. “We would shoot commercials on film and the processing was a bit difficult because the lab had no generator and it would often shut down when you went to process your film. So instead we would go overseas to process in Bangkok and bring the film back.”

As with many other industries here, over time the government’s attitude toward moviemaking would liberalize, giving filmmakers more opportunity. Explaining this shift, Othello shares, “The government would finance a film for the state-run studios, but

unfortunately they were all at a loss. That’s when they decided to allow private companies to produce feature films. First, we were doing technology transfer for the state studios. Then we were allowed to have our company to do services. Then those companies with services were allowed to make feature films. Then they were allowed to make television programs and later on they were allowed to own TV channels.”

Amidst these changes, a wave of local and *Viet Kieu* filmmakers began to surface. Tony Bui’s 1999 film *Three Seasons*, the story of an American veteran who returns to Vietnam in search of a child he fathered during the war, would prove a significant achievement, garnering international acclaim and earning the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance Film Festival. Shortly thereafter, directors Le Hoang and Vu Ngoc Dang would establish themselves as masters of the local box office with such hits as *Gai Nhay* (2003) and *Nhung Co Gai Chan Dai* (2004).

However, Othello points out that a discrepancy between the international and local audiences soon became clear. “If you make a film for the Vietnamese



audience, it’s been proven that it will never have an international audience,” he admits. “Some films were able to do well at festivals, but it’s very limited and also the Vietnamese language is kind of a barrier. Almost 100 million people speak Vietnamese, but only in Vietnam and some pockets of diaspora here and there.”

No Laughing Matter

Further elaborating on the domestic audience’s preferences, Irene Trinh, Head of Production and Feature Films at The CREATV Company, observes, “There has been a real shift in storytelling genre, from melodrama to comedy, shifting away from the more serious themes and topics to lighthearted, whimsical, and sometimes farcical situations. Action films are sparse, as are the more serious dramas, as audiences have clearly voiced their opinion at the box office. In the last five years or so, for every four or five comedies made there is one action or drama. It’s a trend that does not seem to wane, but likely to continue in the years to come.”

Irene, who has produced eight feature films in Vietnam since 2005 and worked with such noteworthy directors as Victor Vu, adds, “It would be wonderful to see Vietnamese cinema be strong enough to bring back the dramas, the thrillers and the arthouse pictures. It’s certainly big enough to sustain, but how to shape and prepare the audience for its return—that will be the challenge. It should be on the industry’s mind as a whole, as it’s important to have variety and diversity in cinema for it to be called a nation’s cinema.”

As film activist who prefers targeting the international crowd,

IRENE / PORTRAIT BY NGOC TRAN



undertaking controversial matters has been another obstacle Othello is familiar with, as was the case with his award-winning 2007 film *Saigon Eclipse*. Examining the topic of impoverished Vietnamese women marrying wealthy foreigners, not for love but out of desperation to help their families and whether this can be considered a form of human trade, his thoughts were, and remain, that being up front with the government is the best method for both sides.

"I believe that if you work well with the People, there's no problem," he explains. "If you have a double agenda, of course you will get in trouble. The government has had bad experiences because some people played them by shooting one script during the day and then shooting a different script at night. The script they had presented was not the script used in the film and people lost their jobs."

"For me, I'm very straightforward. It's too complicated and I cannot have double language because I'm not smart enough," Othello says laughing. "I spend enough energy trying to find out what I really want to say. So every time we do stuff that may be controversial, I'll present it from the start and the government will explain their angle. I feel like it's more of a collaboration. Once we're clear with what we want to do, they're very helpful and are part of the team that works together to make it happen."

The challenge for directors hoping to hit it big in Vietnamese cinemas, he explains, is also partly the result of a lack of laws in place requiring theaters to designate a certain number of screens for locally made film and, therefore, directors are less likely to take risks when forced to compete with Hollywood blockbusters. "It's challenging to make successful films in Vietnam because, even though there are more screens now, you only have a two-week window to break through and you're fighting against films like *Superman* and *Captain America*."

"So it's very difficult for Vietnamese film to grow," he goes on. "The only way to do it is to have some commercial recipes, meaning the budget should only be around USD300,000 or less. Otherwise you cannot make a profit in two weeks and the only way to make that kind of film is to make a heavy comedy—a slapstick film that will please the masses."

Nonetheless, there are several locally made movies that have enjoyed unprecedented success over the last few years, catering to a growing domestic audience of nearly 50 million moviegoers. Most recently, director Le Thanh Son's comedy *Em Chua 18* (2017) grossed an impressive USD8.8 million, while in 2015 Phan Xine Linh's *Em La Ba Noi Cua Anh* brought in USD4.76 million. From a business perspective, the sheer numbers are an encouraging sign for the film industry,



Othello shooting in Hanoi
35mm circa 1996

though as a classical cinephile, it's readily apparent Othello hopes to see a desire for a deeper exploration in subject matter from the audience.

"I think over time people have decided to have access to more foreign films," he posits. "But, mostly what they call blockbusters. What's been missing for a lot of people is an understanding and a knowledge about the culture of

film. Maybe because of what's been given to them, they are kept in a kind of infancy. Nobody knows about John Ford, Fellini, Francois Truffaut."

Thinking on the future for a moment, Othello adds, "But now that there is access to everything on the internet and people travel to study overseas and come back, maybe that third generation will start to grow." ■



Truong Ngoc Anh, Dustin Nguyen & Othello on location at Qbar Saigon

A large, soft-focus portrait of actress Nguyen Nhu Quynh occupies the right half of the page. She is shown from the chest up, in profile, looking towards the left. She has long, dark, wavy hair and is wearing a light green, sleeveless top with a subtle pattern. The background is a warm, out-of-focus interior space.

Taking The Lead

Nguyen Nhu Quynh, star of *Cyclo* and *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*, discusses traditional Vietnamese culture, her journey to international recognition and playing a psychopathic mafia boss

Interview and Text by **Chris Humphrey**

Translation by **Tra My Garvey**

Portrait by **Chris Humphrey**

WHEN NGUYEN NHU QUYNH appeared in the film *Indochine*, it marked a dramatic change in her career: the former student of *cai luong* had made the big time. It was also a representation of Vietnam's beauty on a scale never seen before; it went on to win the Oscar for best foreign language film, and drew thousands of tourists to Vietnam. Since then she's gone on to star in a number of acclaimed French films, including *Cyclo* and *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*. Over the last 15 years she has continued to be a mainstay of Vietnamese cinema, becoming one of the most distinguished figures in the industry.

Nhu Quynh invited *Oi* to her home in Hanoi's Old Quarter. We sit on stained

bamboo chairs as she pours us some tea, her long, pastel-green dress matching the cups we drink from. The living room is a curious assembly of bits and pieces—turtle shells, obscure musical instruments, puppets, and beautiful black and white portraits of her family. Nhu Quynh is animated as we talk, by turns reflective or chuckling knowingly, but always calm and composed.

Many will be familiar with the French films Nhu Quynh has appeared in, but perhaps not so with the earlier stages of her career. It's for this reason that we sat down with her to find out more about her backstory, her successes and her thoughts on where the Vietnamese film industry is heading.

So, was acting something you were expected to do by your family, or was it your choice?

Well, in Vietnamese families, the parents always want one of their children to follow in their footsteps—to continue the family tradition. When I finished high school I was only 14 or 15, so I was still very young and I wasn't really sure what to do with my life. I decided to do as my parents wished and enrolled at the Vietnam Theatre School. And, in the end, I loved it... I felt that I had found my calling. It soon became clear that I carried the acting gene and that it was me, not my sisters, who should continue the acting tradition in my family. For my graduation assignment

I played the part of Thuy Kieu, a prestigious role in Vietnamese drama. My mother also played this part in 1962.

Describe your earliest days in acting and experiences at the Vietnam Theatre School?

I've been asked this question many times. My parents, and even my grandparents before them, were stage actors. I was one of three children and when I finished high school my parents wanted at least one of their daughters to carry on the acting tradition in the family. Back then, my parents were involved in *cai luong*, which is a type of traditional Vietnamese drama. They wanted me to study at the Vietnam Theatre School so I could sing Vietnamese opera like they did. I started studying at the institution in 1968, and when I finished studying, I joined the Golden Bell Show, which was the beginning of my career in *cai luong*. Then, in 1973, a director found a photo of me and invited me to act in *Bai Ca Ra Tran*, my first ever film.

What experiences in your early life do you think shaped you as an actress and helped you to develop your craft?

While studying I had the chance to play a diverse mix of roles. They were generally girls or women from rural areas or from fishing villages, but they were different from what I was used to. I had to read a lot and watch films to help imagine what these people's lives would be like and bring their realities, their pain and their dreams, into my performance.

I developed a firm foundation in acting from studying at the Vietnam Theatre School, which allowed me to embrace many different roles the teachers offered me. But I was born a very gentle Hanoi girl. Girls in my family were expected to be gentle, and so to play one of the characters in the fishing village I had to learn to be unruly and rough to really capture their character.

Can you explain how you came to win such prominent roles in *Indochine* (1992), *Cyclo* (1995) and *The Vertical Ray of the Sun* (2000)?

So I appeared in a film in 1985, which was very successful. It featured in a number of film festivals in Europe. We didn't win any prizes, but that was how foreign directors first started to recognize me. And then, in 1989, I acted in a movie created by a German company, about the French colonies and the southern Vietnamese armies, so that's how I got my first role in a foreign-produced film. It was after that performance that I was offered the role in *Indochine*, which won the Oscar for best foreign language film. It was a huge success, and many people who saw it actually came to Vietnam to follow the journey they took in the film, from the south all the way up to Ha Long Bay. After that, I was on the list of actors to be contacted for these kinds of roles, and so I was invited to appear in many films.

And how did your life change when you achieved this international recognition?

[Laughs] Maybe you don't realize this but for the older generation of actors and actresses in Vietnam, even after all that success, you're still normal. I was still a wife and a mother, I still went to the market. But, when I went out, people would call me by the name of characters I had played, and that was very rewarding. There were many fans in those days—there still weren't many famous performers from Vietnam then, so the fans really cared about the ones that had made it. But I still continued a normal life...

Which elements of Vietnam and Vietnamese culture do you feel that your work represents on the screen?

I think that for the majority of my acting career directors have cast me as a mother who will make any kind of sacrifice for her family. *Den Hen Lai Len*, for example, is a story about a girl who marries a wealthy man she doesn't even love, just so she can afford to care for her sick mother. My whole life has been acting in these kinds of roles. But this changed with *Cyclo*. In this film I played a violent mafia boss—it was a dramatic role change for me. I was playing a strong, aggressive woman who killed people. But even then, deep inside this psychopathic woman, was a person who cared deeply for a son who had mental health problems. And when her husband found out there were mental health problems in the family he left them, but she did everything she could to protect her son.

For a long time, people have spoken about Vietnamese women or Asian women as being deeply caring, that they will do anything for their family. But now directors are writing about how women use their inner strength

to fight for what they believe in, and to fight against men. There are more films like this now than ever before, which is fascinating.

What are your favorite roles, and why are they significant to you?

Well, if you ask me what is my favorite role of all time then, of course, there are many! But, after a certain point in my life, I realized how much I had to learn for each role, and I put so much into every performance that they were all significant to me. In *Den Hen Lai Len*, for example, I was only 20 years old. The character, Net, does everything for her mother, she even marries the wrong man. This was all so new to me, I was so young. It's definitely one of my most important roles.

And then there's *Cyclo*. This was an extremely significant part for me. It was a totally new kind of role that gave me the chance to explore different aspects of life. I chose to accept the role because I wanted to make everyone understand that Vietnamese women can be as strong and fearful as any man. After this role I was offered a number of other parts, playing cold-hearted, mean people. And that was very exciting. In one I played a married woman who had an affair with a younger man, which was intensely controversial at the time. Men could have mistresses, but not women.

What do you think of the film industry in Vietnam now, and what effect did the high-profile productions you appeared in have on the industry?

Fifteen years ago, the film industry here was very poor. The country was too—all the roles reflected how people lived here on a daily basis. But since then, there's been a lot of change in terms of technology. There have also been more and more *Viet Kieus* getting involved. They've brought new ways of thinking into the industry—which is good news for everyone—it's brought the industry standards closer to the rest of the world. But we are still Vietnamese people. We still have the same core values. This is the string that ties everything together.

In *Indochine*, for example, Mrs. Sao has to flee south with her family. At one point they stand on the top of a mountain and look down towards the land. She really feels that this is the place where her family will be safe. I remember the director, Regis Wargnier, asking what I thought about women in that kind of situation. And I told him that, for Vietnamese women, there is nothing more important than sharing happiness with your family. Our whole life is dedicated to protecting our family—they must come first. And after that conversation, he let me act that scene in the way I felt was natural. I think it's moments like that one that have had an impact on the industry. ■



The Vietnamese Hamburger Movie



Oi speaks to Le Thanh Son, director of rom-com *Em Chua 18* (Jailbait), Vietnam's highest grossing film to date

Text by Tasso Dattenberg-Doyle
Portrait Provided by Le Thanh Son

COMING-OF-AGE STORIES NEVER GET OLD.

Like it or not, we all have to grow up somehow, and that sometimes painful process has seen umpteen iterations. A recent addition to the list is *Em Chua 18* (English title: *Jailbait*), a comedy about a young-at-heart, well-to-do pick-up-artist and his club-footed foray into the world of high school dating. After a bet gone wrong, the fashionable and capricious Hoang (Kieu Minh Tuan) mistakenly spends a night with a girl, Linh Dan (Kaity Nguyen), who only reveals her age to him the following day. When she blackmails him with the video evidence, forcing him to play her boyfriend as vengeance on her high school ex, Hoang accidentally finds that he too is stuck in his juvenility. The story perhaps sounds familiar but, in this instance, variations on this age-old theme beat new life, and new laughs, into a story detractors might consider something of a dead horse.

Le Thanh Son, director of this smash hit, sat down with me to discuss the success of the film, the stories he wants to tell and his thoughts on the Vietnamese film industry.

Em Chua 18 is remarkable for a number of reasons, notable among them perhaps is its dedication to a clean, polished aesthetic. The film is set in Ho Chi Minh City's most affluent neighborhoods, depicting the lives of wealthy middle-class individuals, tinged with the American 80s comedies that built up the backbone of the genre. At first glance one is reminded of *Clueless*, which epitomized the 'daddy's princess' archetype, *The Breakfast Club*, which sorted high school students into instantly-identifiable cliques, and *Mean Girls*, which distilled its predecessors and created a host of new clichés to reflect the changing times. The often-charming world of these characters is brought back for *Em Chua 18* but it feels different. We are not in suburban America but what looks like District 7. There are Westerners speaking Vietnamese, an openly gay, camp student, expensive cars, brilliant nightclubs, a preponderance of English phrases and an overwhelming obsession with who will become this year's prom king and queen. This Vietnam is perhaps not the one we all recognize and Son admits this.

Fast Food Flicks

"I try to give them a dream," he explains. The fact is that Hollywood's cultural capital is strongest in those countries that have not yet had time to find a completely distinct voice. Cinema-going has not been a common practice in Vietnam for long and even now older generations tend not to go to the cinema (45 and older account for less than one percent of the estimated market). With little of its own cinematic history to draw on, it is only natural to seek inspiration in the most widespread and popular foreign exports, but that is not to say that the Vietnamese heart beneath it all has been muted.

