



# Jeans Street

Donning their best denims, **Agung Guritno** and **Rosalinda Corazon** took a walk along Bandung's Jalan Cihampelas



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? It's Superman! But astride a garuda? Holy Haberdashery! Do you have a vivid imagination, or was that Batman flying overhead? While you're looking skyward, you'd better duck! Cepot, the puppet clown (dressed in denim?!), is cycling out of a maze of bicycles high on a wall, straight into thin air!

What is going on? Superheroes to the left of you, jokers to the right, here you are stuck in the middle of... Jeans Street. You are in the dynamic heart of garment retail in Bandung, the textile and clothing manufacturing centre of Java. This is no hallucination.

Shopfronts along a kilometre stretch of Jalan Cihampelas, as it is formally known, are outdoing each other

as they bid for your attention. Jeans Street has reigned for more than a decade, an overflow of elaborate shops full of bargains. It is a fitting tribute to the fashion heritage of its location.

In the heady days when Bandung was known as the Paris of Java, Jalan Cihampelas, a beautiful, broad thoroughfare of elegant Dutch houses set among glorious canari trees, was referred to as the Champs Elysée.

Rumour has it that Cihampelas is an Indonesian transliteration of Champs Elysée. Today, the legacy of the trees remains. Luxuriant leafy boughs overhang the road, balancing in their grandeur the fabulous fabrications that have replaced the old Dutch houses.

The transformation of Jalan Ci-

hampelas was started in 1984. At that time, there were two popular places to buy jeans in Bandung. The first was Gang Tamim, a wholesale/retail area packed with clothing outlets, which today remains true to its origins.

The other one was Jalan Pajajaran, which offered something fresh, decorating its stores in cowboy themes complete with wooden shopfronts, swinging saloon doors, tethering posts and wagon wheels.

When an old Dutch house in Jalan Cihampelas put out a sign and opened its front room to sell jeans, it was a comparatively quiet start. Even the name, IBC Jeans, was unassuming. But young people began talking about this new jeans place, set in a sophisticated street graced by grand old trees. It was



Superman (facing page) rides a garuda above Jalan Cihampelas; Cepot (right), a favourite *wayang golek* character, advertises Bicycle Jeans; a hawker (below left) selling carved dragon blowpipes and youngsters (below right) become dedicated followers of fashion at an early age

rather pleasing to the ego to shop in such an exclusive location. And the jeans were different.

Word spread. Soon, when people asked, "Where did you buy your jeans?" the reply became, "Jalan Cihampelas." It was big news in Bandung—another good place for jeans! IBC's neighbours noticed what was happening, and followed suit.

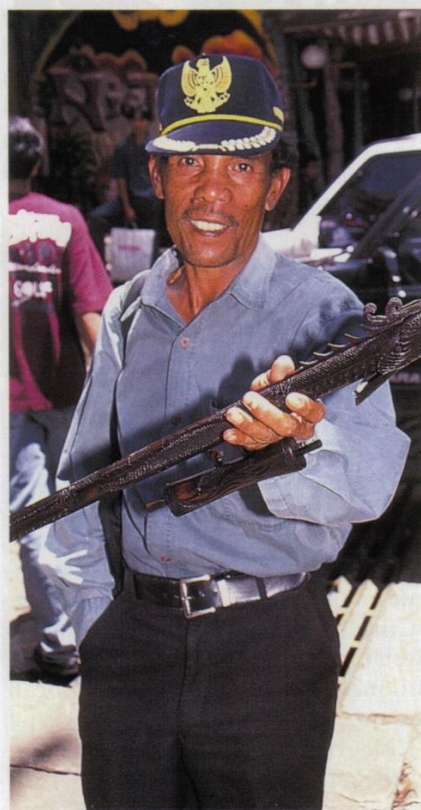
Jeans shops began springing up in all directions. Entrepreneurs got in on the act, buying up houses or contracting them out, putting into play their creative tactics to lure people away from the other streets and the neighbours' stores, and into their jeans dens.

The innovators included Sapulidi (Broom) Jeans. They began with an external display of traditional coconut leaf brooms, and updated to tumbling terracotta pots and colourful parasols spilling over Balinese facades. Perahu (Boat) Jeans went over the top, their eaves dominated by two giant bows of Sulawesi's *phinisi* boats, later complemented with a speedboat on the roof. Taxi Jeans crashed an old yellow Holden, decked out as a New York cab, through the wall above the shop.

