

The new DV8: back in black

After a year-and-a-half hiatus, DV8, which held a special spot in the heart of many an expatriate, recently reopened in a new location near the terminus of Fuxing South Road (復興南路).

"One of the reasons we wanted to open again was that I kept hearing from our regulars that they missed having a place to go and see one another. It wasn't just them — I missed DV8, too," says co-owner Michelle Wong (王鳳鶯).

The new bar is sleeker and more modern than its predecessor on Jinhua Street (金華街), which was fondly known for its dive-y atmosphere. But patrons still make the ambience — literally. The black paint on the walls has been left unsealed so customers can draw and write on it in chalk. Framed pencil sketches by regular Kenbo Liao (廖緒健) hang in the small alcove off the back of the bar, while a vintage tuba, a gift from one of Wong's friends, stands guard over the liquor bottles.

As with the old DV8, the new bar will have DJs, many of them regulars, almost every night. Wong's famous thin-crust pizza is available for NT\$200. (She and her husband ran an Italian restaurant before the original DV8, as evidenced by the two tapered bottles of Galliano on the bar.) Other entrees on the new menu include chili con carne and beef goulash (NT\$250).

The new space doesn't have room for a pool table, but customers can look forward to darts and a roulette wheel. (Winners will enjoy prizes like a free beer or steep discounts on drinks.) Other activities include regular wine-and-cheese nights, with a selection of house wines going for NT\$100 a glass or NT\$600 a bottle. Beers on tap include Heineken (NT\$180) and Carlsberg (NT\$160); bottled beers, including Guinness and Corona, are also available.

DV8 is located at 385, Fuxing S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市復興南路二段385號), between Heping East (和平東) and Xinhai (辛亥) roads. Current opening hours are from 8pm to 3am Mondays through Saturdays, with happy hour lasting from 8pm to 9pm, though plans are afoot to open Sundays, too. Call (02) 2733-9039 for more information.

— CATHERINE SHU



It looks completely different, but the new DV8 is incorporating many of the perks that made the old bar special.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES



Left: A blue-light walkway extends from the bar to the stage of Tone 56, a new live house on Minchuan East Road.

Below: Tone 56 co-owner Robert Iacoboni rocks out with house band Loaded last Saturday at his bar.

PHOTOS: ALITA RICKARDS



New live house sets the right 'Tone'

The opening of a Western restaurant and live house in Taipei is nothing special — the city has seen a rise in both types of establishments in recent years. What is worth noting is a place, like new venue Tone 56 Live Bar, that combines all the elements of a great night out — food, service, and entertainment, and excels at all three.

When Robert Iacoboni, who has been traveling and playing in bands for the past 17 years, decided to move to Taiwan and settle down, he contacted old friend and Taipei resident Greg Johnston. "I am experienced in the entertainment industry," said Iacoboni, who performed mainly in five-star hotels, "but Greg is more business-oriented." Johnston was mostly involved in franchise development companies. Together they decided that they wanted to open what Iacoboni called "the kind of place you'd go for dinner with friends, followed by a chilled evening of drinking and dancing to a live band."

The last element fell into place when they hired Thomas Huang (黃聖偉), who not only trained at a five-star hotel in Taipei, but had also spent two years working as second to the chef at the Taipei American Club. Huang prepares all his sauces, marinades and gravies from scratch. His Caesar dressing is a

creamy concoction richly imbued with garlic, Parmesan and a hint of anchovy; the salad is topped with crisp crumbled bacon and fresh grated Parmesan.

Huang's chicken wings alone make Tone 56 worth a visit. The meat is tender and juicy and pulls off the bone easily, seared with grill marks. A generous portion of wings is offered with mild, spicy or a rich, flavorful and savory barbeque sauce. I can't stop thinking about them and have already convinced several friends to go to Wednesday Wing Night, when wings, a choice of salad, and a half-liter glass of beer or soda is NT\$290.

The attentive and friendly staff seems motivated to provide the best possible service. Johnston "likes to train them in a franchise way — there's a certain standard, to give that extra little bit," said Iacoboni. "We want to have a higher-class place without high-class prices."