Son calls his film a "Vietnamese hamburger": American on the outside but with Vietnamese meat. As he tells it, the film juggles an exterior that speaks to its audience, one that is recognizably part of a genre that people can gravitate towards but does not sacrifice the integrity that will make a local audience respond to its message.

The most obvious facet of this hybrid composition is the relationship itself. The union of a couple separated by such an important age gap (17 and 35) is more likely to inspire shock than laughter for many Western viewers. It is not simply the difference in age, after all the stereotype of the older wealthy man with a younger woman is far from over, but the

fact that the girl in this instance is still a minor has pushed keyboard warriors to spray vitriol online. The relationship is unsatisfactory to most Western palettes but, then, it's not a story set in their world. The 'Americanized' world that the story depicts is only a veneer, the relationships beneath it speak to Vietnamese concerns, and an age gap of that nature is, well, less shocking. Hoang is a rich man from an educated family. So, he's a bit older, but it's not the gargantuan problem it would be if he wasn't already coming from such a respectable and wealthy background.

For Son the film that he made isn't about exploring this taboo for its moral implications. *Em Chua 18* is not so heavy and the Vietnamese audience prefers it that way. The main focus of the film is on relationships, across different categories. The film's relationships are of young love, innocent love, erotic passion, parental love, unrequited love, jealousy, envy and a host of others, but the film is not a treatise, it's a comedy. The quirks of these relationships are the source of most of the film's humour: a father who wants to connect with his daughter and tries to act younger, the infantile silliness of glorifying the prom and, of course, the problem of dating someone who is still legally a child.

The way the characters speak, their fears and their habits have a Vietnamese flavor, but the film translated beautifully.

I don't mean that the subtitles are actually well-written (though Son has showered them with praise) but that the humor is universal. Like all good stories, everyone watching will recognize elements from their own life reflected here, whether it be in the awkward attempts to appear fashionable and young in the old, forceful and in control for the young, or just the frustration of seeing a whole day's events conspire against you.

The universality of these themes has already caught the attention of the international market: rights to make remakes have already been bought in India, China and South Korea. The 'Vietnamese Hamburger' as well as other fast food flicks, Son explains, are still very popular. Hollywood churns out one superhero movie after another in an endless cycle of pretty monotonous consumer-friendly distraction sludge. Movies, like any other business, respond to the needs of the market. *Em Chua 18* has broad appeal but it manages not to dissolve into tired, humdrum, recycled scenes. There's a lot of heart, a very charming cast and a lot to laugh about. It's a film that you may think you've seen up until you've actually got it in front of you.

So what comes after? The success of *Em Chua 18* has already set the gears in motion for a sequel set for a release around April 2018. The audience asks and it shall receive. ■

Behind the Scenes

Text by Michael Arnold

Image Provided by Kathy Uyen

Sometimes behind great actors there's a great acting coach

ABOUT A DECADE AGO, A NUMBER of Overseas Vietnamese film professionals began to make names for themselves here in the emerging local movie industry. They were directors, actors & actresses, and producers—many of them the kids of “boat people” families who’d grown up to become film studies students and enthusiasts back home before fashioning careers out of their various crafts. In many cases, they contributed Hollywood-style filmmaking techniques and production values to local projects, invigorating homegrown cinema and presenting audiences here with quality Vietnamese-language entertainment. The features that came out of that injection of *Viet Kieu* talent—from *The Rebel* and *Fool for Love* through to *Once Upon a Time in Vietnam* and *Tam Cam*—arguably changed the nature of films produced in this country.

When Vietnamese-American actress Kathy Uyen told *Oi Vietnam* in our 2015 interview that she was going to be holding classes in acting techniques, there was a sense that she was getting ready to pass on the torch. Kathy’s early work in Los Angeles brought her leading roles in Vietnamese movies that transformed her into a local celebrity. Later on, considering that random parts for American-accented actresses were unlikely to bring her much professional longevity, Kathy won a new relevance for herself by writing and co-producing her own romantic comedy, 2013’s *How to Fight in Six Inch Heels*. Still a much-loved figure in local cinema today, her fresh role as a real-life acting coach could see her become an even more influential industry player than she has been so far—her recent work mentoring Kaity Nguyen, the female lead of the 2017 hit *Jailbait*, contributed to a cast performance that saw the film break local box office records.

We caught up with Kathy again this month to learn more about her ongoing coaching work, asking her if she’s simply

aiming to establish confidence in aspiring actors—as it turns out, her approach is a little different.

“Confidence is quite general,” she explains. “You need knowledge and a set of techniques to be truly confident as a professional actor. The craft of acting is an artform in itself, it’s something that can be learned. It’s not enough to be photogenic, charming and confident—although there have been some lucky breakthroughs with new actors who fit the part and have great instincts and charisma while reading and performing a script. But films are always shot out of sequential order, which makes it so difficult for an actor keep track of the emotional relationships in character, from fighting with a love interest to being madly in love, to shooting the scene of just meeting each other for the first time on the last day of shooting... and what if an actor is able to deliver an amazing heartfelt crying scene, and there’s a technical camera problem and the scene has to be performed again and again? Chances are that the anxiety of not being able to achieve the desired emotion and the repeated takes will eat that confidence away.”

What Kathy specifically teaches are techniques that can be used to awaken the desired emotions, reactions, and what she calls “physical doings” most specific to the character in the script being rehearsed for. Her students are usually professional actors working a feature film, although her classes have also raised interest from people outside of the entertainment industry.

“Art imitates life,” she says, “we can only write what we know, act with personalities and project emotions we feel most connected to. As regular people, we play different roles every day. Every moment we’re in a scene of life, trying to achieve our objectives, yearning for love and acceptance, to express our anger, to ask for forgiveness, or to let loose and have fun—yet constantly stuck with obstacles,

or someone not giving in to our desired objectives, or not loving us back, or causing further frustrations. It’s this dramatic state of conflict that is interesting to capture and watch, the slice of life that we as artists strive to recreate in the medium of film.”

Learn to Act, Act to Learn

Kathy is currently engaged in writing a new script that will serve as her directorial debut, and preparing to act as a romantic love interest in a coming-of-age romance in the works. In the meantime, she still keeps up her acting workshops and coaching work, and is often approached by career actors who need help with a feature film. “I’m not teaching them charisma,” she explains, “they have their own, they’ve got their role on their own. I’m helping to give them a set of tools that they can lean on when they go to set, so that they can be more consistent with their acting.”

“I’m not encouraging actors to be ‘technical actors’,” she continues, “I’m encouraging them to learn the skills and techniques of acting so that they know how to study it, rehearse it, improve it and be prepared on set; so they can feel free on set. Once they’ve done their homework, built their character, done the necessary imaginative work, studied the script and scenes, understand their character’s emotional arc, and are familiar with their character’s objectives, obstacles, and relationships to those around them, then they have earned their confidence on set, and they can then let go of the technical knowledge and truly be natural and in the moment,





Kathy, right

having built the character from within.”

The one issue that tends to divide opinion about studying acting as a craft is the notion that it should be something natural and emotional, performed ‘in the moment.’ Kathy concedes that some actors she speaks with complain that they feel robotic after overthinking everything when they start learning, and that amateur actors are often afraid to practice a scene for fear of ‘using up’ their natural instincts. “I think that’s very inexperienced thinking,” she observes. “If we’re true professionals, we never run out of the ability to create, build and master our emotions, talents and skills on demand. In my opinion, that’s exactly what separates amateurs from professionals. With any new skill or new profession, it’s normal to experience discomfort or frustration in the beginning. For example, with exercise, it’s difficult and painful at first to know how to do a proper ab crunch. But once we learn it, we master it, we practice it every day and we can achieve an amazing set of abs in the end. After several months, we can do the exercise without thinking, and it looks effortless. Learning the skill is the first step, so that we can practice, so we can improve and perform effortlessly and naturally in front of others. It’s not enough to take an acting class to learn it; we have to practice it habitually to improve and try to master our chosen craft. Although I’ve been acting for over 15 years, I’m still learning each and every day and improving in my art.”

According to Kathy, general audiences aren’t usually aware that acting can be

learned, or don’t know where to take a class or are otherwise afraid that the stigma of taking classes means they’re not confident enough. Kathy was a habitual participant in acting courses in Los Angeles with multiple acting coaches in all types of acting methods while taking film studies at U.C. Irvine—at the time, her acting classmates were all different levels of working actors, including stage, commercial, TV and film, all of who were still attending class to constantly improve their skills. “In a highly competitive industry, we can never stop learning,” she says. “I miss the culture of being among a professional community whose aim is to constantly learn, push each other to grow and challenge each other with new limits. I wanted to create that kind of safe environment for all lovers of acting, from beginners to advanced working actors, and create a strong community of likeminded professionals. Once we all have a common language of acting, we can feel free to rehearse together, share feedback, improve together, and push the level of acting performance to the next level. In the Vietnamese acting industry now, however, it’s quite uncommon to hear of actors rehearsing alone without the director. If actors don’t share a common language, how can they distinguish between a good scene and a bad scene? Actors who receive critique can improve and be more willing to practice and be more prepared on set—but we can only offer useful critique to each other if we’re knowledgeable of the vocabulary of acting technique. It’s about creating a language we can use to

communicate with each other.”

The real question is the extent to which established Vietnamese actors really need the kind of coaching Kathy provides, and while few would argue that Vietnam has produced its share of fine cinematic works, the jury’s still out in terms of general performance quality—especially in commercial releases that aren’t attempting to stand out as long-term classics of their genre. While Kathy’s very cautious to pronounce judgment, she is the first to admit that part of her motivation in coaching is to play one small part in raising standards industry-wide.

“I do hear it a lot,” she sighs. “They say, ‘Vietnamese actors are not good...’ I hear that a lot. Honestly, I’ve been constantly learning and improving my skills as an actor for years, and I feel great pride when I tell people I’m an actress because I know I worked hard for it. But when I moved to Vietnam and shared that with people, I didn’t feel the same consensus that they thought it should be something to be proud of. I feel that acting is not yet a respected career here in Vietnam. General audiences don’t see the value in enrolling their children in acting classes, for example—they just don’t feel it’s something that can be learned or worth paying money to learn. I want to change that, and I want to change public perception as well. Acting is the art of learning how to be aware, create and control your emotions, building emotional intelligence in how we connect with people and effectively communicate our emotions in the most productive way. It also changes your perceptions on how to react to other human emotions—and if we can really begin to understand what people actually mean to say, as opposed to stopping at the words they use, we can effectively communicate better. Wouldn’t it be amazing if one day people here chose to enroll their child in acting, because that’s going to give them the confidence to stand on stage, that’s going to give them the insight that they need to have their own meaning and purpose and story when they talk to other people, and they can channel positive thoughts and meanings to people, being present and having the ability to share engaging moments of human connection?”

In the end, Kathy is still driven by the same passion for the industry as she was when acting classes were part of her own daily diet. “If you really love the craft of acting, if you really want to be an actor, you’ve got to ask yourself, do you want to be famous or do you want to be an actor?” she says. “Because they’re two different things. Some people want to be an actor so that they can be famous. But if you want to be an actor because you love the art of acting, then you want to get better and you want to be amazing, you want to do amazing things in your career and you want to play interesting roles, and you’re going to keep wanting to work with directors and get better. And through your passion for acting, the fame will follow.” ■

Shot in 2880 Minutes

Local filmmakers, actors and writers put their skills to the test in this fast-paced, no sleep film competition

Text by **Tasso Dattenberg-Doyle**
Images Provided by **Ross Stewart**



THE 48 HOUR FILM PROJECT is a global success. The project was set up in 2001 to promote filmmaking and give an audience to filmmakers, giving them a difficult but inspiring challenge: to write, shoot and edit a film in just 48 hours. It may sound impossible but, 16 years and 30,000 short films later, the competition is still going strong, with competitions being held in 130 cities worldwide. For aspiring filmmakers, this is a competition to look out for: winning films are sent to the next round of the competition, appearing at screenings across the world and the final winner screens at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. Ross Stewart, head of the Saigon division of the project, talked to me about his experiences with the competition.

The 48 Hour Film Project first arrived in Ho Chi Minh City in 2010 when Ross contacted their offices with the hope of

bringing the project to Vietnam. At the time, he says, he felt that Saigon was missing a creative drive that he saw in other cities. There weren't enough events, competitions or other catalysts for people's creativity and he wanted to bring in an outlet to give a voice to those who wanted to be heard. Before moving to Vietnam, Ross had worked for a number of years in a curatorial role in his native Australia, including Brisbane and Melbourne, both well-known for their burgeoning arts scenes. His passion is to help develop creative talent and, with the 48 Hour Film Project, he saw an opportunity to bring an international community of creatives into his new hometown.

What makes the 48 Film Project so special? For anyone with a passing interest in film it may appear an almost ludicrous challenge. 48 is little enough time to write a short script, let alone

produce it. However, since its inception, the project has been met with great enthusiasm and produced a number of very special works. The fact is that 48 hours pushes filmmakers to work. If someone sets themselves a vague deadline they can put off the actual work indefinitely, but with this boxy challenge the competitors have to be ready to go go go.

One of the most interesting challenges of the competition is that the filmmakers are not allowed to make any sort of film they want; they are given a category and have to run with it. Many competitors choose to have a list of possibilities before the competition starts. The stage of development of these varies a lot. Some are basically good to go, some are nascent and others are just a few fuzzy themes and images getting kicked around the back of someone's





Ross interviewing Jordan Vogt-Roberts, director of **Kong: Skull Island**



head. There is no one way to win or to make a great film, even if a degree of preparation is always advisable (you'll probably have an easier time if you don't have to find, rent and charge your equipment during competition times for example). Ross says that he has seen winners come from pre-written materials and quick-spliced ideas alike. There are many different types of filmmakers, some feel it in the moment and some are more rigid. Whatever your style, you have only 48 hours from the time your genre is revealed to the moment you submit your work.

In 2017, 160 teams registered for the competition, 120 started the project and 105 films were finally submitted. The

challenge is immense, especially for those undertaking the task for the first time. Not every team can finish their project on time and, of those, not all feel their film is in good enough shape to stand a chance. There is no denying 48 hours is a tight deadline, even for films ranging from 4-7 minutes. You can't get everything right. There are always lighting issues, some fuzzy sound, a bit of bad color grading, perhaps even a cameraman in the mirror, but then that's the nature of the beast and the judges know it. The purpose of the challenge is not, however, to present a completely pristine short film without blemishes, the true purpose is that of all films: to tell a story.

Ross has got high hopes for the

future of the 48 Hour Film Project and, in particular, the growing film scene in Saigon. His hope is that, as attention grows for the project, more people will flock to it and the number of Vietnamese filmmakers will grow.

The 48 Hour Film Project is a tremendous challenge but the leaning curb is biggest at the beginning. Once you've competed once, the next time is already much easier. For anyone out there with a story to tell, a passion for film, or someone who just wants to learn the ropes and meet other like-minded people, the 48 Hour Film Project has a lot to offer. All you need to do is register on their website (www.48hourfilm.com/vietnam) and Ross can show you the way. ■

Wine & Dine

SECRET HOUSE / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN







Flavors of Home

Vietnamese comfort food that
makes you feel at home

Text by **Brian Jung**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**



IT WAS EVENING AND WE meandered down an alleyway where we came upon **Secret House by Secret Garden Vietnamese Restaurant & Café** (55/1 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1), a new establishment by Huy, who has already made a name for himself with popular restaurants Secret Garden and Mountain Retreat. Born in the north of Vietnam,

and armed with over six years experience in the food and beverage industry, Secret House is by all intents and purposes a natural full circle for him. As he explained the concept behind the modest and humble designs reflects his Buddhist beliefs of harmony and peace, I couldn't help but also be lulled into a sense of calm. It helped that we were seated



Lau Rieu Cua Dong Bap Bo

around an open garden where green crops of lemongrass, jasmine and corn stretched languidly out towards a clear sky. Soft lighting and wood surrounded us and Huy also pointed out a wall that was made from mud and rice, all to give the sense of countryside Vietnam. For him the busy city life surrounded by the urban jungle really needed a place for both expats and locals to relive the comfort of home as well as taste it.