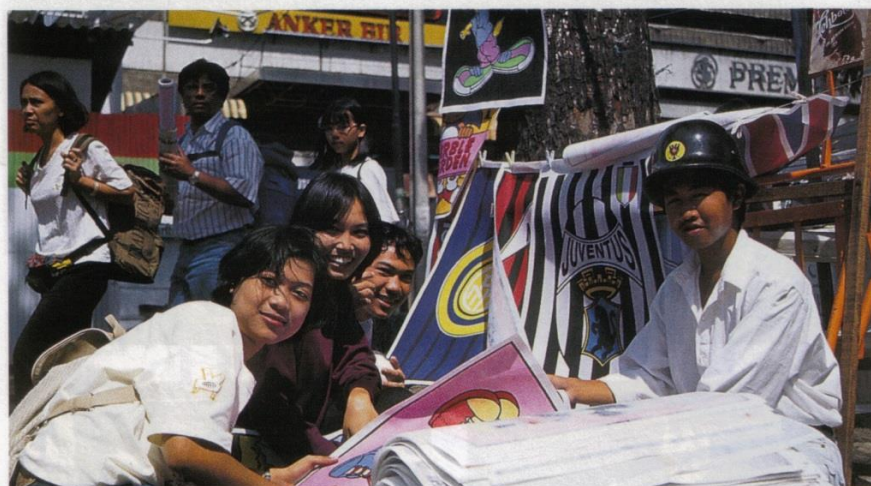
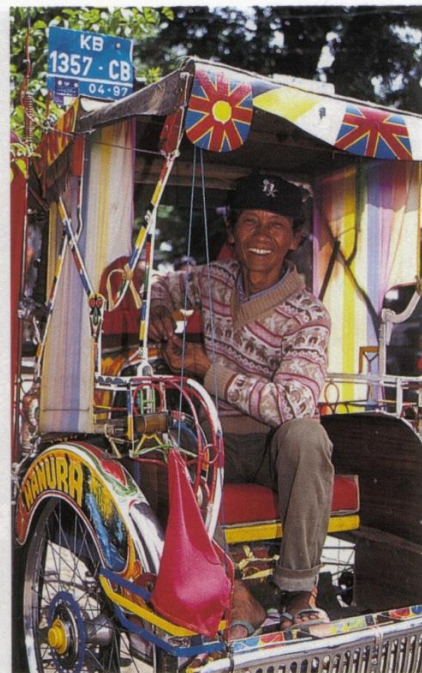
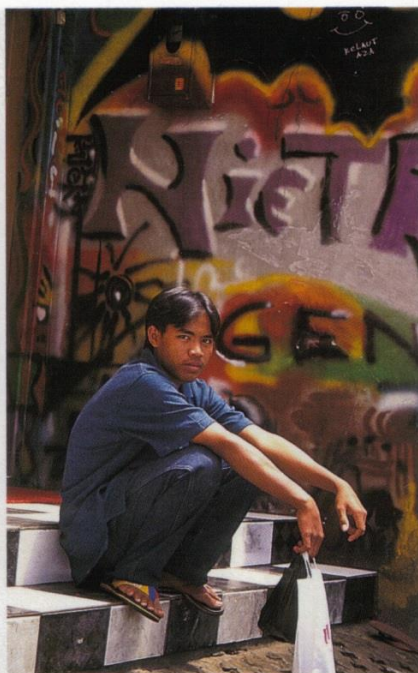
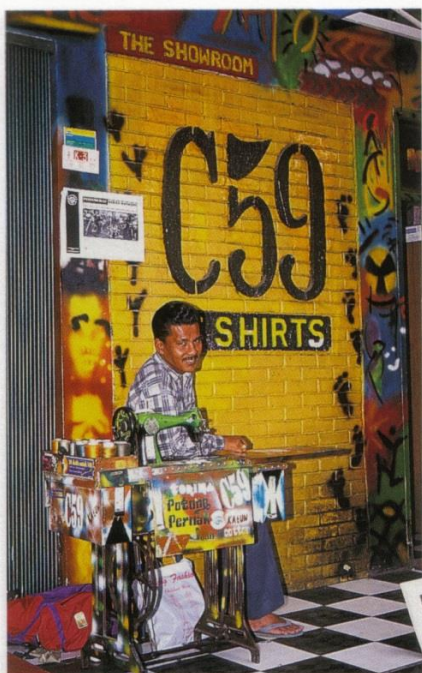
Attention grabbing ideas shifted into full swing. Superheroes championed denim, their gargantuan, brawny effigies promoting stores named Super Rambo Jeans, Superman Jeans, Aladin Jeans, James Bond 007 and Ultraman. Batman Jeans crossed cultures, boasting—just below the masked wonder in flight—*Gelar aneka batik* ("Showing different kinds of batik").

Ksatria Baja Hitam RX Jeans & Sepatu (footwear) used a Japanese superhero to promote their wares. Gorillas gave the thumbs up and flashed their white behinds outside King Kong Branded Land. Mobil (Car) Jeans, Boneka (Doll) Jeans, and Semut (Ant) Jeans all stayed true to their themes with funky models and signs. Sepeda (Bicycle) Jeans recruited the aforementioned *wayang golek* (Sundanese wooden puppet) favourite, Cepot, dressing him for the 20th century to lead their crazy collection of bikes.

One by one the stately old Dutch







Clockwise from left: teenagers check out the latest posters; many stores offer a personal tailoring service; once you've found the perfect jeans, you can relax; Bapak Hartono provides colourful transport seven days a week; bring a friend to shop for bargains

houses of Jalan Cihampelas have converted into carnivalesque competition. This once genteel avenue has become very colourful ... and very loud. Today, each store discharges a different brand of music, generating a cacophony that collides with the traffic before, diluted, it crosses the wide boulevard and fades into the trees. Local Top 40, Nirvana, Michael Learns To Rock, Indonesia's Iwan Fals, Alanis Morissette, the styles are old and new, favourites of past decades right up to disco and house music.

