



Developer Steve Maras

Rundle St revamp

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

GOOD Rundle St has changed in the 15 or 20 years since it was a student enjoying regular refreshment at the Esplanade. 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-ey-shop on the northern side of the street. And I remember opening The Advertiser to see if Ed got into uni. It was to Johnny Rourke's, (that lady '80s-style diner where the waiters spontaneously broke into dance). Back to the day. Rundle St was a lot granger, and all about students. Over time it's become more slick, and there's been a sudden influx of speciality, decidedly non-grunge 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 & Blide, SABA, Lisa Ho, Calibre, Jack London and Zinnerman. Alannah HC opened last week in the former Amarin Thai building and is having its official launch party on June 11. 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? **The posh retailers** The story starts with the Maras

Group, which bought four blocks of Rundle St from the State Government in 2001 (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". Seeking to increase its day-use and profile, he set about curvessing high-end boutiques with the assistance of local fashion retail specialist Leo Beatts (and a big trash account).



Why go for the high end? Well retailers including Sportsgirl, Brian Rochford and Espri 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 Edus Chilli (a Jewellery shop that has moved to Regent Arcade), Platinum (a GasLoo shop no longer operating) and Natural (which has consolidated in David Jones). After much curvessing by Steve and Leo, Gripp Jeans decided to move into one of the newly vacated shop fronts, followed by Sass & Blide.



In a nutshell, Steve began structuring 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. It's 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 night club 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 Alfreeseo's. "We don't want the noths 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." **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. Email me at enleanor@mgnews16.com.au or leave a comment on my blog at easternculture.com.au/blog.



FRESH FACE: The new Alannah HC boutique opened last week.

Rundle St gossip from Steve
 • **LI CHERRY** wanted to redevelop the east end towards Frome St near the high end buildings, with a new strip of retail.
 • **LI CHERRY** (Madden) shops will be arriving in the next few weeks of the street in July.
 • **LI CHERRY** shops will require to include a third level, specialising in group tenancies (contributing to targeting home nights).
 • **LI CHERRY** shops of tenancies owned by the Maras group there are 70 tenancies (many of which are upturns of professional you might not realise from the street). They include architects, a Sydney mining company, lawyers, engineers, and recently, specialist Nick Krumpholtz.
 • **LI CHERRY** Group (HC) says Maras says he "will never reach" Mary Martin Bookshop at www.martinbooks.com.au, describing both as "Adelaide institutions".
 • **LI CHERRY** The Maras Group plans to build some new premises in "pods and cranes" around the place on Rundle St.
 • **LI CHERRY** 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).

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