And taste it we did. For those with richer palettes this is not the place for you. Huy explained that the menu concept was deliberately kept simple, in fact one could say this place's main theme was entirely around Vietnamese comfort food. It's the kind of food you remembered as a kid or staying with your grandparents in their hometown. Additionally, he wanted to also educate foreigners on local eating habits. So don't expect to order *pho* at night. They create separate menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

To start we had Clams with basil (VND65,000). Different from the traditional French style, there wasn't heavy butter in this—the natural juices from the cooked clams were perfect. The entire platter of clams was gone instantly

so for bigger groups I highly recommend getting two portions. Next we had Com Chay Cham Kho Quet (VND75,000), which was crispy rice served with a kind of sambal—a mix of a fish sauce reduction with bits of pork and dried shrimp. This was not like dipping your nachos into a bowl of salsa. Be careful and use it sparingly or else you'll get a heavy strong dose of fishy shrimp flavor. I learned the hard way so take my advice on that.

A familiar sight for those who've lived in Vietnam a bit was seeing the Banh Khot (VND75,000), mini savory pancakes with a single shrimp or calamari on top. Served with a light fish sauce, these were soft and delicious, the pancake itself slightly doughy and perfect for dipping.

The main course was a massive Lau Rieu Cua Dong Bap Bo (VND395,000, enough for four people)—ground crab meatballs filled hot-pot served with thin slices of beef. The veggies sourced from the gardens as well as the meat were as fresh as if just plucked in the morning. For me the best part was actually the grounded crab meatballs swimming in the broth. The ground crab mixed with a light egg binder melted in the mouth like

a soft piece of tofu yet wasn't overly rich or heavy or fishy. The broth itself was delicious and unlike other hotpots there's no MSG or overly salty broth. This was smooth, and had rich deep flavors accented by the fat from the beef and the ground crab meatballs. I found myself deliciously spooning in mouthfuls of the broth despite being already quite full.

Lastly, Tra xa chanh (VND30,000), lemongrass tea with lime, was packed with lemongrass, literally picked from the ground to the side of where I was sitting, tasted cool and fresh, and had none of the artificial flavors found in other teas. An interesting Vietnamese take on bulletproof coffee, Ca phe Trung nong (VND50,000), consisted of a slow drip black coffee mixed with egg.

Huy has created a Vietnamese comfort food restaurant with a unique open garden theme and a calm vibe. It will be interesting to see how the menu grows and expands to include other perhaps lesser known Vietnamese comfort food. What is comforting is that successful entrepreneurs like Huy continue to develop and evolve the food scene here in Ho Chi Minh City. I don't think this Secret House will remain much of a secret for long. ■



Banh Khot



Com Chay Cham Kho Quet



Ca phe Trung nong



Bacon clubhouse

Burger Bound

Over-achieving Hungry Bunny serves top notch burgers and American comfort food

Text by **Michael Arnold**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

AN OUTPOST OF AMERICAN comfort food just a short hop away from any location where the menu prices would have to compensate for higher rents, Hungry Bunny (1 Nguyen Cuu Van, D1) is a jewel-in-the-rough venue you'll definitely want to hunt down, if only to get in early before this takes off as a fashionable nightspot away from the main drag. It's neatly tucked away just off a twist in a lesser-used thoroughfare that cuts through the area between Districts 1 and 2, and those who are actively seeking it out will be amply rewarded by genuinely tasty, home-style heart-of-the-USA dishes in a clean, striking venue surrounded by unassuming local businesses and beer dives. Hungry Bunny's black and white interior is evenly lit by street-lantern wall fixtures with heavy incandescent bulbs and a funky ceiling installation made with off-center rings of neon: the restaurant's real gem, however, is its cage-concept rooftop bar, which has yet to open but is likely to become virally popular once the finishing touches are made.



Bacon & blue burger



Spaghetti bolognese

restaurant's more urban surroundings. The restaurant is also said to put on a good mac & cheese and creamy chicken alfredo, while listing a few interesting sandwich options as well.

Hungry Bunny will really get kicking once the rooftop's ready so that guests will be able to follow up hearty meals like these with open-air craft beers and glasses of wine. Ice creams and desserts are promised to be feature menu items in the near future, making this a venue to keep an eye on. For now, you wouldn't be ill-advised to hit Danny up for a cup of his very good coffee: having invested in a superb machine as well as some one-on-one coaching to undo the Starbucks automaton training, the K-Coffee brew is worth a visit to Hungry Bunny in and of itself. ■

The casual diner is more or less a one-man-show fronted by Danny Cuong, a recent returnee from the US for whom entrepreneurship in the F&B business has been the answer to his own fascinating existential crisis—ask him for more details. The restaurant serves as the ultimate solution to the skills he acquired as a kitchen hand and Starbucks barista back in the States, as well as his self-professed love for all things burger, from McDonald's through to gold leaf New York. Hungry Bunny is Danny's serious attempt to make his penchant for American-style gourmet burgers a legitimate business—and with the right ambience and service, a focused, well-executed menu, and an enthusiastically-realized interior design, he's clearly got all the elements lined up in the right places.

It's a tight ship for now, and the short lineup of dishes on offer are only the first draft for an expanded range promised to be in the works. The advantage to this is that the condensed list of available options plays to the chef's strengths—confidently and expertly prepared, the taste and quality of everything that comes out of the kitchen is guaranteed.

We take some simple starters. A cream of mushroom soup (VND65,000) with its toasty croutons has a pleasingly warm, buttery character and smooth consistency to it. The waiting staff recommend a slightly unorthodox American cobb salad (VND130,000) in a generous-enough size to serve as a main; it is overwhelmingly clean-tasting with its avocado and crispy romaine lettuce enhanced by a whiff of blue cheese and big chunks of chicken and bacon—and comes served with a special house ranch dressing in a gravy jug that you'll want to apply lavishly.

Hungry Bunny should be judged first and foremost for its burgers, and it's certain that diners who stick to the signature range are going to find themselves well-fed. The hamburgers are heavy and classically built with bulging beef patties balanced by their salad elements. We had a very refined Bacon & Blue (VND140,000), a richly pungent



American cobb salad

creation with crispy bacon, blue cheese crumble, tomato, spring mix and blue cheese aioli—as well as a Bacon Clubhouse (VND135,000) with a sweet house cocktail sauce and caramelized onions, soaked in a mild melted white cheddar. These are heavy burgers, with thick 160-gram patties of pressed minced beef thoroughly infused with their respective cheeses that hold together firmly in the burger and break up easily in the mouth, radiating their latent heat. Hungry Bunny burgers hold their own against gourmet burgers twice their price served in more upmarket locations; they're both authentic in taste and creative in their ingredients, and come served with some chunky hand-cut fries in jackets perfectly-prepared without overuse of oil and paired with a pleasingly intense ketchup.

Don't be concerned if you're not up for a burger—you'll be well-pleased with a selection from the several pastas on offer. We tried a flawless spaghetti Bolognese (VND125,000) with a welcomingly familiar and balanced meat sauce that stood out as a contradiction to the





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Get delicious chef-prepared meals delivered right to your door

Text by **Michael Honcheaux**
Images Provided by **Saigon Kitchen Club**

WHAT'S THERE TO EAT?

It's a perennial question. For some, it's an excuse to dig into the newest cookbooks or blogs for inspiration. But for those of us who hate grocery shopping, don't feel comfortable with our cooking skills, or have zero time to plan (let alone cook!), the question causes a fair bit of anxiety and stress. Don't worry, **Saigon Kitchen Club** offers fresh, healthy and delicious food and, best of all, they deliver it straight to your door—all you have to do is reheate. Over five days, I was treated to their exciting rotating menu and it was a delight.

Monday

Breakfast: Grilled Tomato Sandwich

A soft white bread sandwich kicked off my culinary adventure, filled with warm, crisp-skinned tomatoes. This classic dish was done to perfection, the sweetness pairing nicely with the milder bread, making for a nourishing yet light and healthy breakfast.

Lunch: Italian Grilled Pork With Herbs

The pork was tender, the surface lightly crispy while the middle was juicy without being watery with a pleasant salty tinge.

Dinner: Morocco Cooked Chicken With Fruit & Wine

Fruit, wine and meat? It sounds like a recipe for a heart attack but I was overjoyed when the meal I received was delicate and subtle. Far from overpowering, this combination was surprisingly delicate and balanced.



Tuesday

Breakfast: Caesar Salad With Egg And Ground Chicken

A good start to the day. The salad leaves were crisp and fresh, the egg and ground chicken providing a nice tang complement: A meal with equilibrium, blending lighter and heavier flavors.

Lunch: Stir-Fried Beef With Mushroom & Courgettes In Shitake Sauce

The beef was beautifully seared, the vegetables melting on its surface to give a rich coating to the succulent beef beneath. The courgettes and mushrooms had a lovely firm texture with just enough bite.

Dinner: Australian Baked Fish

I wasn't aware that there was an Australian way of cooking anything before I received this charming dinner. The fish was easy to pull into strips, slightly flaky in texture and provided a



oblivion. This pork retained some lovely bouncy, rubbery meatiness and it was a pleasure to tear it from the bone with my teeth. The honey and ginger worked beautifully, complementing the already sweet pork.

Dinner: Samba Grilled Meat Balls With Vegetables

Spicy but not that spicy, these meatballs were a bit chewy but bursting with flavor. The tang of the meat and the freshness of the vegetables synchronized for a harmonious dish.

Friday

Breakfast: Vegetables Mixed With Tabasco Ground Pork

I'm into the ground meat thing now. It was good for breakfast on Tuesday and it's good now. A fine, light breakfast that won't feel like it's weighing me down for the rest of the day.

Lunch: Mexican Baked Fish With Olives

More baked fish and I love it. This



dish was none too light but very tasty and, once again, a fine texture on the fish which is, after all, so easy to ruin.

Dinner: Stir-Fried Chicken With Corn In Singapore Chili Sauce

A healthy stir-fry with sliced circles of corn and a mild chili sauce to accompany it. The chicken had a deep savory taste that went well with the sweet corn and chili sauce.

At the end of my five-day culinary journey I am delighted by the variety of fresh and healthy dishes. If you're a foodie with a busy schedule, this is for you. ■

lot of character to my meal, melding with its entourage of spices harmoniously—delicious overall.

Wednesday

Breakfast: Brown Bread With Garlic Butter & Betel Leaf Beef Topping

A hearty breakfast but not so heavy as to encumber my morning. Black bread is an ultimate breakfast food, providing slow burn energy for the whole day and a rich flavor, with a slight bitter tinge. Topped with garlic butter and betel leaf beef, I really enjoyed the innovative pairing and the different flavors which came together beautifully. Very rich.

Lunch: Stir-Fried Chicken In Honey Sauce

White meats and honey are one of my favorite combinations and this rendition was fantastic. A lovely light glaze to complement the juicy chicken made for a wonderfully sweet lunch, without drowning out the delicate flavor of the chicken and vegetables.

Dinner: Mediterranean Pasta In Tomato Sauce

A classic and for a good reason. Pasta in tomato sauce is a very popular dish and I was reminded why. The tomatoes were sweet and meaty, having been seared to lock in the flavor and juices.

Thursday

Breakfast: Black Bean Crepe With Strawberry Sauce

The strawberry sauce, like all the sugar-based treats to date on this culinary odyssey, wasn't too sweet and let the crepe counter-balance it. It is easy for a dish like this to suffer from an overpowering sweet sauce that makes it hard to eat too much without getting lockjaw. Here the balance was more judicious.

Lunch: Thai Cooked Pork Ribs With Honey And Ginger

An absolute delight. The pork ribs weren't the sort of fall away in fatty slivers you get when you barbecue it to



To order simply go to www.saigonkitchenclub.com and follow the step by step ordering instructions. They have several packages to choose from:

- 1) Bodybuilding: 3 meals (breakfast, full lunch, full dinner) with 1900-2100 calories for VND1,260,000/5 days
- 2) Lunch Package: Set includes 1 main dish, 1 salad/soup and a dessert (fruit yogurt or assorted fruit) for VND450,000 for 5 weekday lunch sets
- 3) For a full week, three meals a day for five days it's VND880,000 per person
- 4) Male (VND980,000) & Female (VND880,000) Diet Plans: Visit, www.saigonkitchenclub.com for more details



Food is Life

With a new head chef at the helm, Bistro Sông Vie's new menu elevates fine dining to the next level

Text by Nick Piggott
Images by Ngoc Tran

Eating at **Bistro Sông Vie** (197/2 Nguyen Van Huong, D2), the all-day dining restaurant at the Villa Sông boutique hotel in Thao Dien feels like a sojourn in another world. Walking through the hotel compound we past along a roofed walkway surrounded by luscious vegetation, past the endearingly lit 25m pool and through the hotel's elegantly appointed reception area.

Behind the hotel villa, the courtyard dining area is strung with warm lightbulbs, giving it the atmosphere of a french summer fête, the tables dotted far enough apart to give diners



The Western-style prawn starter (VND220,000) is essentially two dishes, the first; two prawns riding atop slices of dragonfruit, whose sweetness perfectly softened the punch of the wasabi mayonnaise. On the same plate more prawns sat in a pool of powerfully flavorful ginger and garlic sauce, giving us a taste of things to come. The generous Thai pomelo salad (VND165,000) comprised two huge, firm tiger prawns on a mound of juicy pomelo chunks and shredded chicken, and the combination of textures gave the whole dish a wonderfully complex mouthfeel.

The Australian Organic Lamb Rack (VND690,000), pan-roasted and encrusted in Provençal herbs was tender and juicy, served with a thick, sticky red wine sauce. The presentation, laid out like a nautical compass with the four ribs indicating the cardinal points, sautéed Enoki and potato wedges interspersed between them, was another reminder of the international influences in the food. Our waitress advised us that it would come medium-rare, however mine arrived blue, so if you prefer meat more well done, be sure to ask for medium. If you're willing to try it as it comes, the dark, pillowy hunks of meat are well worth it.

The other main, an Asian-style pan-baked seabass fillet (VND450,000) offers delicate, simple flavors. A marinade containing mirin, yellow miso and white chocolate tagarashi, could have been overwhelming, but the cauliflower cream and onion jus ensured the flavors stayed wonderfully even, and the fish was cooked superbly, flaking into the sauce at a touch.

The wines are personally selected and imported by Head Chef Jeremy Choo who makes an annual pilgrimage to France for the September harvest and he offers wine recommendations to complement every dish. Surprisingly, the restaurant only offers one red/white/sparkling wine by the glass, so



there is limited opportunity to sample many of the excellent wines available. That said, the Expression Imperatrice 2014 (France, Sauvignon Blanc) was a delightful complement to the dessert, and the full bodied River Retreat 2015, (Australian, Cabernet Shiraz) would be welcome in any collector's cellar. Both will be added to the wine list soon.

