

Rundle's revamp

Eleanor Miller asked developer Steve Maras about Rundle St's recent image change.

GEEZ Rundle St has changed in the 15 or so years since I was a student enjoying regular refreshment at the Exeter.

I miss good old Don Giovanni's, Big Star records, Buongiorno's (site of my first appalling attempt at waitressing), and the arty Boltz Cafe.

Once upon a time there was a great underground op shop on the northern side of the street.

And I remember opening *The Advertiser* to see if I'd gotten into uni at 3am in Johnny Rockets, (that tacky '50s-style diner where the waiters spontaneously broke into dance).

Back in the day, Rundle St was a lot grungier, and all about students.

Over time it's become more slick, and there's been a sudden influx of sparkling, decidedly non-grungy, high-end fashion boutiques.

In the past 18 months, despite the Global Financial Crisis, Rundle St has gained Gripp Jeans (unfortunately now in liquidation nationally), Sass & Bide, SABA, Lisa Ho, Calibre, Jack London and Zimmermann.

Alannah Hill opened last week in the former Amarin Thai building and is having its official launch party on June 17.

And there's at least one more high end store to come (being kept annoyingly secret).

My understanding is that all of these retailers are so far happy with their trading results, operating at a level as expected or above expectations.

This has to be a good thing for Adelaide.

The question is: how and why this has all come about?

Seeking to increase its day-use and profile, he set about canvassing high-end boutiques with the assistance of local fashion retail specialist Lou Rentis (and a big lunch account).

Why go for the high end? Well retailers including Sportsgirl, Brian Rochford and Esprit had already been trialled unsuccessfully on Rundle St in the mid '90s.

It would appear they were too close to what was already on offer in Rundle Mall. Time to try something more unique.

By fortunate coincidence, a number of tenancies along Rundle St ended within a short space of each other.

They included the premises of Blue Chilli (a jewellery shop that has moved to Regent Arcade), Platinum (a fashion shop no longer operating) and Natuzzi (which has consolidated in David Jones).

After much canvassing by Steve and Lou, Gripp Jeans decided to move into one of the newly vacated shop fronts, followed by Sass & Bide.

In a nutshell, like began attracting like and the others came onboard in a relatively short time.

"We had a five-year plan but it all happened in 18 months we were very surprised by that," Steve says.

His one disappointment so far is that he came very close to securing Scanlan and Theodore but was unable to offer the company a shop floor big enough for its needs.

The nightlife

The other thread to this "behind the scenes" story has been a blunt "anti nightclub sleaze" campaign on Rundle St.

Since becoming landlord, the Maras Group has restricted the hours of the Stag Hotel and the Belgian Beer Cafe.

Backed by surrounding residents, it has actively campaigned against other late night venues on the street in buildings owned by other landlords.

A current bone of contention is a proposed billiard hall proposed for the top of Alfresco's.

"We don't want the moths that are attracted by late nights and bright lights, we want people (as tenants)," Steve says.

"We've had bars and night club operators in the past willing to offer us double the rent to take on a tenancy. We turn them away."



Developer Steve Maras



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End product

Steve says the success of the street comes down to "careful planning" and "having the right mix of retailers and cafes so there's something happening day and night".

He knew he'd reached his goal of creating a "lifestyle strip" when the Crown Hotel came to town, specifically asking to be located near Rundle St in the East End.



The new Alannah Hill store opened last week.

Email me at millere@mng.newsitd.com.au or leave a comment on my blog at citynorthmessenger.com.au/blogs.

Rundle St gossip from Steve

- Cherri Bellini is moving further east towards Frome St near the high end boutiques, with a new shop fit out.
- Steve Madden shoes will be arriving on the southern side of the street in July.
- Endota Spa will expand to include a third level, specialising in group treatments (particularly targeting hens nights).
- Of the four blocks of tenancies owned by the Maras group there are 70 tenants (many of which are upstairs professional you might not notice from the street.) They include architects, a Sydney mining company, lawyers, engineers, and recently, senator Nick Xenophon.
- Maras Group CEO Steve Maras says he "will never touch" Mary Martin Bookshop or giftware retailer Bimbo, describing both as "Adelaide institutions".
- The Maras Group plans to build some new premises in "nooks and crannies around the place" on Rundle St.
- While high-end retailers are welcome on Rundle St, Ebenezer Place (just behind Rundle St) is designed to accommodate youthful independent local retailers (the indie crowd)



The posh retailers

The story starts with the Maras Group, which bought four blocks of Rundle St from the State Government in 2007 (reaching from the Stag Hotel to Union St).

Managing Director Steve Maras says there was a perception at the time that the strip was restaurant-heavy and "a bit stagnant".

Magical wedding day in Koh Samui

WEDDING | KASIA OZOG

A BEACH ceremony in Koh Samui with a traditional Thai drum parade and blessing from Buddhist monks celebrated the union of Matthew and Melissa Pengilly (nee Shammall).

The North Adelaide pair, who got together after meeting at work in 2004, were married on March 27, two and a half years after Matthew proposed on the Santa Monica Pier in Los Angeles while on holiday.

"He was so nervous that when he went to propose he found that he couldn't talk so he just kept winking at me," laughs Melissa, 24.

"I thought he was having a stroke!"

Sixteen close friends and family flew to Thailand for the wedding.

"The traditional drum parade before the ceremony, the blessing from the Buddhist monks, our fireworks and most of all saying our vows to one another that we had written ourselves ... was the highlight," Melissa says.

She wore a custom-made backless dress by George from Alexis George, vintage 1920s bracelets and a headpiece by Jasmine Jackson, who also made Delta Goodrem's headpieces for her 2009 tour.

Matthew, 27, wore a suit by Saba. Guests feasted on a Thai Kantoke banquet of fresh seafood and tra-

ditional Thai dishes followed by dessert of a two-tiered chocolate wedding cake and also sticky rice with coconut ice cream and fresh mango.

Bridesmaids were Rebecca Cooper, Kate Colligan and Amanda Nicholls, the fourth bridesmaid, Katie Sava, was unable to fly as she is pregnant.

Groomsmen were Matthew's brother Adam, Luke Carlino, Tulsa Giles and Duncan Watson.

Matthew and Melissa are having an "after wedding party" at the Skybar at the Griffins Head for guests who couldn't attend the wedding.



BEACH CEREMONY: North Adelaide's Matthew and Melissa Pengilly (nee Shammall) were married in a beach ceremony in Koh Samui.