



PIGEON POST

Blogging competition opens next month



All English bloggers in Taiwan are encouraged to compete in the first-ever Taiwan Blog Award sponsored by Taiwonderful, an English community Web site that aims to promote Taiwan and its culture. Only Taiwan-based blogs registered at the Taiwonderful blog directory are eligible to participate. Interested bloggers must register with Taiwonderful by next Tuesday. Awards will be given out in several categories, including Best Education, Best General, Best "Other," Best Personal, Best Photography, Best Politics, Best Religion, Best Travel and Best Video-Podcast blog. The awards will be based on voting by visitors to the Taiwonderful Web site next month. Visitors can cast one vote per blog but can vote for as many of the blogs as they like. The results will be announced on Nov. 1. For more information, visit: www.taiwonderful.net/blog/taiwan-best-blog-awards-2008.

Taichung offers job guide for immigrants



The Taichung City Government has published a manual for new immigrants, primarily foreign spouses, to help them seek employment. The *Versatile Manual for New Residents to Find Jobs* is printed in five languages — Chinese with the *zhuyin* phonetic system, English, Bahasa, Thai and Vietnamese. Chen Yu-yi (陳裕益), deputy director of the city's Bureau of Labor Affairs, said last Wednesday. The manual features three protagonists from different countries in various situations to help explain the government's laws, regulations and services. The 15-chapter manual also includes information on the legal working rights of foreign spouses and how to deal with labor-management disputes. Five thousand copies of e-book discs in Chinese with the *zhuyin* phonetic system will be available through Taichung's new immigrant centers and district offices or by calling (04) 2228-9111, ext 3309, or (04) 2229-1731.

Community Services Center hosts annual fundraising dinner



The Community Services Center (CSC) is welcoming everyone to join its annual charity auction dinner, which will be held on Friday, Oct. 17, in the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Taipei. Up for auction are a wide variety of items, including an exclusive dinner for 20 guests at the Grand Hyatt Residence, fine antiques, artwork and Persian rugs, exotic vacation packages, golf clubs and more. There will be a champagne reception followed by a sumptuous five-course dinner. Tickets are available for NT\$3,000 per person or NT\$30,000 for a table of 10. All proceeds from the event will be used to help the CSC provide vital services to the expatriate community in Taiwan. For more information, contact Robyn or Grace at the CSC: (02) 2836-8134.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

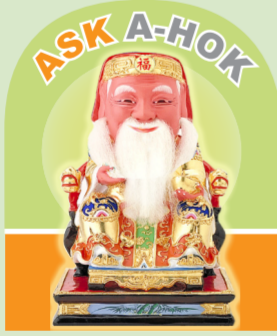
Q: Can you provide a list of TV stations that have news in English, if there are any, and their schedules?

A-hok says:

You must subscribe to a cable TV service to watch news broadcasts in English. Da Ai Television (大愛電視台) — which is either on channel 9 or 10, depending on your location — has two half-hour English news broadcasts each day from Monday through Friday at 7:30am and 12:30am.

Things get easier when it comes to Formosa TV (FTV, 民視), which broadcasts news for 15 minutes in English at 11:45pm every night on channel 53. CNN and BBC news can be found on most — but not all — cable services. The channel also varies depending on your location, but CNN is usually on channel 5.

If you're a subscriber to Chunghwa Telecom's multimedia-on-demand (MOD) service, you have a wide range of choices including the Australia Network on 76, Bloomberg on 79, al-Jazeera on 80, Deutsche Welle on 83 and the BBC on 84. You can also get news broadcasts from several countries on MOD channel 51.



If you have something you'd like to ask, write to community@taipeitimes.com.



Victor Major, center, and "Cycle Taiwan" members chat with other bikers they met on the road while biking near Wuzhishan, Taipei City, on May 4.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CYCLE TAIWAN

Australian touts Taiwan as a cycling destination

'CYCLE TAIWAN': Victor Major created an online forum dedicated to biking in Taiwan in order to bring together people of different backgrounds with an interest in bikes

BY SHELLEY SHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Australian Victor Major learned how to ride a bicycle when he was young, but it was in Taiwan that he really found the joy of biking.

"In Taiwan, I started riding for no reason," he said. "There is no purpose to it. It's just fun exercise."

But that was not his impression when he first moved to Taiwan two years ago. The Taipei he saw was filled with scooters and cars and did not look like an ideal place for cyclists.

What changed his mind was a bunch of friends he met who were into biking around Taipei. In his words, he "got hooked" and started looking for places to ride.