The dessert menu is filled with so many French classics (including a berry filled chocolate soufflé and a puff-pastry Normandy apple pie), that my insatiable sweet-tooth was in seventh heaven, eventually choosing the éclair (VND180,000) filled with mango grenache, served with grilled mango and ice cream. The sharpness of the grenache oozing from the éclair and the mellow vanilla flavored ice cream work well together, and the firm slices of grilled mango provide for some really tasty substance.

Finding good cheese in Vietnam sometimes feels like a Sisyphean task, one which Bistro Sông Vĩe has achieved wonderfully. The cheeseboard (VND280,000) delivers two-person portions of five soft cheeses (goat, feta, camembert, brie and reblochon) beautifully presented with twists of peppered breadstick and lightly toasted brioche, marking the perfect conclusion to a well-rounded meal.

Considering Head Chef Jeremy only took over the kitchen five months ago and is "keeping the menu simple... for now," there is enough variety in both the Western and Asian sections to keep you coming back until the menu changes in January. The staff are attentive and friendly, and the whole dining experience is a low-key delight. No wonder so many of the hotel guests decide to eat in-house. ■

a sense of privacy without seeming sparse. Next to the private jetty (river shuttle service available for hotel guests, coming soon for diners), riverside tables offer an obtuse view upstream of the new developments in D2, skyscrapers twinkling in the distance, and on the far bank is the island of Binh Quoi, where wooden dug-out boats shuttle fruit and rice across the river to the city proper. It's a view that perfectly reflects the menu; modern on one side, traditional on the other.

The signature cocktails (VND200,000 each) are works of art; The Pearl of Paradise (gin, pomelo juice, rose syrup, lime juice) looked like a lotus flower floating on a cloud, and tasted as good as it looked. The lime & lychee Saigon Delight was fresh and bright, striking the perfect balance between sweet and tart, which we enjoyed with the complimentary amuse bouche of squid saté.





Glass Noodles

Isaan

It Delicious?

When it comes to Thai food, perhaps none is more distinctive or unique than Isaan cuisine

Text by James Pham
Images by Ngoc Tran

WHILE MOST PEOPLE HAVE PROBABLY NEVER heard of Isaan cuisine, they've most likely enjoyed its best-known export, *som tam* (green papaya salad). Located in northeastern Thailand, the 20 provinces that make up Isaan jut out into Southeast Asia with Laos to the north and east, Cambodia to the south, and the rest of Thailand to the west.

Unlike the sweeter flavors and Chinese-influenced stir-fries and noodle dishes (think: pad thai and tom yum) of South and Central Thailand, Isaan cooking is strongly influenced by Laos and Cambodia, favoring extreme heat and sour flavors. While less celebrated internationally, Isaan food is hugely popular locally for its gritty simplicity, reflecting the rice-growing culture of the region where workers stuff their sticky rice and other food in bamboo containers or wrapped in banana leaves to eat in the fields.

Somtum Der (136 Pasteur, D1) proudly flies the flag for Isaan cuisine in Saigon. Part of a franchise with locations in Bangkok, Beijing and Tokyo, Somtum Der is all about showcasing the simply authentic yet in-your-face flavors of Isaan characterized by fiery chilies, pungent fermented fish sauces and teeth-sucking sour notes. The beauty of Isaan cuisine is being able to marry whole ingredients with unadorned cooking techniques to create something greater than the sum of its parts, acknowledged by Somtum Der New York being awarded a Michelin star in 2016. Michelin's description of the restaurant rings true for the Saigon branch in that "Somtum Der offers a cozy little enclave, stylishly accented with bright pops of red, and a welcome glimpse of the kitchen's somtum station. There, you'll spy large glass jars of peanuts, dried red chilies, and spices—the contents of which are ground by mortar and pestle to produce what some claim is the city's best green papaya salad. Order big here, for the portions aren't massive and the food is so terrific you'll inevitably want more."

We start with the restaurant's namesake, Tum Suo Der (VND95,000), the classic unripe papaya salad, here served over a bed of rice noodles to sop up the juices (and to counter the deceptive spiciness). It's a beautiful example of sweet, salty, tangy and spicy with the texture provided by crispy pork rinds and a basket of crunchy vegetables. We're told this is one of the least pungent versions the restaurant serves, with just a bit of thick, opaque Thai fermented fish sauce (not to be confused with the regular, thin, clear fish sauce), the telltale



Somtum Der



sign (and smell) of Isaan cuisine.

We enjoy two other appetizers, Nua Dad Diao (VND95,000) and Tod Mun Pla Krai fish cakes (VND115,000).

The Nua Dad Diao is beef that's been marinated then sun-dried before getting a quick deep-fry. The sun-drying makes it pleasantly chewy without being tough, and the crispy-fried lemon leaves add a burst of flavor to accompany the nuttiness provided by the sprinkling of coriander seeds. The fish cakes are more reminiscent of Central Thailand with its savory-sweet flavors and bright dipping sauce.

The Tom Saap Kra Dook Aon, or pork spare rib soup (VND95,000), is very characteristic of rustic Isaan cuisine—a clear broth in contrast to the coconut-based tom yum—with an earthy

mélange of simple ingredients: chunks of pork ribs, big stalks of lemongrass, slices of galangal and a handful of straw mushrooms. The result is a light, clean soup that burns slow and intense, thanks to the copious amount of fresh chilies in the broth. If you don't like spicy, make sure to let the kitchen know, as even our 'medium' hot had us sucking air through our teeth and downing handfuls of the pull-apart sticky rice in shades of brown and purple in between gulps of refreshing Thai Singha beer (VND45,000).

Our main was a plate of Glass Noodles (VND150,000), a refreshing yet somewhat tame chaser to the hot and sour soup, but loaded with big, fresh shrimp, minced pork and dried shrimp over bean thread vermicelli cooked al



dente to soak up the sweet and tangy dressing.

To finish, we shared a serving of Water Chestnuts in Coconut Milk (VND45,000), little bubbles of jelly around a crunchy center and topped with shaved ice, a sweet, icy ending to a fiery meal.

Helmed by Thai Chef Nam who was trained at the original Sontum Der Bangkok, the Saigon branch is just one of two Thai restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City to be awarded the Thai SELECT certification by the Royal Thai Government, a sign of authentic Thai cuisine. The restaurant also receives visits from Bangkok-based chefs every three months to ensure the flavors remain true to the high Sontum Der standards, a slice of northeastern Isaan abroad. ■



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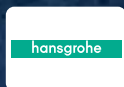
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With an eye for visual beauty as well as a discerning palate, Ngoc Tran has undertaken to collect and present *Easy To Cook: 40 Delicious Vietnamese Dishes As Listed By CNN*. Ngoc has personally traveled around her native Vietnam in search of the most outstanding variety of every recipe featured in her book. Find her book at all Phuong Nam bookstores (nhasachphuongnam.com) or on Kindle at Amazon



Ca Tim Kho To

(Braised Eggplant)

Eggplant can get a bad rap. Some people find it mushy while others may find it stringy or even tasteless. But if it's prepared well, eggplant can be an extremely satisfying meat substitute and, when joined with steamed rice, a few tomatoes and fresh herbs, the perfect summer meal.



1 Cut eggplant up into 5cm-long pieces. Wash in salted water.



2 Preheat non-stick pan, add sugar.



3 Cook the sugar until it caramelizes, add cooking oil.

INGREDIENTS	SERVES: 3
• Eggplant:	3
• Shallots:	2
• Salt:	2 tbsp
• Sugar:	2 tbsp
• Oyster sauce, soy sauce, pepper, seasoning:	enough
• Cooking oil:	2 tbsp



4 Add sliced shallots and garlic, stir until the mixture is caramelized.



5 Add the eggplant, salt, oyster sauce, soy sauce, sugar, pepper, and seasoning. Gently stir-fry for 10'.



6 Put the eggplant into the clay pot, cover, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 20' until soft.



Garnish with scallions and pepper. Clay pot eggplant is often served as an appetizer or as a vegetarian main dish. You can replace the soy sauce with fish sauce if you like.





Alfredo de la Casa has been organizing wine tastings for over 20 years and has published three wine books, including the Gourmand award winner for best wine education book. You can reach him at www.wineinvietnam.com.

Wine It Up

Alcohol and wine, what you need to know

When I listen to people talk about alcohol and wine, it is astonishing to hear the many misconceptions between the two. So, let's look at the basics, how it all starts: Wine comes from grapes but grapes do not have alcohol, so how do they become alcoholic? Simple, grapes have sugar, and through a chemical process called fermentation (actually more like 40 different chemical processes going out together as the result of yeast and oxygen), sugar is converted into alcohol.

The alcohol levels are usually determined at fermentation, and they stay like that for most of the wines (fortified wines follow other processes, for example). And if you are wondering, not all grapes have the same sugar levels in them; again many factors—like ripeness, exposure to the sun, grape type, harvest time before/after being ripe—will determine how much sugar grapes have.

Alcohol is the backbone of wine and without it wine would not exist, or keep alive, it would just become juice that would rot.

Wine gets its taste and smell through three different factors: the particular grapes used to make the wine, known as primary; fermentation, known as secondary, and aging, known as tertiary. One of the misconceptions is that alcohol evaporates when you age the wine, especially old wines, and this is far from true. Although you may perceive the alcohol less in older wines, this is because the tertiary smells have developed further with time, and



sometimes hide those from fermentation like alcohol.

Some people, especially men in Asian countries, think that the more alcohol the better the wine. But such affirmation has more to do with their childish approach to show how macho (stupid) they are for drinking high levels of alcohol than with wine quality; if that is your case move to absinthe or bourbon. Alcohol in wine, like acid and other components, has to be at the right levels for the wines to give the best they can offer both now and with time.

For example, Bordeaux and Rioja wines are around 13 or 13.5%, known as some of the best world wines, some others like Amarone are usually around 15%, while Chianti can be closer to 12% than it is to 14%. A couple of percentage

points more or less will not make wine, in general, better or worse.

Another myth is that when you open a bottle of wine, alcohol evaporates. When you do, the contact with air will start different chemical reactions, and some alcohol and water will indeed evaporate, but in such small amounts that you would need weeks for it to be noticeable.

If you look at statistics, generally speaking, current alcohol levels in wine are higher now than 40 years ago. There are many reasons for that, perhaps the principal one is trend, but also some experts blame climate change for it: the warmer the weather, the more sugars in the grapes that are converted to alcohol during fermentation. ■

Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

A casual destination to escape and unwind in the sun. In the evening, the space transforms into a rooftop lounge where guests and locals will come to socialize, dance or just let loose. On the mezzanine level, comfortable lounges and a flow of cocktails create a casual and fun atmosphere. It is the perfect spot to watch the sunset over the horizon.

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, DI / 028 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

Set on the fifth floor, Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar makes up for its modest height with breath-taking views of Vietnam's French colonial structures such as Saigon Opera House and People's Committee Hall. Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar is also fitted with an elevated stage and dancefloor, hosting live Latino bands and salsa performances at 20:00 onwards.

141 Nguyen Hue, DI



Thao Dien

Tropicana

Tropicana is the first and only rooftop bar in Thao Dien, District 2. The venue, with its sweeping views, looks over the Saigon River and Thao Dien, with an exciting selection of beverages, including signature cocktails, an extensive wine list and liqueurs. The bar is based on a Latin concept with live music and a Latin food menu.

Tuesday to Sundays: 5PM till late
41 Street 41, Thao Dien, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City
info@tropicanausaigon.com
Phone: (+84) 165 424 3972

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19-23 Lam Son Square, DI
hotel@caravellehotel.com / 028 3823 4999



Le Meridien

Centered around three distinctive dining venues - Latest Recipe, Bamboo Chic and Latitude 10 - Le Meridien offers three brunch packages, prices range from VND1,500,000 to VND2,500,000 and include Oriental and International cuisine.

3C Ton Duc Thang, DI
028 6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridiensaigon.com



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Acoustic Bar

A place to catch some high-quality live music in a lively atmosphere. Plus, the frequent rotation of performers means that even the most regular of patrons are kept on their toes.

E1 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Aperitivo

Cosy, friendly, and chic, with a quality cocktail and wine list, delicious deli sandwiches by day and night, Aperitivo is a great place to relax and unwind after work.

80B/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.



BiaCraft

BiaCraft is renowned for its extensive selection of craft beers. The back to basics décor only serves to enhance the laidback ambience which BiaCraft prides itself on.

90 Xuan Thuy, D2

CHINESE

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Dragon Court

The well-heeled Chinese certainly go for luxury and this venue has it in spades. Situated in a classy location just opposite the Opera House, Dragon Court features a broad selection of dishes from across the spectrum of mainland cuisines, making this an ideal a-la-carte venue as well as the perfect spot for Dim Sum.

11-13 Lam Son Square, DI
028 3827 2566



Dynasty

New World's own slice of Canton with a particularly fine Dim Sum selection, Dynasty is a traditional lavishly-styled Chinese venue with flawless design. Authenticity and a sense of old-world China make this one of Saigon's more refined options for the cuisine. A number of private rooms are available.

New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, DI
028 3822 8888
www.saiгон.newworldhotels.com



Kabin

Dine Cantonese-style by the river at the Renaissance Riverside's own Chinese venue decked out with flourishes reminiscent of classical Qing period tastes. Kabin's cuisine is known for presenting new takes on traditional dishes as well as for its more exotic fare.

Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, DI
028 3822 0033



Li Bai

Thoroughly traditional Chinese venue at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers offering choice oriental delicacies against a backdrop of fine Chinese art. This opulent venue, open throughout the day, is one of the city's more beautiful restaurants in this category.

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, DI
028 3827 2828
www.libaisaigon.com



Ming Court

The best in Chinese cuisine with a unique Taiwanese focus in a Japanese hotel, Ming Court is classy in its precision and graceful without compromise. It's certainly one of the city's most impressive venues for fans of the cuisine, and nothing is left to chance with the venue's signature exemplary service standards.

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, DI



San Fu Lou – Cantonese Kitchen

San Fu Lou combines tradition with our Chinese kitchen and sophisticated contemporary Oriental ambience. San Fu Lou exudes colors and cozy feel of a traditional Chinese "house". Our open kitchen, which is a first in Vietnam for a Chinese restaurant, allows diners to take in a visual feast before the food is served.

SAN FU LOU 1
Ground floor, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC
(+2848) 38239513
SAN FU LOU 2
195-197 Phan Xich Long St., Phu Nhuan Dist, HCMC
(+2848) 35176168
SAN FU LOU 3
24 Ba Thang Hai St., Dist 10, HCMC
(+2848) 38620920

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

An old mainstay on the Chinese cuisine trail with well over a decade in operation, Hung Ky Mi Gia is known for its classic mainland dishes with a focus on delicious roasts. Safe and tasty Chinese food.

20 Le Anh Xuan, DI
028 3822 2673

Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.

2 Le Duan Street, DI
028 3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

12 Duong 26, D6
028 3755 1577
www.7kyquan.com

Shang Palace

Renowned as one of the finest restaurants in the city, Shang Palace boasts mouth-watering Cantonese and Hong Kong cuisine served in a warm and elegant atmosphere. Whether it be an intimate dinner for two or a larger group event, Shang Palace can cater for three-hundred guests including private VIP rooms. With more than fifty Dim-Sum items and over two-hundred delectable dishes to choose from, Shang Palace is an ideal rendezvous for any dining occasion.

