

I don't ride motorbikes. I don't know how. But when I'm on holiday and someone presents me with a scooter, I always saddle up. It could be the heat, the oversized helmets, or the sunglasses... I don't know. But as soon as I squeeze that throttle, I enter the world of 1980s television.



I am on the island of Langkawi in Malaysia. It's six letters and a million miles from L.A. but with an engine between my legs I suddenly become one half of TV cop duo, CHiPS. My friend has already bagged Poncherello on account of him having a similar skin tone to Erik Estrada, so I end up being the character played by Larry Wilcox whose name no-one ever remembers.

But names and engine sizes don't matter. I'm on a bike in the sunshine, cruising the island roads with the wind and the insects in my face. My confidence grows and it shows in my bike handling – I'm banking around banana trees, and overtaking minibuses on the wrong side of the road. But I always stay on the right side of the law – I'm one of the good guys, remember.

I spot a fancy hotel around Tanjung Rhu. I sidle up to my partner and ask him to pull over – this highway patrol business is thirsty work. The hotel is so exclusive we have to blag our way past security, and its beach is so white the sand could be sugar. From the restaurant's veranda the view of the limestone outcrops is spectacular. We hang up our helmets and let the tax-free beers fly at us like bullets.

I am soon aware that if I don't stop drinking, I'll be breaking the law when I get back on my bike. The smiling waiter asks us if we would like more drinks. A tough one. The real CHiPS would send him packing. But I'm tired of being a good guy, so we order again, and again.

We don't plan on doing a runner. It just happens. The waiter presents Poncherello with a bill, a pen and a look of expectation. 'Would you like this charged to your room, Sir?' he asks.

Ponch looks at me. I can't resist. 'Let's charge it to *my* room,' I say. And it is at this point that I remember my name. I take the pen and sign the bill *Officer Jon Baker* from Room 218.

The waiters move slowly in Malaysia, and this buys us just enough time to sneak through the gardens, around the pool, past reception and out into the car park. My bike is still there but I now see it for what it really is – a hairdryer on wheels that refuses to start. Poncherello's bike starts first time, but mine only splutters when I kick it.

The security guy is big. He has an earpiece. He walks over. My heart skips like a kindergarten teacher. I'm ready to confess.

'You need to use the choke,' he tells me. And I'm back on the road.