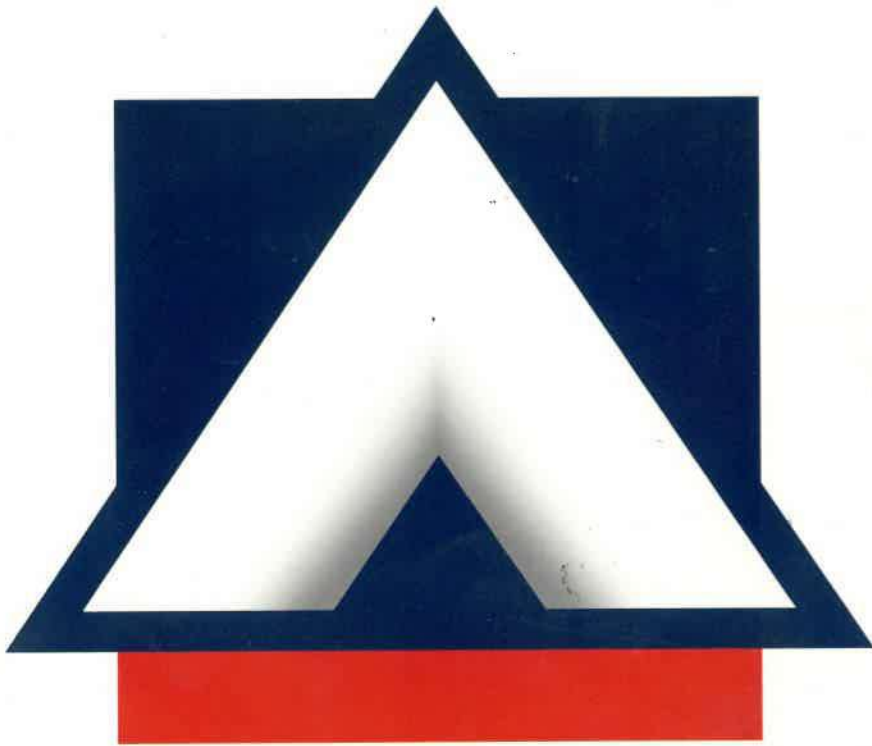


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# Nostalgic retreat

The timber weekend home of Baharum and Almaz oozes with tradition, beauty and a love for the environment



**Clockwise from top left** The stallion called Palladine, a retired show jumper, and Isabella the goat are some of the animals residing on the grounds of this dream home • Previously part of a rubber estate, the two-acre land was cleared, leaving only a row of rubber trees • Open spaces integrating the living and dining areas. Lounge and dining chairs were sourced from an antique shop in Melaka • Wooden adjustable louvre windows give the house a cosy and breezy feel • A view of the rear of the building. The stone 'stilts' not only provide a kampung feel but also a visual contrast

DETACHED / SEMI-DETACHED CATEGORY  
Silver Award

Location | Kuang, Selangor

Architect | Ar. Almaz Salma Abdul Rahim of Almaz Architect

my  
dream  
HOME  
2009





A PERFECT CHILDHOOD for some would most probably involve a big area filled with mature fruit trees among which to run and hide, perhaps a three-storey viewing deck or observation post, if you will, a pool and maybe some animals.

You can find all of the above and more — two horses and 22 goats, to be precise — in a house in Kuang, about 30 minutes away from Petaling Jaya in Selangor.

The 3,350 sq ft one-storey detached house on a two acres homestead features a traditional Malay kampung house. It is built mostly out of timber, although the rear rests on stone stilts. A huge raintree throws its shade on the gravel driveway to this weekend retreat of Baharum Mohd Amin and Almaz Salma Abdul Rahim. Baharum says the raintree, which they had bought in Yong Peng, Johor, reminds him of a big tree on the grounds of Malay College Kuala Kangsar where he went to school.

Inside the house, it is apparent that Almaz, the principal of Almaz Architect, loves everything traditional. Most of the materials used in it are either recycled or salvaged from old buildings or homes waiting to be demolished. Beyond the main door, old teak-framed glass windows — found in Melaka — give the home a nostalgic air. The unvarnished timber floor (kempas and balau) was also recycled.

"I was lucky as my late contractor was passionate about timber. He helped me source the timber from stores, old houses and a sawmill that was closing down in Perak. As you can see, they are well aged," says Almaz.