The restaurant was originally called Tone, so they decided to add 56 — the street number as well as the number of seats in the bar — to the name and make it a live house. The floor has a blue-lit pathway from the bar to the fully equipped stage, which was "built from scratch" under Iacoboni's direction. His band, Loaded, is the house band. It performs live rock 'n' roll covers on Saturday nights from 10pm. Last weekend

more than half the tables got up to dance.

On Fridays The Rubber Band plays, and different blues, rock, swing or jazz bands are scheduled to play on Sundays. There is also an outdoor barbeque on Sundays, and on Thursday's Disco Night two dancers perform and "are willing to teach you a few disco moves," said Iacoboni.

The decor is quite upscale, which is surprising to new customers who "come in expecting to see a pub" and "tell their friends who then show up on Sundays," said Iacoboni, grinning and gesturing to the landscaped courtyard and outdoor tables. Both owners like to bring their Taiwanese wives for a night out. Said Iacoboni: "there's no place like this where you can go on a date, get up and dance to songs you know, hear a blast from the past and really get into it."

Tone 56 is at 56, Minchuan E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市民權東路三段56號). Hours are from 5pm to 1am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 5pm to 2am on Fridays and Saturdays, and 5pm to midnight on Sundays. Tone 56 is closed on Tuesdays. For more information call 0960-504-924 or 0988-182-818. For a full schedule of weekly events, visit their Web site at www.myspace.com/tone56livebar.

— ALITA RICKARDS



Roasted pork steak with mustard sauce.

PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES

Nonzero

Address: 5, Alley 4, Ln 27, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段27巷4弄5號)

Telephone: (02) 2772-1630

Open: 11:30am to 2pm (lunch); 6:30pm to 9:30pm (dinner); 2pm to 12:30am (cafe/tapas bar)

Average meal: NT\$1,000 per person

Details: English menu; credit cards accepted; wireless Internet available

Nonzero is as much about lifestyle as it is about food. This is evident the moment you walk into its spacious premises with its chunky wooden communal tables and mismatched antique furnishings. The shelves glitter with bottles of artisan oils, balsamic vinegar, vegetable pastes and spices, while a Parma ham sits stage center on a special stand waiting to be sliced. On the sunny afternoon I visited, the interior was bathed in dappled light, and small fans hidden discreetly in the corners kept the space cool. This was designer rustic of a very appealing variety.

Nonzero is owned by Chu Ping (朱平), who also runs the Aveda cosmetics franchise in Taiwan. It embraces many similar ideas, focusing on high quality natural ingredients, bold combinations and striking presentation. One of the first joys I discovered on entering Nonzero was the tasting bar of olive oils, which are treated in much the same manner as fine wines. A sip of a Dandaragan Estate olive oil from Australia with lovely floral overtones was followed by a limited-edition oil made from Italian picholine olives that totally threw my taste buds for a loop as I tried to comprehend its unusually pungent layers of flavor. Quality balsamics are also on offer, some imported exclusively by Nonzero.

Many of these imported ingredients are available as part of Nonzero's tapas menu, which ranges from the simplicity of bread with roasted tomato (NT\$120) to more unusual but equally simple dishes such as blanched market-fresh squid (NT\$350). There is also a truly exciting assortment of salads, including a grilled seasonal warm vegetable salad (NT\$450) and an elaborate rack of lamb caparicio with tomato and angula (NT\$1,000). A la carte entrees are priced from NT\$600 to NT\$1,000, and there is a daily set menu for NT\$750, with a lunch including soup, salad, main, dessert and coffee or tea.

With the exception of a few standards on the a la carte menu, the offerings at Nonzero change constantly depending on product availability and the innovation of the chef. This being peach season, the main course of the set menu on the day I visited was a delightful roast pork steak with mustard sauce served with a baked half peach. It was a surprising and utterly delicious combination. The dish — which also included French beans blanched to perfection, perfectly crisp without being undercooked, and blueberries — was not large, but the flavors were layered and intense. It was the sort of food you'd want to talk about with fellow diners.

