

Book launch with a difference

By JASYANTHRI NADARAJA

IF A book launch means nothing more to you than long, boring speeches, you would be surprised.

This particular book launch proved to be informal, unique, entertaining and fun.

Now, if you are wondering how a book launch could possibly be categorised as such, well, it was held at the Top Hat Restaurant in Kuala Lumpur and dress code specifically stated Peranakan, traditional or casual wear.

As I walked into the restaurant, the first thing that hit me was the cosiness of the place.

The music playing in the background, the paintings on the walls and the decorative Peranakan items and antiques, arranged neatly in cabinets in plain view, further enhanced the feeling.

The crowd began arriving after 3pm, dressed in the traditional Peranakan costume, the *kebaya*. The various colours and combination was definitely a show of their support for the writer's wish to have a cosy and friendly Peranakan-style function.

Lee Su Kim, the writer of "Malaysian Flavours: Insights Into Things Malaysian", the second edition, wanted the long-awaited launch of her

book, which was first published in 1996, in a Peranakan setting.

Lee found Top Hat to be the perfect place for the launch.

The unique thing about the event was that the customary reading of a section of the book was replaced with short enactments to represent the different sections in the book.

"Malaysian Flavours" is a compilation of essays and articles, some of which she wrote during her stint as a columnist with *The Star* from 1993 to 1996, on the quirks and idiosyncrasies of Malaysians.

The pieces are written with humour and occasional tinge of satire that entertains as well as provokes the readers. It is a book that celebrates the uniqueness and the Malaysian identity.

Lee, who is of Peranakan parentage, always had interest in writing but only embarked on it after her son was born, when she found some of the nursery rhymes violent.

She wrote three essays to *The Star* and later received a call asking if she would like to be a columnist.

Lee recalled that it was Datuk Ng Poh Tip and Datuk Steven Tan who encouraged her to write for the column, which she decided to call "Malaysian Flavours".



Lee signing a copy of her book 'Malaysian Flavours: Insights Into Things Malaysian' for her uncle Foo Yat Chin.