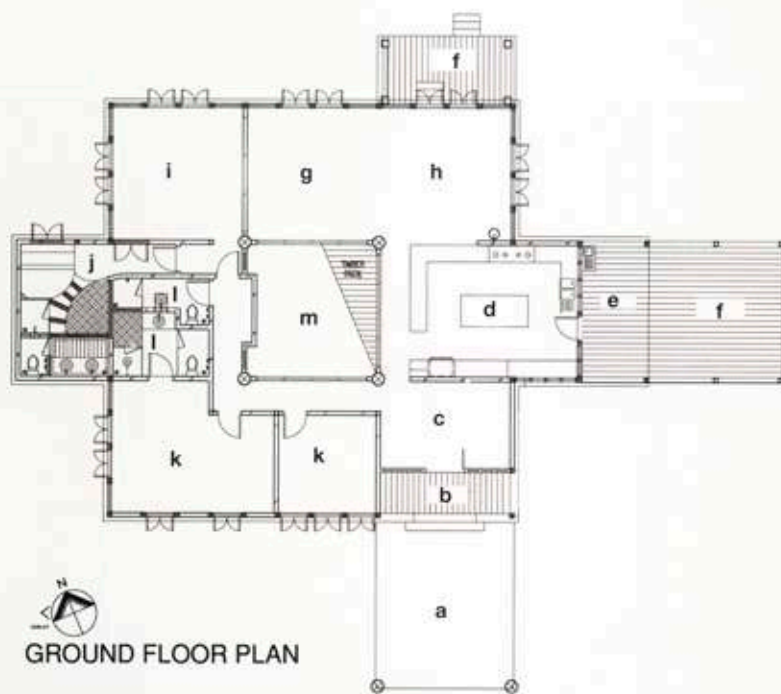


Clockwise from far left The three-storey viewing post complete with a kitchenette offers spectacular views • An antique mirror and old teak-framed glass windows from Melaka at the entrance bid a warm welcome • Beautiful decorative tiles salvaged from an old house in Melaka are used for the 'open air' guest bathroom • A 16ft by 16ft plunge pool created in the heart of this dream abode cools it and is perfect for a dip on a hot afternoon





**Clockwise from top left** With its base cabinets made out of cengal and granite tops, the open-concept kitchen complements the spacious feel of the house • The leftover decorative tiles from the guest bathroom are put to good use in the entertainment area below • The dining area can be 'extended' to this platform which is perfect for meals in the open



- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| a car porch        | h dining room    |
| b verandah         | i master bedroom |
| c foyer            | j master bath    |
| d kitchen          | k bedroom        |
| e terrace          | l bath           |
| f open timber deck | m plunge pool    |
| g living room      |                  |





Baharum and Almaz with two of their daughters, Faridah (left) and Soraya, in their dream home

Smack in the middle of the house is a 16ft x 16ft plunge pool which is perfect for a dip if the weather gets too hot. The pool also serves to cool the house, which is predominantly timber. Not surprisingly, there is no signs of air-conditioning in the house, only ceiling fans.

The kitchen is open and spacious. The base cabinets are made out of cengal and the table tops granite, making it easy to entertain guests. All the spaces in the home flow seamlessly into each other, making it appear fully integrated.

As further proof of her love for everything traditional, Almaz bought the dining table chairs and lounge furniture in the living area from an antique shop in Melaka. To create a more contemporary look, she had the chairs re-upholstered — leaving their exquisite carvings untouched — to match the green drapes in the living area. The dining and coffee tables were made from the timber left over from the floors.

Adjustable timber louvres or “walls that breathe” — as Almaz calls them — are another fascinating fea-

ture of the living and dining areas. The louvres, which are Kelantanese by tradition, were fashioned out of wood salvaged from an old istana in Kuala Lipis, Perak, by a craftsman in Kelantan.

The couple has four children and the paintings found all over the house are mainly works of art by Soraya, their third daughter, who is passionate about drawing flowers.

There are three bedrooms and bathrooms each in the breezy abode, with most of the beds and wardrobes being antique pieces from Melaka. “I am always curious to know how everything was originally,” Almaz says.

The guest bathroom has a blue theme, with beautiful decorative tiles from a house in Melaka that was marked for demolition. “I immediately took all the tiles — all 3,000 of them — even though I only needed a fraction of them for this bathroom. They were too beautiful to leave behind. I finally used the balance for the entertainment area below,” says the lady of the house, with a satisfied smile.

The master bathroom is mainly green, complete with a palm tree and a sunken Jacuzzi. Baharum says they



**This picture** The breezy master bedroom, complete with a four-poster bed from Bali, offers an arresting view of the maturing landscape

**Right** The green-themed master bathroom is complete with plants and a palm tree. It also features a sunken Jacuzzi





The room for the couple's three daughters, with antique beds and wardrobes from Melaka

liked the idea of having a palm tree in their bathroom after staying in a villa in Bali.

The couple took their time building the home away from home. The land, previously a rubber plantation, was bought 12 years ago. "We prepared the land first before we began construction of the house. The land was cleared, leaving only a few rubber trees along the perimeter," explains Almaz.

Numerous hardwood trees, such as chengal, nyatoh,

kembang semangkuk, jati and merbau, were planted and because she loves and appreciates timber, Almaz documents their growth. Fragrant trees like cempaka, kemuning, pulai, kenanga and tembusu were planted around the house for shade and aroma. Traditional herbs and vegetables, including bunga kantan, belimbing, misai kucing, tujuh jarum, mas cotek, sambung nyawa, ulam and temu lawak, were added after the house was completed.

"It took us 2½ years to build the main house as a lot of time was taken in preparing the timberwork. Planning and cutting the timber to size so that each piece fitted perfectly meant hardly any nails were used," Almaz explains. As water supply was not regular in the beginning, the couple had a 200ft-deep well dug just outside the house. To hide the well system, a viewing deck complete with kitchenette was built above it. Rainwater is collected via roof gutters and used to flush toilets and water the garden.

After spending more than two hours in the beautiful and peaceful house with its vast grounds, it was difficult to accept the fact that it was a mere 30 minutes or less away from the hustle and bustle of the city. The horses, chicken and goats in the back perfectly complement the whole kampung experience, while narrow roads mean even the drive to this self-contained home is an adventure of its own. ■