"I couldn't find any information. There was nothing in English," he said. "While there were some blogs on particular aspects of the trails ... there was no clear information on where someone can go and ride, or where to meet people to ride with."

The scarcity of detailed information for bikers compelled him to create "Cycle Taiwan," an online forum dedicated to biking in Taiwan.

"I started it with the idea of bringing all the different communities of riders in Taiwan together in one place, both Chinese and English speakers," he said.

In addition to serving as an

online forum for bikers, Major also reviewed cycling parts made by some of the second-tier manufacturers in Taiwan.

As the site's administrator and chief editor, Major said that Cycle Taiwan is owned by the biking community. Anyone can become a member by simply signing onto the Web site, and each member is free to post articles and photos.

In the meantime, members organize different activities themselves — whether it is a day trip to Taoyuan or a cross-country race.

Today, the site has about 200 registered members, with 50 percent of them foreigners.

Major said members are mainly composed of three groups: the industry personnel who came to Taiwan for a short time to oversee the production process of new bicycles, the expatriates and Taiwanese.

And it is not difficult to tell if someone is a Cycle Taiwan member.

"It's always the same people pretty much wherever you go," he said.

Major's favorite route is from Da-an (大安) in Taipei City to Wuzhishan (五指山) via Jiannan (劍南) and Zhishan (至善) roads. He said that the route involved steep uphill climbing, and a round-trip ride took around six hours.

"Riders like to ride because of the mountains, and Taiwan is full of

“[When the wheels hit the rock at a fast speed] you tend to fly off in the air. And since your body can't turn, you start praying to whatever god you believe in to not fall off a cliff or hit a tree.”

— Victor Major, creator of Cycle Taiwan

them," he said. "You see beautiful scenery, green plains, flowers, frogs; it's an escape."

His most exhilarating riding experiences involve biking on off-road trails, such as on a boulder field.

"[When the wheels hit the rock at a fast speed] you tend to fly off in the air," he said. "And since your body can't turn, you start praying to whatever god you believe in to not fall off a cliff or hit a tree."

Off-road biking is a "good kind of scary" that keeps you young and energetic, he said.

But he said that no experience is scarier than riding a bicycle in the city, particularly when you have to deal with bus drivers.

"For me, the sure sign to know that we now have a green light is too see a bus shooting across the intersection full speed through a red light," Major said. "Want to think about scary? That's actually

truly scary."

He said that more needs to be done if the government wants to encourage people to commute by bicycle. Apart from dedicated bike lanes, he said, the Taipei MRT and the Taiwan Railway Administration system need to allow people to carry their bicycles with them when they board the trains every day.

In addition, Major said the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corp (THSRC) needed to increase the space in luggage rooms where it allows passengers to place bicycles. The service would make the THSRC an attractive option for tourists, he said.

More offices around the nation should also be equipped with shower facilities for employees, he said.

And to make Taiwan one of the first-rate choices for bikers from overseas, Major said that the nation needed to have chartered courses for mountain bikers.

"The hiking trails and biking trails need to be separated, but we also want to make sure that we maintain harmony between hiking communities and biking communities," he said.

Aside from being a tourist destination for overseas bikers, Major also said that Taiwan had the potential to host more cycling races recognized by the International Cycling Union.

"Taiwan has some of the best riding roads, most challenging climbs and descents in the world. There are also low-lying areas for different stage races. I believe Taiwan is more than ready when it comes to road racing," Major said.

Expat soccer club celebrates 25th anniversary with eight-sided battle

BY TONY PHILLIPS
STAFF REPORTER

Not even a typhoon could put a damper on the 25th anniversary celebrations of expat soccer club Red Lions FC.

A special tournament, months in the planning, looked in grave danger when the original venue was rendered unusable after Typhoon Senlaku did its worst. However, frantic last minute efforts saved the day and the sun shone on Taipei's Dajia Riverside Park on Sunday as eight sides battled it out in two groups of four.

Club chairman Nick Alexander puts the Lions' unusual longevity down to team spirit.

"It's perhaps an exaggeration but it is a bit like a family," Alexander, an English teacher at the British Council says. "We go out for a drink after games and get together at weekends, even when we don't have games."

Soccer proved a good way for Alexander to find his feet in Taiwan when he arrived here in 1996.

"When you first get here you don't know the situation but through football you can find people who can help out with finding jobs and so on. People helped each other a lot," Alexander says.

Another stalwart, Paddy O'Sullivan, recalls one of the club's finest hours.