1st Floor, Norfolk Mansion
17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, DI
028 3823 2221

Yu Chu

Yu Chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant décor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, Dim Sum and Peking Duck right in the kitchen is a prominent, popular feature.

1st Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon, Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, DI
028 3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com



Bach Dang

An institute that's been around for over 30 years, Kem Bach Dang is a short walking distance from The Opera House and is a favorite dessert and cafe spot among locals and tourists. They have two locations directly across from each other serving juices, smoothies, shakes, beer and ice cream, with air conditioning on the upper levels.

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Cafe RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening.

96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
www.caferrunam.com



Chat

A quaint cafe with a red brick wall on one side and a mural of everyday life in Saigon on the opposite. A friendly staff serves smoothies, juices, and a good array of Italian-style coffee such as cappuccinos and lattes for cheap, prices start from VND15,000.

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



K.Coffee

Accented with sleek furniture and dark wood, this cozy cafe serves fresh Italian-style coffee, cold fruit juices, homemade Vietnamese food and desserts. The friendly owner and staff make this a great spot to while away the afternoon with a good book or magazine.

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM.

Sunday closed.

86 Hoang Dieu, D4
38253316 / 090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

Situated in an authentic French colonial structure, this relaxed cafe is the perfect haven to escape the hustle and bustle of District 1. The east meets west interior décor is reminiscent of Old Saigon, and is greatly complemented by the Vietnamese fusion cuisine on offer.

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

The cafe is located on the top floor and resembles an inner city warehouse. The best seats are by the windows where you can watch the traffic zoom by. If you prefer your coffee brewed a particular way, there are a number of brewing techniques to ask for, from Siphon to Aeropress and Chemex. Sorry, no Vietnamese ca phe sua da served here.

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



FRENCH

Fest.vn **FEST**



Le Terroir

Recently opened, Le Terroir serves dishes such as Bouchée à la Reine duo, Pan seared salmon along with pastas, risotto and decadent desserts. The wine list here is an oenophile's dream with over 200 labels in stock from Australia, California and Chile to Italy. The restaurant is on two levels with a small terrace in the ground floor.

30 Thai Van Lung, D1



Le Bacoulos

Le Bacoulos is a French restaurant, bar and lounge that serves French cuisine, bar food like burgers, fish and chips alongside vegetarian options like spinach soup and Greek salad. There's also a garden to unwind in with a glass of wine.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
028 3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com



Le Jardin

This place is consistently popular with French expats seeking an escape from the busier boulevards. It has a wholesome bistro-style menu with a shaded terrace cafe in the outdoor garden of the French cultural centre, Idecaf.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



Long Phi

French-owned, this longstanding restobar has been a favorite among late-night revelers because of its late opening hours - 4am. The menu is a combination of Vietnamese and French with pasta dishes thrown in to cater to everyone.

207 Bui Vien, D1



Ty Coz

This unassuming restaurant is located down an alley and up three flights of stairs. The charming French owner/chef will happily run through the entire menu in details and offer his recommendations. An accompanying wine list includes a wide range of choices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com



Also Try...

La Cuisine

A cosy restaurant just outside the main eating strip on Le Thanh Ton, La Cuisine offers quality French food in an upmarket but not overly expensive setting. Suitable for special occasions or business dinners to impress. Regular diners recommend the filet of beef.

48 Le Thanh Ton
028 2229 8882

La Villa

Housed in a stunning white French villa that was originally built as a private house, La Villa features outdoor tables dotted around a swimming pool and a more formal dining room inside. Superb cuisine, with staff trained as they would be in France. Bookings are advised, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
028 3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

La Nicoise

A traditional 'neighbourhood' French restaurant, La Nicoise serves simple, filling French fare at exceptional value in the shadow of the Bitexco tower. Most popular for its steak dishes, the restaurant has an extensive menu which belies its compact size.


56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
028 3821 3056

Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
028 3744 4585



 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

INDIAN

Fest.vn **FEST**



Ashoka

A small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1
33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



Ganesh

Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris and rotis along with the hottest curries, dovas and vada from the southern region.

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Natraj

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Natraj's specialty is its special chaat & tandoori dishes. Parties, events & catering services are available, with Daily Lunch Thali and set menus. Available for delivery. Complete menu on Facebook.

41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
028 6679 5267 - 028 6686 3168
www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine



Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1.

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1



Tandoor®

Tandoor has recently moved to a new location. The restaurant serves authentic South and North Indian cuisine, with set lunches available, in a spacious dining area. Offers free home delivery and outside catering. Halal food.

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1
028 3930 4839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com



The Punjabi

Best known for its excellent tandoori cooking executed in a specialized, custom-built oven, Punjabi serves the best of genuine North Indian cuisine in a venue well within the backpacker enclave, ensuring forgiving menu prices.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1



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📷 instagram.com/fitmeal.vn
✉ fitmealvietnam@gmail.com



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ITALIAN

Fest.vn **FEST**



Ciao Bella

Hearty homestyle Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people-watching. Big groups should book in advance.

11 Dong Du, D1
028 3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



La Forchetta

La cucina La Forchetta is located in a hotel building in Phu My Hung. Chef Gianni, who hails from Sicily, puts his passion into his food, focusing on pastas and pizzas with Italian meat and fish dishes as well delicious homemade desserts. Most of the tables are outside, so you can enjoy a relaxing outdoor dinner.

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
028 3541 1006



La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere invoking something like an Italian town, this venue focuses on traditional ethnic Italian cuisine (rather than the ubiquitous pizza and pasta), creations of the skillful executive chef – straight out of Venice. The place lights up on romantic Thursday evenings with candlelight and light music.

17B Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com



Portofino

Great place for pizza's, pasta's and interesting main dishes in a cozy setting.

15 Dong Du, D1
+84 28 3823 3597
info@portofinovietnam.com
http://www.portofinovietnam.com/



NO.1 Pizza In The World

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Lot L5-18, 5F Saigon Centre, 92-94 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St., D.1, HCMC
(028) 3821 8319
pizzalogic.hcm@gmail.com
http://pizzalogic-hcm.com/index-vn.html
Fest.vn or call 1900636997



Also Try...

Casa Italia

Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District 1. Authentic pizza and a comprehensive range of pasta, pork, chicken and beef dishes offers something for everyone. Located a stone's throw from Ben Thanh Market.

86 Le Loi, D1
028 3824 4286

Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Marco Torre learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spawned a sister eatery in District 2. Set off the street in a peaceful garden with indoor and outdoor eating areas, separate bar and function area, it offers a wide-ranging Italian menu and monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, D1
028 3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 0789 4444
www.pizza4ps.com

Carpaccio

Often unfairly mistaken as a purely tourist dining destination, Carpaccio offers an extensive range of Italian fare, especially seafood and beef dishes. The dining area is in a distinctively curved brick 'tunnel' opening into a large room at the rear, making it ideal for couples or groups.

79 Hai Ba Trung
028 3823 8998



For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

JAPANESE

Fest.vn **FEST**



Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.

8/3 Le Thanh Ton
028 3827 1618
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com



Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.

204 Le Lai, D1
www.ichibansushi.vn



Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1
028 38 270 443



SORAE Sushi Sake Lounge

"Sorae": Up in the sky, is one of the most spectacular Japanese restaurant and a "must go" destination at the heart of the bustling busy district of Saigon.

Located in the heart of District 1, on the 24th floor of AB Tower, it has a gorgeous 360 degree overview over to the city. Sorae can accommodate up to 368 people in a spacious 1,000 sqm elegant setting including a bar with hundreds of varieties of beverages and the finest cigar club in town. Besides offering delicious Japanese cuisine, Sorae delights its guests with great entertainment and DJ.

Level 24, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC
028 3827 2372

<http://www.soraesushi.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Soraesushi/>
Weekend Brunch at only VND 680,000
Fest.vn or call 1900636997
www.libaisaigon.com



Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
028 3930 0039

www.sushidiningaoi.com



Yoshino

The decor is straight out of the set of Shogun, with black wood, tatami mats, stencilled cherry blossoms and all the trappings of Japanese exoticism – tastefully done. While Ho Chi Minh City is certainly not short of fine Japanese eateries, this one is particularly impressive.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 3823 3333



KOREAN

Fest.vn **FEST**



Ciao Bella

Hearty homestyle Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people-watching. Big groups should book in advance.

11 Dong Du, D1
028 3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com



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028 3541 1006



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17B Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com



THAI

Koh Thai

Supremely chic Thai venue with all the authentic burn you need – or without if you prefer. An opulent, fashionable decor with the cuisine to match – often reported to serve dishes comparable with those of Thailand itself.

Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1
028 3823 4423

Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment - or be brave and climb the narrow spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi St. D1
028 3823 7506

Thai Street

Authentic Thai Food in a fun street-food setting. All the favorites of Thailand - Tom Yum Goong, Red and Green Curries, Som Tum - prepared by their Thai chef.

26 Thao Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2
028 6654 9525

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with rooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 879 1412

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

Kitch and authentic, Tuk Tuk brings the pleasure of street-style Thai food into an elegant but friendly setting. Now a fashionable venue in its own right, Tuk Tuk's menu features some unique dishes and drinks you won't see elsewhere.

17/11 Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3521 8513 / 090 688 6180



 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

STEAKHOUSE

Fest.vn **FEST**



Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Western and Asian cuisines and a wide range of sizzling steaks cooked to your liking, this is the ideal choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, DI
028 3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn



El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

The fine dining steakhouse boasts a modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambiance and genuine atmosphere. The authenticity of the Argentinian cuisine is strictly followed by the methods of preparation, hand-made charcoal grill serves as the focal point in the kitchen to maintain and accentuate the original flavor of the meat.

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, DI



New York Steakhouse

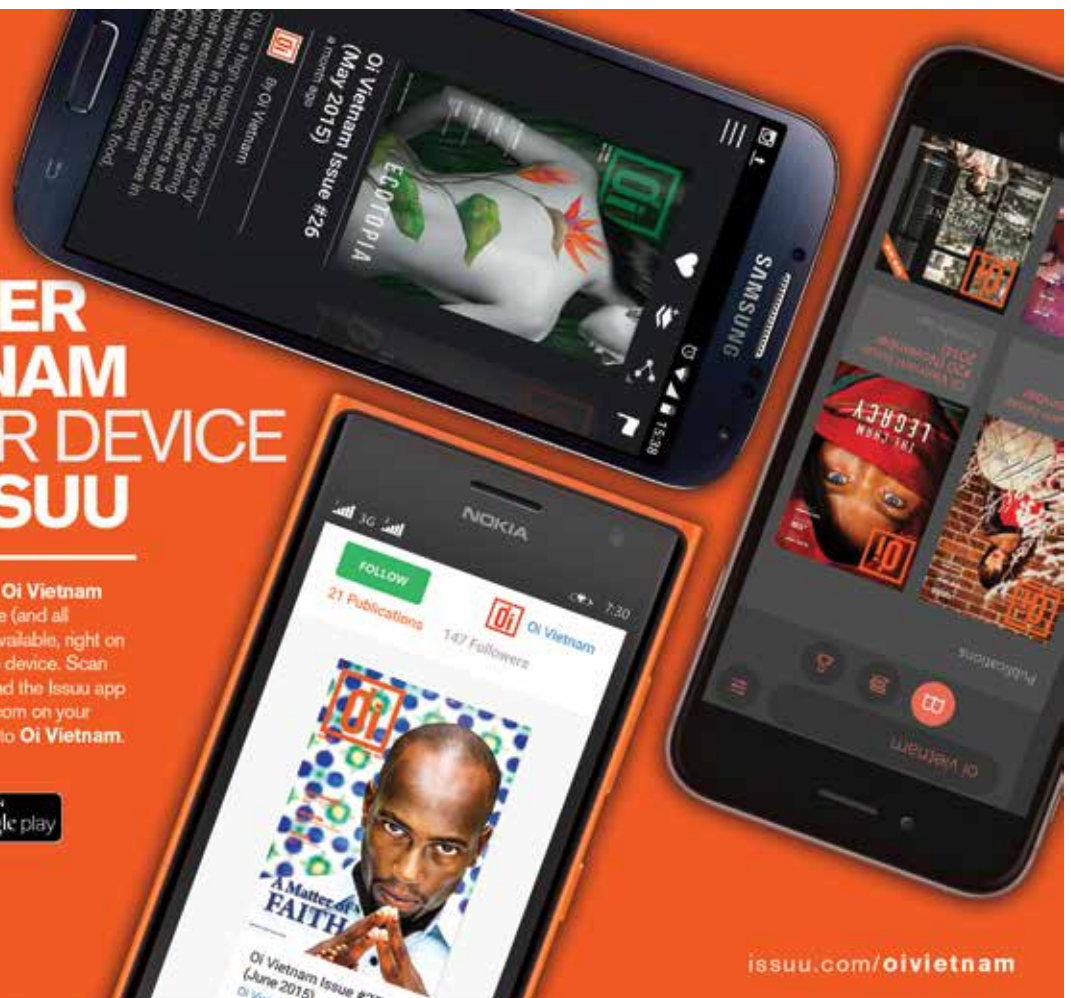
New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak and tenderloin being popular options.

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI



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Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with 5G Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from Tripadvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.

234 Bui Vien, D1



Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1

+84 90 719 45 57



Nhà Hàng Di Mai

Every family has a unique recipe which is handed down from generations and perfected to create that hearty comfort food. Our customers can relive having home-cooked food experience as our signature recipes are crafted with passion and tradition. Every meal is a delight in Di Mai. Explore the culinary journey of traditional authentic Vietnamese flavors set in an open kitchen, modern contemporary design.

136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam St., Dist. 1, HCMC

028 3821 7786

nhahangdimai.com/

<https://www.facebook.com/nhahangdimai/>



Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3

012 0880 5905

Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant



The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant – bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai centerpieces in pretty ceramic bowls and lots of greenery. The menu highlight unique ingredients only found in Hue, like the Va tron fig salad with shrimp and pork, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.

Rooftop Master Building

41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3

Opening time 10am-10pm.

0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

Fun Vietnamese-style creperie popular with locals and expats alike for its tasty, healthy prawn pancakes, along with a number of other traditional dishes.

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

If you do only one thing, you'd better do it well – and this venue does precisely that, serving only traditional Hanoian Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

Famous for its inclusion in the Anthony Bourdain *No Reservations* program, the venue is best known for its theatrics. Every bowl of rice is served in a terracotta bowl that is unceremoniously shattered upon serving. Unforgettable local food in a very pleasant traditionally-styled venue.

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3
028 3932 6363
comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
comnieusaigon.com.vn

Cuc Gach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on Trip Advisor, this delightful restaurant serves up traditional, country-style foods and contemporary alternatives in two character-filled wooden houses located on opposite sides of the street from each other. Unique food in a unique setting and an unbelievably large menu.

10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144

Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

2 Thi Sach, D1
028 3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

Fine Vietnamese fare served in a character-filled three-story rustic villa located up a narrow alley, off the beaten track. Watch the chefs prepare authentic food from a varied menu in an open kitchen.

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

Nha Hang Ngon

Possibly the best-known Vietnamese restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Hang Ngon serves up hundreds of traditional local dishes in a classy French-style mansion.

160 Pasteur, D1
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
028 3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn



Bamboo Chic

Bamboo Chic serves an inventive menu of Japanese and Chinese dishes and creative cocktails. Open for dinner, the contemporary space features modern velvet chairs with purple and plum pillows and dramatic beaded chandeliers inspired by the Saigon River along with live music from the house DJ.

Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel
3C Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 6263 6688
www.lemeridien.com/saigon
For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



Hotel Equatorial HCMC

New Vietnamese Bistro & European Grill Menu At "Chit Chat at the Café"
The new menu features the Chefs' flair for creativity with international inspiration from Europe and Asia. This special execution can be experienced in the new a la carte menu which includes imported steaks, meats, and seafood.

242 Tran Binh Trong St, Dist. 5
028 3839 7777
<https://hochiminhcity.equatorial.com/>



Hungry Bunny

Hungry Bunny is a new American Bistro situated in the heart of Thi Nghe neighborhood in Binh Thanh district. The restaurant's main focus is gourmet Burgers such as the Bacon Clubhouse and Bacon & Blue burger. Other offers include breakfast, soups, salads, sandwiches and pastas. There is one main dining area downstairs with two smaller rooms upstairs that offer guests with more privacy and great views. Come enjoy our great selection of American diner food with a glass of cold beer.

8am-10pm / Tel 028 2229 0011
01 Nguyen Cuu Van street, Binh Thanh district
www.hungrybunnybistro.com
www.facebook.com/hungrybunnybistro



Panam - The Backroom

Panam is a cozy restaurant and pub with a friendly and chilled ambiance. If you're searching for a place to meet up for happy hours after work, Panam is the perfect choice. Come and enjoy great food like falafels and kebabs with homemade sauces, cold craft beers, cocktails and board games.

12pm-1am / Tel: 0122 733 0235
91 Pasteur, D1
(in a side alley behind Cuba la Casa del Mojito)



Poke Saigon

Poke is a traditional Hawaiian dish made with fresh, cubed raw fish and toppings. Poke Saigon is the first poke restaurant in HCMC where diners create their own bowl. Located on the second floor of an apartment building, the dining space reflects the menu: fresh, fun, creative and healthy. There are many different options for your poke bowl with bases that include sushi or brown rice, including mix-in sauces like wasabi mayo and goma sesame and toppings such as wakame seaweed salad, crab salad and poke options: ahi tuna, salmon, shrimp and more. We are available for delivery.

Tue-Sun 110am-8pm
2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, D1
0902474388
<https://www.facebook.com/pokesaigon/>



Saigon Kitchen Club

Saigon Kitchen Club specializes in fresh, healthy and perfectly-portioned meals delivered to your home or office. They offer a variety of packages: Full Day, Lunch, Family and Weight Loss. The ingredients used are 100% pure olive oil, brown sugar, brown rice and strictly no MSG; giving diners exquisite and healthy meals.

Place order through the website:
www.saigonkitchenclub.com or call 0888.629.788



Saigon Social Space

SAIGON SOCIAL SPACE is your new venue to eat, drink, relax, socialise and celebrate. An oasis in Ho Chi Minh City, located in the mystical Pendula Gardens, lakeside sala's, gardens, the terrace and swimming pools. Produce driven menus, local & global flavors, sharing plates, wood fired grills. Also available for private events, meetings and pool parties.

Restaurant-Pool-Bar-Events-Weddings
53 Quach Giai St., Thanh My Loi, D2
0938 890 870 reservation@saigonsocialspace.com
www.saigonsocialspace.com
facebook.com/3s.saigonsocialspace



Stellar Restaurant

Occupies a refurbished villa within the upscale District 2. The restaurant serves a menu of familiar European cuisine. Lunch and Dinner at Stellar can expect well-executed renditions of Italian and French cuisines combining traditional technique with some Asian influences.

9:00am-10:30pm
43 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC.
028 374 45115
reservation@stellar.com.vn



twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).
21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

Travel & Wellness

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American Summer Dream

A boyhood dream of an American adventure comes true

Text and Images by Josh Hobson

Washington D.C.

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I have always wanted to travel to the US. When I was growing up in the UK I would spend the weekends with my grandparents. While there, I remember watching films like *Smokey and the Bandit*, *Forrest Gump*, *Home Alone* and many other classics that portray the beauty and excitement of that country.

Actually, my grandfather was a bigger influence on my fascination with the US. He was in the Merchant Navy and spent a lot of time traveling to North America. Whenever I visited on a weekend, my grandfather would sit down beside me with a scrapbook that held his dearest memories: pictures of sailors working and having a good time,

majestic views and famous celebrities.

My grandfather told me how he met Frank Sinatra in a jazz bar in Chicago after sailing through Lake Michigan. Another time, he managed to get a picture with the entire New York Yankees right after a game. The stories that he told made it seem as if he was the luckiest person on earth. I would sit there for hours, listening to every word.

The best piece of advice my grandfather told me was: “Make sure you travel. Make sure you travel often. Experience the world. Don’t settle for ‘home’. Home will always be here, it doesn’t change. It never does. Go and see what the world has to offer you.” I live by those words now.

Planning Planes, Trains and Automobiles

Because of my grandfather's stories I wanted to travel—feel what he felt, stand in locations in his scrapbook. So, as soon as my friend Jono and I had our exam timetables, we planned our routes around the US. We decided that while we were there, we wanted to try as many forms of transportation as possible. We planned routes on planes, trains and automobiles.

We were set to fly into New York on June 16, stay for five days before taking a Greyhound bus to Atlantic City. From AC, we would take another bus straight to Washington D.C. Again, and like many places we arrived at, we would stay there for another five days. We were to

take the train to Philadelphia, after a day trip to Baltimore.

We saw a cheap(ish) train from Philadelphia to Penn State. The prospect of going to Penn State wasn't one that excited Jono, however, I managed to persuade him that it would be sweet. It is a college town after all. We had both mentioned how we'd like to enter a 'frat' party. We decided that from Penn State, we would travel to Ohio State. That way if we failed in Penn State, there was another chance in Ohio.

An 11-hour coach journey would see us leave Ohio and head for Chicago. By this point we knew that we would be exhausted from all of the possible partying, junk food and long hours on the road. We decided we'd stay in Chicago for eight days, which would give us enough time to really explore the city. More importantly, though, to get back the wind in our sails.

Jono and I then planned on traveling to San Francisco. The prospect of a lengthy car journey was cut short when it was revealed the main reason we wanted to do it—Route 66—had been, in part, shut down. Jono and I, therefore, decided to fly. I have to admit we saved 28 hours, accordingly to Google Maps route planner.

From San Francisco, we finally decided to drive. We would drive to Yosemite National Park and camp for a few days. I wish we had planned for how cold it would be at night. Thankfully, there were many shops to buy blankets upon arrival, in case you're wondering.

The penultimate leg of our journey

would see us continue driving from Yosemite to Los Angeles. Driving in the US is the easiest thing I've ever done. Ok, driving on the wrong side of the road is somewhat scary... at first. Nevertheless, driving an automatic car on straight roads; seriously can't fault it.

Last, but not least, we would then take another Greyhound from Los Angeles to San Diego. We planned to stay in San Diego for a week, but we ended up there for two. We'd read so many reviews about San Diego's laid-back attitude and it sounded just the place to rest our wanderlust bodies and minds after a great adventure. You may be wondering why we stayed in San Diego for a week longer—and quite rightly so. Los Angeles was a disaster, so we left after a day...

So there it was. A summer in the US planned out for my friend Jono and I.

New York City, Chicago and San Diego

We arrived in New York City and were taken aback by how surreal the atmosphere was. It was as if all of my grandfather's pictures were coming to life and I was the main focal point. He used to tell me, "When you get to New York City, on a clear day, you have to watch the sunset from the Brooklyn Bridge. If you do one thing in New York, it has to be that." This had been drilled into me. I drilled this into Jono. The sun sets over the Manhattan skyline. The view is breathtaking. I remember seeing films with similar scenes in them when I was a child. It was as if I were in a movie. Jono and I fell silent. For that moment,



we were at one with ourselves. The silence broke shortly thereafter.

"We're here!" said Jono. We had arrived.

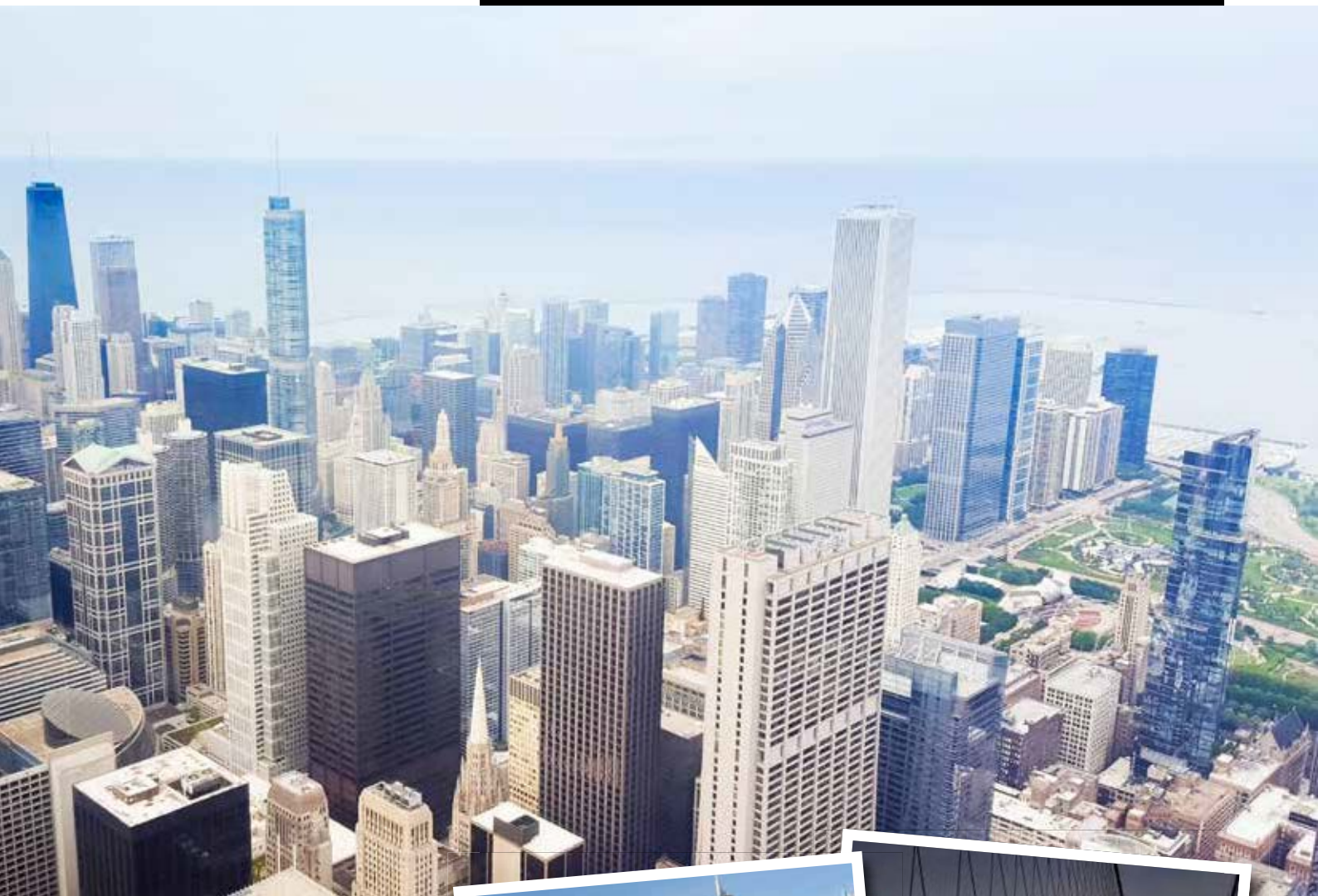
Undeterred by the lack of celebrity spotting, we continued on our travels.

Chicago was the next place I had been excited for. I'm a big jazz fan. I love Frank Sinatra. I love musicals. The Blues Brothers, etc. Chicago, well, it's the best place if you love jazz. There's a lot of history and culture from Chicago, and it's hard to compare it to anywhere else I've ever been. As we entered Chicago, we saw the sign for Route 66. When you hear things like 'Route 66' mentioned your entire life, and then you suddenly see a sign for it it's special. Chicago stood out for me, not because of the culture and jazz element, yet, but because of the kindness of the locals.

Before entering Chicago, we had read about how the city was a dangerous place. We experienced nothing but the contrary. We arrived anxiously thinking that we may be in trouble at some point in the city but how wrong were we. Whenever we were lost, locals would come up to us and ask if we needed help. At bus stops or train stations around the city, strangers would start a conversation with us. Give us recommendations for places to visit and eat. We loved Chicago.



New York City Time Square



The last city to stand out city on our trip was San Diego. After a grueling few months of traveling, sleeping in hostels, eating junk food and a disastrous time in Los Angeles, we were ready to relax in San Diego for two weeks before flying back to London.

And did we relax... San Diego stands out for one simple reason. It feels like a completely different universe to the rest of the US we visited. Where New York and San Francisco were quite fast paced and frantic, San Diego was chilled. The people were friendly and laidback. Unlike LA, everything was relatively affordable too.

Unknown to Jono and I, we had decided to book a hostel in the Hill Crest area. We stayed for two weeks at a place called Zoo Hostel. It was fantastic. The owners took us to Mexico for a night to party in Tijuana with the rest of the hostel's guests. There were other people that were there for a few weeks, too. Over the course of that two-week period, we made friends for life. Friends that we shared memories with.

Jono and I create our own scrapbook. We created our own memories. Our own feelings. One day I hope that I can show my grandchildren my scrapbook. I hope they follow in my footsteps, as I did with my grandfather. I will be offering them the same advice he offered me. ■



philly



Brooklyn Bridge Sunset

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While planning the trip to the US, there are a lot of problems that you might come across. Booking flights, coaches, hotels, car rentals, all kinds of issues can arise. Potentially, the most problematic comes in the form of a US visa. Well, thankfully, that wasn't the case for this adventure.

Luckily, being from the UK, Jono and I were able to travel to the US without a visa. Instead, we acquired the little-known resource called the ESTA (www.estaform.org). With the ESTA, you can travel to the US for up to 90 days as a tourist or to conduct business. Quite convenient then considering that we had planned a

three-month adventure.

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Kids & Education



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



Tag

A FRIEND

Saigon's thriving graffiti culture may surprise you

Text by Tasso Dattenberg-Doyle
Images by Ngoc Tran

IT'S HARD TO THINK OF GRAFFITI WITHOUT

the connotations of illegality. Tagging, which rose to prominence in the 90s, has always been seen as an art form for youth and rebellion. However, now that it has surfaced and gained in popularity and prominence, classes and workshops on the matter are freely available even to those who have no intention of taking the art form into the street, where it is at home.

Lee Wessels is one of the forerunners in Ho Chi Minh City's nascent graffiti scene. His workshops were originally aimed at school children as an after-school activity but, with rising popularity, they have started to include adults and younger children as well. Graffiti, it seems, is well and healthy. Lee, a Dutch national adopted from South Korea, is a long-standing graffiti artist who mixes the forms he learned by running around in the streets with the more orthodox, academic teachings from art school. The popularity of his works is such that he has been invited to decorate some of Ho Chi Minh City's most recognizable hotspots, including Indika, Outcast, Piu Piu, the Saigon skate park and En-Dee Garden. In the two-and-a-half short years he has been here, he has certainly already left a mark.

The quality of Saigon's own graffiti scene, he says, is the fact that the community is supportive and devoid of the machismo found in other cities. The groups that he teaches are there to help each other and while there is a healthy spirit of competition, it is not so aggressive as to cow the inexperienced. Most of all it seems that those who want to get involved in graffiti want to spread a message of positivity.