It's a fairground atmosphere. Traditional ice-cream barrows trundle by, ringing their distinctive bells. Hawkers proffer carved dragon blowpipes, wooden bird sculptures or naturalist paintings. Bright slices of tropical fruit light up the windows of fruit vendors' carts, shielded by

colourfully-striped umbrellas. One-man toyshops carry balloons, whistles and whirligigs. Street stalls sell jewellery, artefacts and air rifles. Stands of posters parade Bob Marley, Metallica, the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, Harley Davidson and Tweety Bird.

Fast food outlets specialise in Sundanese food and "Oleh Oleh" (Gifts from Bandung), which comprise such delicacies as *kerepik* (varieties of vegetable chips) and *peyeum* (fermented cassava). Exhausted shoppers may take a break in a relaxing European cafe on the quieter side of the street or in the tranquil Deisogun Japanese Restaurant, or they may try out a traditional Indonesian dish in a local restaurant.

Not that there is much opportunity for reflection on Jeans Street. This frenetic location also boasts SE Dis-

cotheque. Recommended a few years ago as the best discotheque in South-East Asia, it is the only crowded place when Jeans Street sleeps in the night. If it's not beating out the latest bands, SE Discotheque is playing host to special events and live shows.

You're unlikely to leave this bizarre part of town empty-handed. Korek Api (matches) Jeans sums up Jeans Street on a giant match, which projects over Jalan Cihampelas. "Pusat Penjualan Jeans Terbesar Di Kota Bandung! Yess", it reads. "The Biggest Jeans Selling Centre in the City of Bandung! Yes".

Agung Guritno and Rosalinda Corazon are photojournalists living in Bandung



## Bandung—the Paris of Java

Once called the Paris of Java, even the Paris of the East, Bandung, a bustling city of nearly three million people, still retains many of its charming tree-lined avenues and fine art deco buildings from the 1930s. Through progress and prosperity, many of its art deco delights today rub shoulders with modern office blocks and factories. Built as Indonesia's first hill resort around 100 years ago, who then would have believed the traffic that now chokes the streets of this dynamic city?

Before the arrival of the railway in 1880, it could take as long as three or four days to make the perilous journey by horse from Jakarta to the cool green hills around Bandung.

But, after the completion of the rail connection, Bandung and the surrounding Parahyangan Highlands quickly became a popular weekend destination for Jakartans wanting to escape the sweltering heat.

Early one morning at Gambir Station in Jakarta we climb aboard the Parahyangan Express to follow in the tracks of those first railway travellers. We settle back to enjoy three hours of scenic splendour as we head into the heartland of West Java. Soon our train begins its ascent into the highlands and we watch the grassy plains give way to spectacular rice terraces. And climbing into the foothills of mighty volcanoes we pass slender bridges spanning rugged gorges and deep ravines.

Surrounded by rolling hills of manicured dark-green tea plantations, Bandung,



It pays to start young (above and below right) if you want to become a successful *angklung* performer; designed in 1932 in typical art deco style, Villa Isola (below left) is today known as the IKIP building, a teacher training college

at a cool 800 metres above sea level, draws many visitors, both domestic and overseas tourists. It ranks high among the tropical art deco centres of the world and is often mentioned in the same breath as Miami and Napier.

New York-born Frances Affandy is a driving force behind the revival of many of Bandung's fine old buildings. Her enthusiasm for the priceless heritage of her adopted city is unbounded and has contributed much to the very active 400-member conservation society. "It is lack of money that preserves old buildings," says Frances, "but with increasing progress and prosperity these treasures are now under great threat."

Next to its art deco architecture, Bandung's most famous tourist attraction would have to be Pak Ujo's School of Angklung.

When we pull up at his school, the mellow tinkling of countless bamboo *angklung* instruments greet us. Groups of bright-eyed children, preparing for their performance, flutter like colourful butterflies across the open yard.

Today a silver-haired patriarch of 69 years, Pak Ujo still conducts every performance of his acclaimed *angklung* group. Many of his children and grandchildren are members of the ensemble but the bulk of the performers are local village children. This happy orchestra plays anything from local folk tunes to Strauss with infectious enthusiasm.

The first tourist performances started 30 years ago and, ever since, Pak Ujo and his children have entertained the many Dutch, English, German and Japanese visitors that flock to his school. Everyone can join in a happy singsong of familiar old songs. And everyone gets a chance to play the *angklung* when the young members of the orchestra hand out numbered instruments. It's easy: you just rattle your *angklung* when your number is called.

When, early next morning, we reluctantly leave Bandung the sound of the *angklung* playing The Blue Danube still rings in our ears. It seems a fitting finale to this charming city which has so successfully blended East and West.—

*Annemarie Hollitzer*

