



# LIFE WAS A CABARET

CRAZY HORSE PARIS HAS MORPHED FROM ONE FORM OF CABARET TO ANOTHER. *GERAINT PRICE* CHECKS OUT THE ACTION.



**A**S mentioned last month, the white elephant that was Crazy Horse Paris has been resurrected, phoenix-like (if that's not a mixed metaphor) into Bellini Grande, which to all intents and purposes is another cabaret club but without the topless girls. To the few who ever actually made it to Crazy Horse, the décor will seem familiar: St James Power Station boss Dennis Foo cut a deal for the club's fixtures and fitting with operators Eng Wah (which amounted to some \$2.75m).

The interior of Crazy Horse was described as like a Parisienne boudoir, complete with red velvet-padded walls, Venetian mirrors, chandeliers, curtains and art-deco wall sconces. I thought it was more reminiscent of a Parisienne bordello (not that I am overly familiar with them, I should point out). Whatever, designers Emily Loberg and Alice Nguyen have toned down the red and added splashes of turquoise and purple to give it a less outré feel; the floor is now a tiled black and white checkerboard. The basic layout remains similar to before, with a bar running the full length of the cavernous, 1,000-seater venue, and the expansive stage with full lighting and mightily impressive sound rig to the right.

For those familiar with the original

Bellini Room at St James (which has now been turned into a Canto bar), Bellini Grande has evolved. Whereas the former was more of a swing club, the new venue is widening the net to encompass music from the 60s, 70s, and into the 80s. The band, a 17-piece big band-cum-pop orchestra delivers a thrice-nightly showcase of songs, augmented by a cast of 11 international singers – including Bellini Room favourite Rob Collins – and dancers along with former Crazy Horse showgirl, Laure Phoutharat.

The effect, I have to admit, is a little of all things to all men: evolution is all well and good, but a lot of the appeal that made the original Bellini a hit in the first place has been broadened out to such a point that it appears to have diluted its intrinsic appeal. As I mentioned earlier, the sound system is utterly superb; the band quite dazzlingly good, and the general standard of the performances exceptionally high – I just can't help but wonder if a musical mix of Gloria Estefan, Frank Sinatra, Mariah Carey, Rod Stewart, Shirley Bassey and Donna Summer sits comfortably together.

The other not inconsiderable consideration is the price: big bands and big stage set ups (not to mention big rents) have to be covered somehow, and while

charging \$15 a door cover on weekdays, rising to \$25 at the weekends, may seem reasonable, the drink charges are not. Weak spirit mixers at \$18, \$22 for a signature Bellini cocktail and \$200 for a bottle of champagne are high by most standards. Crazy Horses Paris' approach was to charge high entrance and lower for drinks. But I'm not Dennis Foo, and if anyone knows about nightlife in Singapore (and, crucially, how to make a success of it), then he does. ■



## THE BELLINI GRANDE

Address **Clarke Quay, The Foundry,**

**3B River Valley Road #01-01**

Contact details **+65 6270-7676** before 5pm

**+65 6336-7676** after 5pm

[www.bellinigrande.sg](http://www.bellinigrande.sg)