The spirit of tagging in Saigon is less rebellious than it is encouraging, hoping to find a way to beautify and color places that otherwise would remain visually anonymous.

Legal Graffiti

The question that most perturbs me is whether graffiti can still be considered graffiti once divorced from its background of illegality. Underground art forms are stripped of that fashionable title when they are given a mainstream spotlight and graffiti classes are certainly a step in that direction. The origins of graffiti, more than many other art forms, seem to be steeped in the clandestine. Lee considers then tells me that the feeling behind the art may change, the rebellion that made the illegality of the art form so attractive may disappear in a classroom, but the techniques remain the same. Whether your motivations are to take the lessons and bring them back to a hidden alley to mark your territory, or something a little bit more private, the skills you can learn at Lee's classes remain equally useful.

The lessons cover different forms of



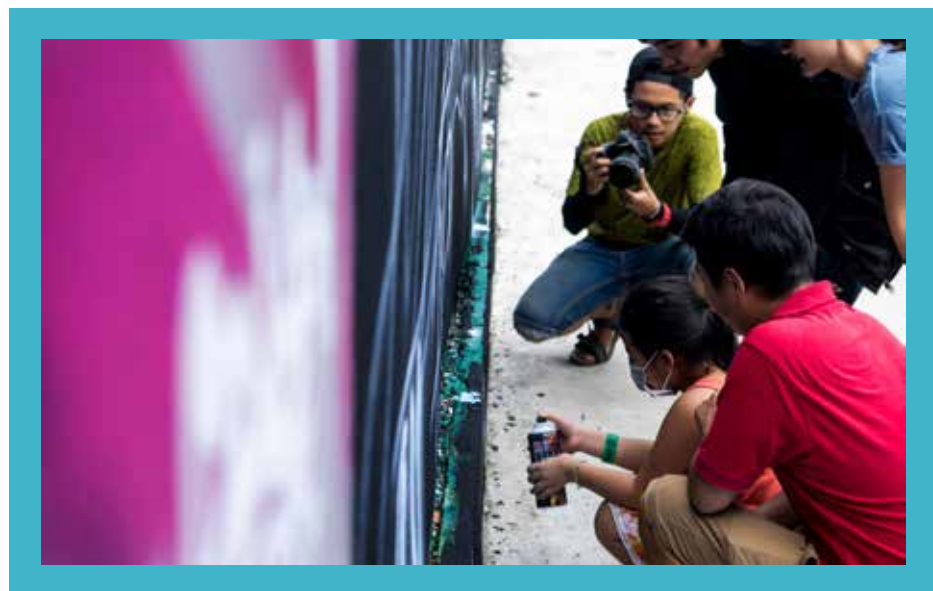
graffiti art: Solid Murals (co-founded by Lukas Harrer, www.facebook.com/solidmurals) focuses on finding new ways to decorate surfaces while Saigon Creative English (co-founded by Thomas Dijkhuizen, www.facebook.com/scevietnam) offers courses on writing and fonts using aerosol and stencilling techniques. From top to bottom and back to front, Lee's classes can cover everything from beginners to more advanced graffiti artists who want to hone their talents or simply find a group to share their passion with.

To that end, sharing graffiti with everyone, Lee has recently opened classes in District 13, the first workshop in Vietnam to cover a full course in graffiti. Included are classes on the history of graffiti, graffiti techniques with aerosol and stencilling, design technique, 3D techniques and even courses on how to design your own themed mural. The course is a complete crash course and 15 percent of the proceeds go to charity, purchasing materials needed to teach the same courses free of charge for orphanages and shelters. As an orphan himself, Lee explains that he wants

to give something to those who went through the same hardships.

One of the great attractions of graffiti for Lee is the fact that it can bring beauty or a message to unexpected places. Art is so often confined to the gallery or to a website and people have to go to the bother of seeking it out. Graffiti is a public art form that can be displayed to hundreds of people. While it may be unfair to call the art passive, there is a side to it that hopes to blend into the environment and to fit in organically. In that sense, graffiti is equally at home as a large-scale eye-catcher in the style of the Los Angeles street art that has become an instantly recognizable characteristic of the city, as it is as a more subtle, downplayed art form that lends beauty without being invasive.

For Lee, the graffiti scene in Saigon is only just starting. The city is youthful and different art forms from music to dance to graffiti are starting to get a dedicated following. It's an exciting time to be an artist in Saigon with so much innovation underway and Lee only sees its star rising. ■





Dffctiuly

With Lainerng To Raed

How technology can help dyslexic learners help themselves

Text by **Jacqui Kirkman**

DYSLEXIA IS NOT SOMETHING that a person 'grows out of,' so dyslexic students need to develop ways of working that use their strengths and bypass their limitations. These technologies are not intended to replace specialized, evidence-based literacy teaching, but rather to provide options for students to access resources and produce work without being hampered by their challenges with spelling and other language conventions. For work where the real aim is that students can show their content knowledge and ability to use higher order skills, some of these

apps and programs can put them on a level playing field with everyone else.

This is commonly referred to as assistive technology (AT). In the past, AT has been expensive and obvious, but the rise of 1:1 technology and bring your own device (BYOD) programs in schools is making AT simpler and cheaper to access and much easier for teachers to integrate into the mainstream classroom.

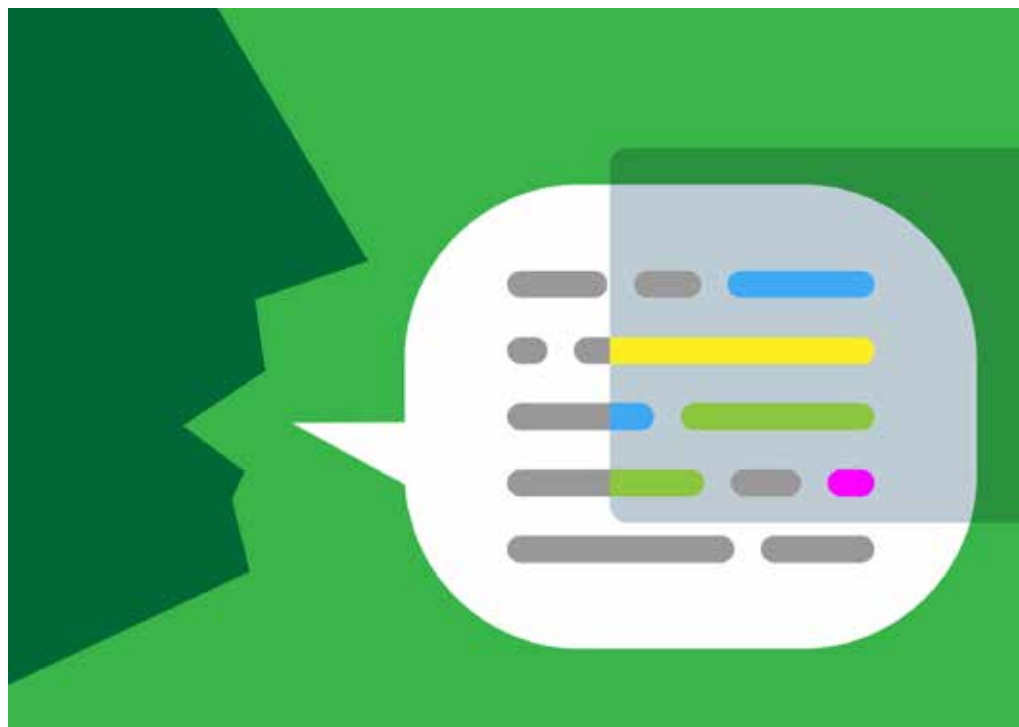
This article merely scratches the surface of assistive technology, but options for different types of devices and different budgets are presented. In some cases, negotiation with the school's IT department may be necessary. In many cases, a lite (free) version is available so teachers can try out the app and see if it suits their learners.

Speech to Text

Something really simple but very liberating, especially for students in the middle primary age-range who are starting to need to research and work more independently but are still struggling with reading and spelling, is to teach them to use a voice command for internet searching. On an iPad or iPhone, ask Siri to search. In a Google browser window, tap the microphone button and speak.

iPads have a built-in dictation feature, which can be enabled in Settings, General, Keyboards. An internet connection is needed for dictation to work. Once in an app and ready to type, users tap the screen and, when the keyboard appears, tap the microphone picture and start dictating. Users can give commands like 'new paragraph,' but corrections need to be made manually. To finish dictating, tap Done.

Setting up speech recognition in Windows 7, 8 or 10 is a little more complicated. Users need to set up a microphone and train their computer to understand their speech. There is a tutorial on the Windows website which takes users through how to talk to their computer so their voice is understood accurately. Over time, the computer builds up a profile of a user's voice, so accuracy should improve.



There are a number of programs and apps that also provide a speech-to-text feature. The best known of these is Dragon Naturally Speaking for PC and Dragon Dictate for Mac. There is an accompanying iPad and iPhone app, Dragon Dictation. There are many dictation programs on the market and many free apps, although the robustness of these apps varies. Some are glitchy or do not allow easy export of text.

Text to Speech

iOS, the operating system on which iPads work, has a variety of settings that allow text to be read aloud. This could be an article in itself but, in short, to enable text to speech, go to Settings, General, Accessibility, Speech.

- Turning Speak Selection on allows users to select sections of text or particular words by tapping and holding down on the screen in any app where they want text read aloud. A box pops up which gives users the option to copy, define or speak that selection.

- Turning Speak Screen on allows users to then swipe down with two fingers from the top of the screen to hear the contents of that screen spoken. A little box appears here too, giving options to pause, fast forward or rewind, to speed up or slow down the rate of speech.

Many iBooks have a text-to-speech function. There are also other sources for talking books that can help a struggling reader to enjoy literature and the many benefits that being widely read brings.

Voice Dream Reader for iPad is a good option to import text from other sources to read aloud. It is integrated with many other programs, has a lot of features and is robust. One thing it does not do is optical character recognition (OCR), so to be able to scan a non-electronic document (such as a worksheet or homework page) and have

it read aloud, then Prizmo or Readiris might be the answer.

Mac OSX (10.8 and later) has dictation and speech-to-text features and work in a similar way to the iPad features and can be accessed via system preferences.

For something that works on a PC, WordTalk is a free add-in for Microsoft Word, developed at the University of Edinburgh. It highlights and reads text in a Word document. Once the add-in is installed from the website, an extra tab labelled Add-ins will appear when Word is opened. That tab contains a toolbar with the available options, such as speak a word, speak a paragraph, speak from the cursor.

Texthelp produces Read&Write for Google, a Google app which provides text-to-speech, editing and translating tools. It is free for teachers, but there is a cost for individuals and schools. It is a good option for someone who wants to work with the Google suite of apps. There is an app version of Read & Write for Google, which is free for the lite version. iReadWrite is an iPad app also produced by Texthelp with text-to-speech and word prediction features, as well as a dictionary and a number of sharing and display options.

Text Prediction

Text prediction is a feature commonly used on tablet devices and smartphones. Many people without a print disability use it routinely. Imagine how much dyslexics appreciate it! Many of the programs and apps already mentioned include this feature, but another couple of apps that use it are Typ-O HD and Spell Better. These are quite simple apps without a lot of exporting options and extra features, but that can be a good thing for younger students and those who are easily distracted by a lot of clutter on the screen.



Reminders/Organization

Dyslexia often goes hand-in-hand with executive functioning challenges, so apps and programs which help people with dyslexia to plan, organize and remember are also useful. Of course, dyslexics are not the only people who want to improve their planning, organization and ability to remember to do things. Because of the wide market demand, there are a huge number of possibilities here, such as the apps Nudge (by Simple Tailor), VoCal (reminders can be created using voice recording—no need to type), Alarmed and Forgetful. Google Calendar can be set to give reminders or alerts, as can Calendar for Mac and the Notifications feature on iPads and iPhones. These are all essentially time based.

There is another set of apps that can also give reminders based on geographic location, for example, when I arrive home, remind me to feed the fish. Some apps with this feature are Todoist, IFTTT (If this, then that) and Tasker. Smart watches also have reminder features and can be hard to ignore when they are attached to a person's arm!

Note Taking

Older students who need to make a record of classes or lectures can really struggle if the only option is to write notes. These programs allow varying combinations of typed text, handwritten notes (could be pictures or symbols), audio recording, photos, PDFs and PowerPoint presentations: AudioNote, Notability, GoodNotes, ShowMe, ScreenChomp and Explain Everything. Different students will have different preferences for how they like to work.

Mind Mapping

Good planning leads to a good outcome. Planning is especially vital for those with a learning disability and they often find a planning system which uses symbols, diagrams and maybe even audio more effective than one which is purely print-focused. Mind mapping is often recommended to enhance learning for all students, so this is another example of an AT strategy which can benefit the entire class, not just those with a disability.

With that in mind, here are some examples of mind mapping programs and apps:

- Popplet – a simple-to-use iPad app designed for students. There is a free version which allows one popplet (or mind map). Images, text and drawing can be included in a popplet and it can be exported via email or saved as an image in the iPad camera roll.

- Tools4Students and Tools4Students2 – each of these low-cost apps includes 25 different graphic organizer templates, for example Cause and Effect, Compare and Contrast, Main Idea and Detail, Problem and Solution. The developers consider the apps suitable for students in Years 4–12.

- Inspiration and Kidspiration – part of a suite of products for planning and mind mapping. The software is purchased by licence, but there are also iPad versions. Kidspiration is designed for K–5 and Inspiration for Grade 4 up. Like Tools4Students, there are templates to choose from or users can start a mind map from scratch. The finished products can be exported to a variety of other programs.

Simplification

Those with poor reading skills can struggle to research effectively, although their content knowledge may be very good. Ads and banners on websites can be very confusing and distracting for some. The following suggestions either declutter the page, provide a simplified version of text or both.

Rewordify.com is a free website into which users can paste text or a url for a website. The site then substitutes words it judges to be difficult with a simpler word or phrase. It is a useful tool, although it does come up with some strange substitutions and the flow is often interrupted when a phrase is substituted for a single word. Single words can also be pasted in to get their meaning and there are other features

"I have dyslexia" was extremely hard for me to say to anyone. It was like saying "I am stupid. I didn't believe that I am stupid. I didn't know if the person I was telling understood what it means to have dyslexia. I once told a close friend and her response was 'I didn't know you weren't normal.'"

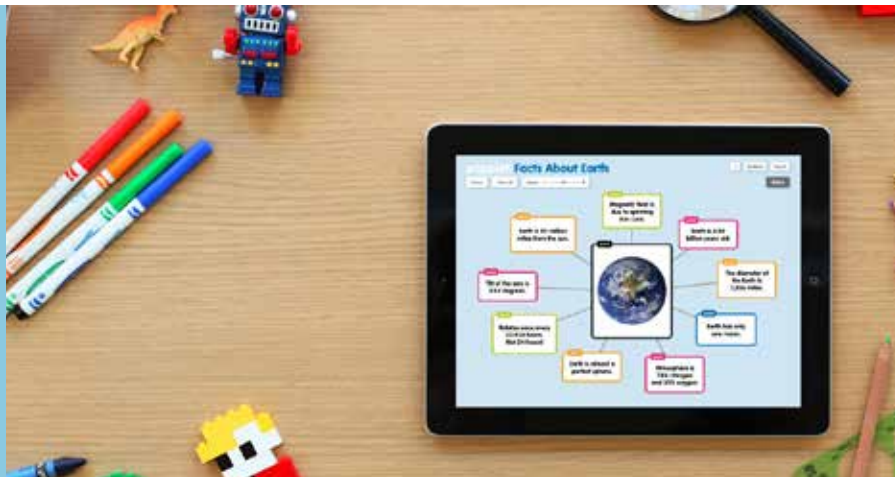
which provide activities for learning vocabulary. More features are available for registered users, but it is not necessary to register to use paste and substitute functionality.

