

Fillies, Fascinators and Fizz Melbourne Cup Day at the Canggu Club

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Since 1861, on the first Tuesday of November at the stroke of 3 p.m., up to 24 of the greatest 3-year-old thoroughbreds from all around the world descend upon Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne, Australia, in an attempt to carve out a piece of history and take home a handsome winner's purse.

Eligibility for entrance into the race is strictly governed and calculated on prize money won and wins in certain qualifying races over the previous 24 months. Some horses, such as the winner of the Doncaster Cup, part of the St. Ledger Festival held in the UK in the previous September, gain automatic qualification.

Melbourne Cup Day sits at the top of the Australian racing calendar and is one of the most important horse races on the international circuit. With a prize purse over A\$6 million (US\$5.25 million), of which A\$3.6 million goes to the winner, plus, of course, the Hardy Brothers solid gold trophy and perhaps most important of all, the prestige, it sits alongside the richest races on earth, bettered only by The Japan Cup and the Dubai World Cup.

It is billed as "the race that stops a nation" and the national interest is staggering as bars, hotels and even shopping malls around Australia are crammed with race fans excitedly shouting and rooting for their favorite horse or jockey. But the Melbourne Cup has developed into something more carnival than festival and on this unique day — think Ladies Day at Royal Ascot on steroids — flamboyant fashion is the hallmark, from the elegant to the simply outrageous, it is a day of true exuberance and possibly the largest fashion parade on earth.

There's perhaps nothing like being there amongst the packed

100,000 crowd sipping your champagne and trying not to get caught eyeing up the fashion, but Australians all around the world celebrate this momentous day with lunches and special charity events — and here in Bali is no different.

Being three hours behind Melbourne time, the Canggu Club was able to host a terrific champagne and cocktail lunch, which featured free flow Moët & Chandon, a fabulous menu, live music by iconic Aussie Rock Legends Ian Moss and Natalie Gillespie, who played a quite stunning set to a large gathering bent on having a great time, plus best dressed competitions. Fashion was Flemingtonesque with some remarkable, often outrageous, hats, outfits and accessories all contributing to a most successful and enjoyable day, which saw the 154th Melbourne Cup won by Protectionist with a remarkable ride by English jockey Ryan Moore.

But aside from the celebration, the Canggu Club event, like many happening simultaneously around the world, had a serious side with the money raised on the day going to Solemen Bali. Solemen is an Indonesian registered non-profit foundation fronted by Englishman Robert Epstone that primarily focuses its efforts on helping the many disadvantaged in Bali. Their tireless work perhaps sets the standard on the island, be it directly supporting the severely disabled or working to create a better life for the slum dwellers, and support at Canggu Club was enthusiastic for the energetic Solemen team. ■

