

# E C

# ECHO



**M**ore than three years have passed since Nigel and Jackie Aimes first decided to open the Beach House restaurant at Pantai Batu Mejam. The villa industry was in its infancy then and Canggu was still an undeveloped backwater. Apart from a few water-tight surfers whose daily budgets stretch to one nasi campur and half a Bintang there were never many visitors to this beautiful spot and Nigel and Jackie had difficulty persuading even their friends to come and sample the food. "Too far away" was the common excuse.

One morning Nigel was peering out over the ocean enjoying his seclusion when the old Martha and the Muffins song

Echo Beach started playing over in his head. For a laugh he fashioned himself a little signpost and adopted Echo Beach as a suitable name for their patch.

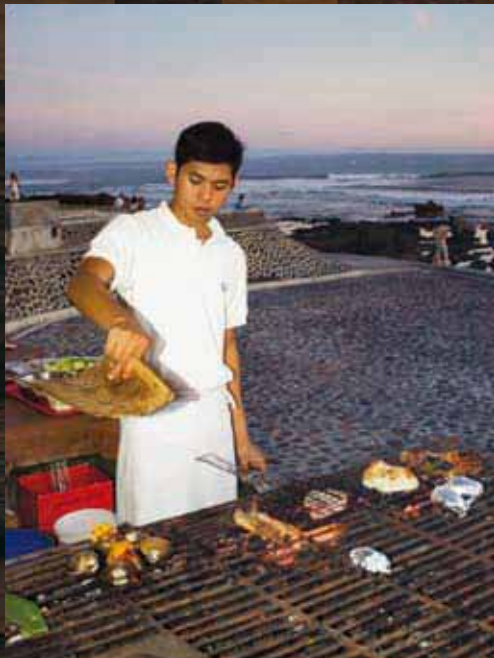
Fast forward three years and Echo beach isn't nearly as far away in time as it used to be. Most of the land in Canggu has been sold to developers and luxury villas have sprung up all along the coastline. Even guide books now refer to the spot as Echo Beach and Nigel is presently trying to persuade Martha and her Muffins to come over and do a concert. Martha is apparently still performing but the Muffins have split up and opened a bakers shop in Scunthorpe. Which is a great shame really, because it's a long time since the Island of the Gods has had a really good 'muffin.'

Every night is barbecue night at the Beach House with fresh fish, lobster, steaks and sizzling racks of ribs cooked in front of your eyes by some very tasty staff. No that's not a typo, there is a huge blackboard above the bar which proudly boasts "Honest & Tasty staff, No Happy Hour Just Happy Endings."

Sundays are probably the busiest day of the week at the Beach House although the place usually gets crowded every day around sunset. The crowd is mostly forty-something expats and their kids. Put it this way, if you are old enough to remember when the song "Echo Beach" was on "Top of the Flops" - you won't feel out of place at the Beach House. With a more bohemian feel than Ku De Ta or Hu'u Bar, the fashion police have

# beach

Text by Dennis Sweeney



left the arena....flip flops and singlets are de rigueur – no thongs though please, at least not on blokes.

On a clear day the view from the Beach House is a stunning panorama which stretches from the jagged cliffs of the Bukit peninsula and all along the rugged coastline as far as the sacred temple at Tanah Lot. The imposing sight of volcanoes against a backdrop of Java lends a dramatic touch to this stunning vista of picture postcard Bali. Even the drive down to the Beach House through the beautiful terraced rice field is an aesthetic treat and brings to mind that oft played song by Sting "On the fields of Bali" or was it "Barley?".... whatever, it's a beautiful song anyway.

A quick look on the Martha and the Muffins website informs us that she thought up the lyrics to "Echo Beach" whilst wearing a clothes peg on her nose hosing down donkeys on Blackpool Beach.

"It was the kind of job where your head didn't have to know what your hands were doing, which allowed me to think and daydream for hours at a time. While Echo Beach did not exist for me as a real location, I used it as a symbol of the place everyone wants to escape to when they're not where they want to be."

So get yourself down to The Beach House Sunday session at Echo Beach for a reality check, Bali style!