A terrine of pork trotter served with preserved sweet peppers (homemade at Nonzero) was another adventure, the terrine soft in the mouth from the incorporation of the pig skin, but without any of the cloying fattiness that I have always associated with trotter.

Although Nonzero stocks a wide selection of wines, there is no wine list. Choices depend on what the management chooses to make available. "We are constantly on the lookout for good things to offer our patrons," said Ivy Hung (洪曼鈴), a manager at the restaurant.

A good quality house wine is available for NT\$250 per glass, and bottles go for as little as NT\$900.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



While American Top 40 hip-hop might have become the dance music of choice in Taiwan over the past couple of years, there's also a local underground hip-hop scene that has been developing here for the past decade. People in the community are saying that this year will be "the golden age" of Taiwanese hip-hop music, since close to 10 albums have been released or are slated for release this year. One of these is *The Beginning of Rhymes* by the TriPoets, a striking offering infused with smooth jazzy beats, dope samples, and poetic-yet-comic, dialogue-like lyrics.

TriPoets is made up of MCs Ill Mo, Shortee and Teacher Lin. They look nothing like the stereotypical nightclub hip-hopper: no tattoos, no bling, no condescending attitude. On the contrary, they are highly educated, courteous "bookworms" who look a little bit nerdy. But they are able to release an album nonetheless because they are among the

select few of remarkable rappers here who truly live up to the title of street poets. Incorporating a true story, an attitude and a concept into an enjoyable song is what they believe real hip-hop music should do.

The members of TriPoets are devoted hip-hop fans who have researched rap like academics and have put their hearts into learning how to rhyme. Teacher Lin launched Taiwan's first online hip-hop forum some 10 years ago. It was called Master U and was where Taiwan's most renowned MCs Hot Dog and Dog-G first began to show their talent, as well as where the TriPoets members first met. Lin went on to run National Taiwan University's Hip-Hop Culture Club while he was an undergraduate there. He became famous for his ability to turn Chinese classical poetry into brilliantly modern rap, and earned the name Teacher Lin because he was the most knowledgeable and legendary figure in the club.

Shortee made his name as a hip-hop DJ before he picked up the mic. He was also an active member of the Hip-Hop Culture Club. After finishing medical school, Shortee opened a record shop instead of pursuing a career as a doctor. Many people might scratch their heads at this decision,



Taiwan hip-hop poets, from left to right, Teacher Lin, Shortee and Ill Mo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRUE COLOR RECORDS

but Shortee says promoting good music is more important than making money.

Ever since the crew was formed in 2002, Ill Mo has been its creative leader. He was bitten by the hip-hop bug when he went to high school in New York. "Although I lived in New York for a while, I didn't really get to hear that much cool hip-hop music until I came back to Taipei and discovered a little record shop [run by DJ Chicano] that carried really dope imported records," he says. It took Ill Mo 10 years and three different universities to finish

college and graduate school after returning to Taiwan because he dedicated way much more time to songwriting than homework.

Having performed with Ice-T, Public Enemy, Supernatural, Toni Blackman and Kero One and released the mixtape *Listen & Speak* in 2004, TriPoets has honed a reputation as a first-class act in Taiwan. For Ill Mo, Shortee and Teacher Lin, performing hip-hop is not about being a star. "It's all about our love for the music," Ill Mo says. "Even if there's no audience, we'll still keep on rapping!"

To learn more about TriPoets, check out www.myspace.com/tripoets.

The outfit performs at Riverside Music Cafe, B1, 2, Ln 244, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (北市羅斯福路三段244巷2號B1), on Sunday at 9:30pm. Entrance is NT\$350.

Tomorrow's House Biaatch, Luxy's most popular quarterly themed party, is the night's grand finale as Cookie relocates to Europe next month. The catchy house anthems, go-go dancers and creative dress codes plus huge promotion efforts have made the night a big success. The dress code is summer Disney. Free entry if you show up as a Disney character.