"We went on a tour of Cambodia and had arranged to play a friendly game at the national stadium," the 18-year club veteran explains. "We got a hell of a shock when we arrived to find it full of spectators with armed soldiers ringing the touchline."

The Lions ended up playing the Cambodian army side, putting up a good fight before going down 1-0.

"We hit the post in the last minute, which was probably just as well, as the crowd were pretty lively," O'Sullivan says.

Alas, there was no fairytale victory for the Lions on Sunday, despite fielding two teams, one of which was a veterans lineup including former players who traveled from as far afield as Hong Kong, China, Singapore and even the UK to take part.

Both sides finished third in their respective groups, which meant the current Red Lions and the veterans met each other in a play-off clash.

Perhaps the hectic schedule of four games in one day had taken its toll, or maybe it was the after-effects of Saturday night's pub crawl around old haunts kicking in, but the Lions sides decided not to play the game and had a penalty shoot-out instead.

The veterans called on all their experience to put the youngsters in their place and earn victory, perhaps claiming bragging rights for the next 25 years.

To find out more about the Lions, visit www.redlionsfc.org.

Jazz educator to preside over competition

BATTLE OF THE BANDS: Six local jazz ensembles selected by jazz professionals from a pool of 11 will compete in this Sunday's activity at Taipei American School

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

It's a battle of the bands with a single winner, but in this contest, "everyone walks away with something," says Gene Aitken, a music teacher recognized as a prominent jazz educator in the US.

Aitken, who was recognized as Jazz Educator of the Year last year by *Downbeat*, the major US jazz publication, will be at the Taipei American School (TAS) on Sunday to preside over the Mercedes-Benz Amateur Jazz Competition.

The activity, sponsored by Mercedes-Benz and the American Institute in Taiwan, will be presented by ICR Morning Show hosts Bill Thissen and Rick Monday, who have billed the event as a search for the "next Wang Chien-ming (王建民) of jazz."

But Aitken's style of judging will differ from a rock n' roll showdown. Each group will play three songs; after a band finishes, Aitken will get on stage and appraise the performance on the spot.

His comments will aim to be constructive — in these types of events, Aitken said he often interacts onstage with musicians: He points out the stronger aspects of a band's performance, often asking them to play certain parts again and suggests different ways to play less successful segments.

Instead of thinking about things in terms of "right and wrong," bands will get "new ideas on how to approach things ... to enhance what they're doing," Aitken said in a phone interview with the *Taipei Times*

from his home in Colorado.

Aitken, who has a PhD in music from the University of Oregon, boasts a long and accomplished resume as an educator. For nearly 25 years, he served as director of jazz studies at the University of Northern Colorado, which is famous for its education program and an award-winning jazz program.

HARMONY

In 2003, Aitken helped to form a youth orchestra program in Thailand devoted to fostering ethnic harmony among Southeast Asian countries. He worked on a similar program earlier this year in northern Iraq as part of the performing arts group AmericanVoices, which often works with US embassies and consulates worldwide.

Aitken has experience teaching Taiwanese students, many of whom he taught while serving as director of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore. He praises them for their "technical ability" and "musicianship."

But like many career-minded Asian music students, Taiwanese tend to favor classical music. Aitken said that such students could actually benefit from jazz, as it requires skills that differ from the "interpretive" approach needed in classical music.

"When [students play] jazz, they have to be creative," he said, adding that jazz helps students develop "self-confidence" and the "ability of self-expression."

And on a practical level, aspiring professionals should consider their job prospects.

"In the world today ... you can't be just a jazz player or a classical player — you have to be

both," Aitken said.

Competing in this Sunday's event are six local groups selected by several jazz professionals in Taiwan: saxophonist Tung Shuen-wen (董舜文), the Taipei combos JEG (這個爵士樂團) and Rich Huang Jazz Band (黃瑞豐爵士樂團), and veteran jazz guitarist Geddy Lin (林正如), who owns the Riverside Music Cafe in Taipei.

Lin said the contestants were chosen from a pool of 11 bands, but all of the bands have been encouraged to attend for the educational experience.

Winners or not, all musicians will come away from this event knowing "what they are doing well," Aitken said.

This Sunday's event is free and takes place from 1:30pm to 6pm at the TAS at 800 Zhongshan N Rd, Sec 6, Taipei (台北市中山北路六段800號). It also features a non-competitive performance by the school's jazz band.



Gene Aitken, a renowned music educator and recipient of *Downbeat's* Jazz Educator of the Year Award last year, will be in Taipei this weekend as a judge for the Mercedes-Benz Amateur Jazz Competition at the Taipei American School.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GENE AITKEN