Readability.com is a free web and mobile app that declutters the web page to remove distractions which can be very... well... distracting for some students. Once the Readability bookmarklets are installed, an icon will appear on the browser toolbar. When the required page is open, users click on the armchair icon and choose Read Now. They will then be presented with a 'clean' version of the page. There are other features in Readability which allow users to mark articles on their reading list to read later and to send articles to a Kindle. The Readability.com option obviously needs a bit of setting up, so it is harder to use when users away from their own computer.

The previously mentioned Read & Write for Google includes a simplify and summarize button in its many premium features. Sadly, Google has removed the option to filter search results according to reading level, but the student's favorite research tool, Wikipedia, still has a simple English version for many of its pages.

The learning future is bright for students with a learning disability who have access to technology to allow them to learn in the ways they learn best.

Jacqui Kirkman is a Brisbane-based educator and is the director of Potential Learning (www.potentiallearning.com.au), a consultancy that helps learners achieve their potential through providing professional development, consultancy and advocacy. She is a member of the Apple Consultants Network and a Specialist Literacy Teacher accredited with SPELD Qld. ■



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Constipation

- A Painful Problem

Constipation in toddlers can lead to an unhappy little one, so learn how to keep them regular and happy



CONSTIPATION IS A COMMON problem that almost every child will experience at some point in time. It is a condition where a child infrequently passes hard painful stools over a long period of time.

Unfortunately, in many cases this problem goes unnoticed. Recently a mother brought her three-year-old child to the clinic. Her concern was her child's loss of appetite. He would often start eating and then suddenly stop and refuse to continue. When I examined the child, I noticed hard masses in his belly. He hadn't passed stools for three days, and the mother told me that when he did, they were usually hard and painful.

Constipation can cause abdominal pain and loss of appetite in children. Normally when we eat, a bodily reaction called the gastrocolic reflex will cause the colon (large intestine) to constrict, creating the urge to defecate. If a child's colon is filled with hard stools, this reflex will cause pain, and the child will stop eating. Eventually, he will refuse eating altogether to avoid this painful sensation.

Constipation has a significant impact on a child, both physically and psychologically. A child who has passed painful stools will try to avoid going to the toilet again to prevent pain. That creates a vicious cycle that will cause the retention of more stool in the colon, stretching it to a point at which the colon doesn't function properly and the constipation will get worse. A child that suffers from long-standing constipation may lose the ability to control his anal sphincter and may suffer from "leakage" of small amounts of loose stools and



Dr. Jonathan Halevy received his degree from the Sackler School of Medicine of Tel Aviv University, and then underwent his residency in the Pediatric Department of the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel, earning his certification as a specialist in pediatrics.

staining of his underpants.

This problem has a great emotional impact on a child. It causes the child to be afraid of the toilet. It will cause a child to feel embarrassed, to try to avoid certain social situations (avoiding public toilets at school, avoiding visiting friends) and to suffer from low self-esteem.

Constipation In Babies

Constipation is a common condition in toddlers and children, but it's quite uncommon in little babies. Sometimes, normal phenomena might be mistaken for constipation:

- Breastfed and formula-fed babies can pass stools anywhere from six times a day to even once a week. Usually, when they do pass a stool, it is soft and not painful.
- A baby might seem to be struggling to pass stools, grunting and straining, even turning red, eventually passing soft stools. This is a result of uncoordination between the abdominal muscles pushing the stool out and the squeezing of the anal sphincter, which makes it difficult to defecate. Eventually, the baby learns to relax his sphincter and the straining situation is resolved.

Reasons

If a baby does suffer from true constipation, we need to search for a cause:

- Constipation may be the only sign of milk allergy in little babies. Sometimes there can be blood in the stool.
- Anatomic conditions such as bowel obstruction, Hirschsprung disease, or hernia.

- Hypothyroidism (Low thyroid hormone)
- Dehydration, Malnutrition
- Botulism (from exposure to honey)
- Rare metabolic disorders.

Treatment

The treatment of constipation involves three aspects:

1. Nutrition

- Avoid sugary sweet foods and drinks (including fruit juices); fatty foods; large amounts of white rice; and bananas. These may worsen constipation.
- It's better to blend the whole fruit than to provide only the juice; your child will get more vitamins, minerals and fiber this way.
- Give your child foods rich in fibers (whole rice, cereals such as oats, whole fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread).
- Blended prunes (especially dried prunes) can sometimes help with constipation.
- Adding 1–2 spoons of olive oil to your child's food may help.
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water (not juice!).

2. Stool Softeners

If nutritional changes don't help, the next step is to use stool softeners. There are different types on the market: I usually recommend Duphalac or Lactulose. This is a special type of sugar that is not absorbed, retaining water inside the gut and loosening the stool. I prefer not to prescribe suppositories (such as

microlet or glycerine) as they are less effective, and sometimes may even be traumatic for the child.

The goal is to get stools as soft as toothpaste—not firm, and not too loose. Start with a low dose (0.5–1 sachet) and gradually increase every 2–3 days until you reach the desired goal.

Continue this dose daily for at least 3–4 months. The treatment usually lasts for several months for a couple of reasons:

- It takes time for the dilated rectum to get back to its normal size and function.
- It takes even longer for the child to forget the pain of passing hard stools.
- There is no risk of "addiction" or "getting used to" this treatment.

3. Behavioral Plan

- Encourage your child to sit on the toilet twice a day after breakfast and after dinner. This way you can take advantage of the gastrocolic reflex that occurs after eating. Let the child sit there for a few moments even if nothing happens, just to get him familiar with the situation.
- Remember, when your child is on the potty or the toilet seat, make sure his knees are higher than his hips. Squatting is even better. This position makes it easier to pass stools.
- Make it fun—in toddlers and preschool children, prepare a calendar. Every time your child successfully passes stools, put a little sticker there. Let him choose a little gift as a reward for every seventh sticker. This will motivate the child to "make an effort"! ■



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Date: Sunday, 24 September 2017

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Parental INVOLVEMENT

While the education system has changed a lot since 1921, one factor - family engagement - remains critical to student achievement

THROUGHOUT MY 10 YEARS

as an international educator, the most frequently asked question from parents is, "How can I support my child at home?" I have spent much of my free time drafting letters with activities and websites parents can use to engage their children, however, most parents are looking for a fast and easy fix where the teacher waves a magic wand and... POOF! Their child is fluent in English, suddenly focused and organized, or performs well on tests. Trust me, there is no simple way to boost your child's performance in the classroom without laying some groundwork at home. This is where you, the parent, come in.

Parent involvement does not necessarily mean talking to the teacher each week, sending children to school after regular school hours, baking cookies for the PTA, or spending hours with repetitive paperwork, which I call 'busy work.' Providing extra handouts on a topic your child has demonstrated good understanding does not improve achievement. In fact, it's detrimental. Children require time to process new information in order for it to be committed to long-term memory. The brain needs adequate 'down time' for this to happen. If you are steadfastly determined to enroll your child in after school activities, try a sports class. Club sports can build teamwork and a sense of community. Other sports such as martial arts are known to improve focus, drive and perseverance as well as gross motor skills. Additionally, try completing a puzzle at home, or playing a board game. These activities can improve fine motor skills. Provide your child their own space to draw, keep a journal, or do crafts. Enroll them in music lessons; research shows a correlation between academic achievement and participation in music,

especially in language acquisition.

Basically, allow them to explore their own interests outside of academia to promote personal, emotional and social growth.

Get involved from the beginning of the school year—now is the perfect time! Occasionally, nearly an entire school year can go by with little or no parent interaction, then suddenly with only one month of school left to go, I have a line of parents queuing up outside my classroom door. While teachers are happy when parents become involved, the 'too little, too late' syndrome should be avoided at all costs. Putting that much pressure for a child to become successful in a short period of time is stressful, for all involved.

Parents can easily become involved from home. Doing things like; creating a set routine and sticking to it, ensuring your child goes to sleep at the same time every day at an age-appropriate hour, turning electronic devices off a half-hour before bedtime, and reading to them plus having them read to you are beneficial. If you are not available, perhaps a family member can substitute. The language of the text is not important, it's the time spent making those connections between concepts and the written word. Pause while reading to ask your child to make predictions, summarize/retell, or for you to 'I wonder....'

Asking questions daily can be valuable as well, but stay away from simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. Look at your child's schedule and ask what they did during a specific subject that day. Open ended questions aid in recall and help to commit new knowledge to long-term memory. When you are interested in what your child does at school it sends the message that school is important to you. As a result, it will become important to them.



Catherine Mihowich is a Grade 3 teacher with an M.Sc Education at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

Let's talk about making mistakes. Many are unwilling to attempt something unless they can do it perfectly the first time. This is a disadvantageous, or fixed mindset. Making mistakes or being confused are time-tested methods of learning. Parents, please impress upon your child that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process; it does not mean they are not intelligent or capable of growth. It means they are risk-takers who are willing to learn through trying. Helen Hayes, an American actress, once said, "The expert at anything was once a beginner." No one masters a topic straight away, so build into your child a growth mindset mentality. Instead of saying, "I can't do it," "It's too hard," or "I'm just not smart," your child should be saying things like, "I need to try a different strategy," "This will be challenging but I'll keep trying," or "I need to think about this some more." The brain is like a muscle, the more you use it the stronger it grows, or, the greater the neuroplasticity. Also, provide them the space to make mistakes. By assigning daily, age-appropriate chores at home you not only build confidence and independence, but also responsibility. These are qualities that translate into the classroom. Have your child make their bed, put their laundry away, help set the table, serve dinner and clear the table, or put groceries away. Remember, if your child can use a smartphone, they can push a broom!

Learning does not stop once the student steps out of the classroom, and you as parents can be the cheerleader from home. Through a collaborative relationship, we can work together to ensure your child's current and future success. ensure your child's current and future success. ■

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (January 2017), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded this Department for Education rating. Progress of students puts the ABCIS among the top 8% of schools in the world. Providing education for 2-18 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment, it delivers a culturally adapted version of the British National Curriculum supported by Cambridge & AQA IGCSE and AS/A levels. Students are prepared for Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Korea and Canada.



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4, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
Primary & Secondary Campus:
2, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36
office@theabcis.com
www.theabcis.com



At EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise - An Phu,

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028 6287 0804 / 0904 938 666
www.etonhouseanphu.com



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

Vietnam's only international school offering a U.S. curriculum for children 18 months to 11 years old within a 100% English language environment. With a library containing over 13,500 English books and more than 60% of students achieving above grade level English, ISSP graduates are well prepared for secondary school at ISHCMC or ISHCMC - American Academy.



92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
+84 (28) 2222 7788/99
admissions@issp.edu.vn
www.issp.edu.vn



Kinder Academy

Kinder Academy is a Reggio Emilia approach and STEM concept inspired preschool, where you can find the best integration of the above philosophies and practices.

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47/11/09 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, District 2
093 878 00 76



Saigon Star International School

Saigon Star is a student focused international school offering a high quality, first class education. Specialising in the British National Curriculum, all of the class teachers hold an international teaching qualification. In our Early Years programme, a Montessori specialist works closely with the mainclass teachers to ensure a high rate of progress and attainment. The school also provides specialists for children requiring additional ESL support.



Residential Area No.5, Thanh My Loi Ward, D2
028 3742 STAR / 028 3742 7827
www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

ISHCMC - American Academy is a U.S. curriculum secondary school, preparing students aged 11 to 18 years old for success at universities worldwide. Early university credits, through SUPA and AP courses, a 1:1 University Counseling Program, and an extensive EAL program sets our graduates on the road to success with 100% acceptance rate and U.S. \$1 million scholarship fund to overseas universities.



16 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@aaavn.edu.vn
www.aaavn.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

ISHCMC is a leading school in HCMC with a rich history, yet is always innovating. Students from over 50 nationalities are taught in modern learning environments by trained IB educators specializing in inquiry-led teaching. This, paired with international-standard safeguarding policies ensures that all children are safe and supported to reach their potential. ISHCMC students develop a life-long passion for asking questions and searching beyond what is asked in the classroom ultimately becoming true 21st century citizens equipped for the future. The 2017/18 academic school year will see the new Secondary Campus open and the continued refurbishment in the Primary Campus.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn
www.ishcmc.com



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 20 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners.

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
028 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223
admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn



WONDERKIDS MONTESSORI SCHOOL (WMS)

School ages: 18 months to 9 years old. WMS is a standard international Montessori school offering nursery, kindergarten and lower elementary program by North America Montessori Curriculum covered with 100% English environment (for children from 18 months to 9 years old). Where the best integration of this philosophy and practices happen, we are proudly an active member of American Montessori Society. "Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Maria Montessori

Campus 1:
3A Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC
0938 909 268 / 028 22534999

montessori-office@wonderkids.edu.vn
www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn

Campus 2:
4-6 Road No.20, My Gia 1, Tan Phu, D7, HCMC
0977299288 / 028 54141416
info@wms.edu.vn
www.wms.edu.vn



Also...

Australian International School (AIS)

The Australian International School is an IB World School with three world class campuses in District 2, HCMC, offering an international education from kindergarten to senior school with the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), Cambridge Secondary Programme (including IGCSE) and IB Diploma Programme (DP).

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
www.aisvietnam.com

British International School (BIS)

Inspected and approved by the British Government, BIS provides a British style curriculum for an international student body from pre-school to Year 13. The school is staffed by British qualified and trained teachers with recent UK experience. Fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and a member of FOBISIA, BIS is the largest international school in Vietnam.

www.bisvietnam.com

Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British School offering the National Curriculum for England complemented by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each pupil is offered an education tailored to meet their individual learning needs. It's a family school providing first-class facilities including a 350- seats theater, swimming pools, mini-pool, drama rooms, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

www.renaissance.edu.vn

Saigon South International School

Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.

www.ssis.edu.vn

The Montessori International School of Vietnam

For children 6 months to 9 years old. A registered member of the American Montessori Society. Montessori uses an internationally recognized educational method which focuses on fostering the child's natural desire to learn. The aim is to create a sense of self and individuality through an encouraging and learning environment. Available are Extra-curricular Activities, Summer camp and immersion programs in Vietnamese, French and Mandarin.

www.montessori.edu.vn



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CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2017!

FROM ALL YOUR FRIENDS
AT ISHCMC

Congratulations to the Class of 2017, the 17th cohort of students to graduate from ISHCMC.

The Class of 2017 scored well above the world average and furthermore, 60% of this class received the prestigious IB Bilingual Diploma, upholding the school's reputation as a truly international school with over 50 nationalities represented school-wide.

In addition to these resounding results, the Graduating Class Valedictorian, Yeji scored a perfect score of 45 out of 45. Only 218 other students around the world achieved this top score out of the 159,400 students who sat the IB DP examinations globally in May 2017. Yeji joined the ISHCMC community in Grade 8 in 2012.

Furthermore, we congratulate the Class of 2017 for their acceptances to top universities all over the world including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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ALL STUDENTS STUDY THE IB

15 NATIONALITIES
REPRESENTED
IN THE
CLASS OF 2017

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BILINGUAL
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