— QUEEN BEE



Beiping Gardens is a decent option for a cheap and satisfying meal near Taipei Main Station.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Beiping Gardens — Chinese Meat Pies and Porridge (北平田園餡餅粥)

Address: 3, Ln 5, Chongqing S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市中正區重慶南路1段5巷3號)

Telephone: (02) 2314-8032

Open: Daily from 11 to 2pm and 5pm to 8pm

Average meal: NT\$100 to NT\$200

Details: Chinese menus; credit cards not accepted

Among the multitude of cheap eateries near the Shinkong Mitsukoshi (新光三越) Building and Taipei Main Station, Beiping Gardens (北平田園) is a safe choice for its satisfying northern-style Chinese fare. Located in an alley off Chongqing South Road, this modest shop serves knife-cut noodles (刀削麵), steamed dumplings and Chinese-style meat pies (餡餅).

The shop, whose sign says it has been in business since 1976, runs like an old but reliable machine. The tired-looking waiters are minimally polite but efficient: they fetch your meal silently once you've checked off your order on the self-service bill. Even during peak hours the food arrives reasonably fast.

Many people seem to come for the knife-cut noodles, which are made from scratch and sliced only when an order has been placed. The shop is adorned with certificates touting its participation in past years of the Taipei Beef Noodle Beef Festival, and connoisseurs looking for that perfect bowl have several obvious choices: the tomato broth beef noodles (番茄牛肉麵, NT\$120); braised beef noodles (紅燒牛肉麵, NT\$110); and, for a lighter choice, the tomato broth noodles (番茄麵, NT\$80), which come with a whole stewed tomato for you to break apart in the soup. The broth is on the plainer side and perhaps a little bland, but the noodle slices are thick and chewy.

You probably couldn't go wrong with any of the noodle dishes. For adventurous beef lovers, there are the beef tendon and stomach noodles (牛筋牛肚牛肉麵, NT\$150) and the half-beef, half-tendon noodles (半筋半肉牛肉麵, NT\$140). Those who crave the classics can try the fried sauce noodles (北平炸醬麵, NT\$80) and moochu fried noodles (木須麵, NT\$80). For something different, the humble talu noodles (大滷麵, NT\$80) have a gravy-like consistency, and in both its appearance and taste resembles hot and sour soup without the vinegar. Beiping Garden's version comes with shredded egg, chopped carrot, bamboo slices and a generous portion of sliced mushrooms.

The restaurant's beef meat pies (牛肉餡餅, NT\$35) were cooked just right, with the sides a crispy golden brown and not too greasy. Take the first bite carefully, as the soupy broth packed in the meat filling can spill out. For a healthier option, go for the steamed vegetable dumplings (花素蒸餃, NT\$80), which are filled with vegetable greens, finely chopped slices of dried bean curd (豆乾) and rice noodles. Also on the lighter side, the tasty beef roll (牛肉捲大餅, NT\$85) could stand alone as a meal, when paired with a bowl of millet porridge (玉米粥, NT\$25). Slices of cold beef and chopped cucumber are layered in a flour wrap that is similar to the scallion pancake (蔥油餅, NT\$25), but flakier and less oily. Plum soy sauce and a sprig of green onion round off the flavor with a sweet bite.

Beiping Gardens has a welcoming storefront with its aged wooden doors, and it feels like you're walking into a semi-secret location. But while the interior is clean and appears to have been recently remodeled, odors wafting in from the street are a reminder of the neighborhood's stubborn grunginess. Still, Beiping Gardens remains a good place to remember for a cheap, dependable meal when near Taipei Main Station.

The easiest way to get there is to walk west on Zhongxiao West Road and turn left at Chongqing South Road, at the fire station. The restaurant is on the first alley to the left.

— DAVID CHEN

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

► B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號B1). Call (02) 2930-0162 or log on at www.the-wall.com.tw for more information
► 8pm tonight, tomorrow, and Sunday
► NT\$450 tonight; Wednesday's show is NT\$500 in advance, NT\$700 at the door

Indie-pop band 13 (拾參) appears tonight at the **Underworld (地下室)**, along with Taiwanese alt-rockers **88 Balaz** (八十八顆芭樂籽). Tomorrow it's death metal bands **Hekate** and **Infernal Chaos**.
► B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1). Call (02) 2369-0103 or visit www.upsaid.com/underworld for more information
► Live shows go from 9:30pm to 11:30pm. The bar is open from 8pm daily, closed Mondays
► Entrance tonight is NT\$400 and NT\$300 tomorrow and includes one drink; NT\$100 on Wednesdays

Tonight **Witch House (女巫店)** hosts **Natural Q (自然捲)**, a pop-folk band whose instrumentation features vocals, guitar, violin, bass and hand drums. Get to the venue early tomorrow night to catch Rebel rocker-turned-mainstream-folk idol **Chen Ming-chang** and the **Tamsui River Band (陳明章與淡水走唱團)**.
► 7, Ln 56, Xincheng S Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市新生南路三段56巷7號). For more information, call (02) 2362-5494 or visit www.witchhouse.org

► Performances start at 9:30pm. Restaurant/bar with queer/feminist bookstore and large collection of board games open 11am to midnight Sundays through Wednesdays; 11am to 1am Thursdays through Saturdays
► NT\$300 entrance includes one drink

Yellow Funky Stuff plays a fusion of jazz, funk and rock tonight at **Riverside Cafe (河岸留言)**. Tomorrow night is a Taiwanese alt-rock extravaganza with **88 Balaz** (八十八顆芭樂籽) and revered anarchist indie rockers **LTJ (瀟水溪公社)**.
► B1, 2, Ln 244, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段244巷2號B1), next to Taipower Building (台電大樓). Call (02) 2368-7310 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for more information
► Shows start at 9:30pm
► NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow, NT\$350 on Sunday. Admission includes one free drink

Tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**, a new restaurant on the corner of Fuxing North and Minquan East roads, is **Rubber Band**, which plays rock, pop and dance music. The group plays every Friday. Tomorrow it's house band **Loaded**, which plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits." Sundays feature a regular rotation of bands, with the New Orleans funk outfit **Kenyatta Trio** playing this week. [See story above].
► 1F, 56, Minquan E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City

(台北市民權東路三段56號1樓), near the corner of Fuxing North Road (復興北路) and Minquan East Road (民權東路). Call (02) 2517-3869 for more information
► Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays, and 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays
► No entrance fee

The Diner's (樂子) new branch on Dunhua South Road hosts The Diner Jam, an open mic every Thursday.
► 6, Ln 103, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段103巷6號), just off Anhe Road (安和路), in the lane behind Carnegie's. Call (02) 2700-1680 or visit www.thediner.com.tw for more information
► 9:30pm to midnight every Thursday
► Free admission

Exhibition

The Red House — A Century of Stories and Blessings (西門紅樓百年特展). Celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Red House's historical architecture, this special exhibition puts together roughly 100 images and films grouped under themes such as Japanese Colonial Rule and the Golden Age of Cinema.
► Red House (西門紅樓), 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號). Open Sundays through Thursdays from 11am to 9:30pm; Fridays and Saturdays from 11am to 10pm. Closed

on Mondays. Call (02) 2311-9380 for more information
► Until Dec. 31

The Neglected Existence — Solo Exhibition by Hsu Pang-chieh (被遺忘的存在：徐邦傑個展).

The exhibition features a series of paintings by the expatriate artist, who lives in the US. The works are still lifes of interiors illuminated with natural light, portraying objects and spaces that are often neglected such as a windowsill glittering in the sunlight, an unmade bed and an old sink.
► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm; Saturdays until 8:30pm. Call (02) 2595-7656 for more information
► Until Sept. 14

Mr Red Solo Exhibition (再生的再生—紅膠囊個展). The exhibition features some 30 original illustrations by the picture book writer Red Capsule (紅膠囊), who is known for his dreamlike compositions full of imagination and whimsy.
► Capital Art Center (首都藝術中心), 2F, 343, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段343號2樓). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 7pm. Call (02) 2775-5268 for more information
► Until Sept. 2