

All you need is Love

The organizers of Ho-Hai-Yan Rock Festival are holding an autumn rock festival at a central Taiwan beach resort to take people's minds off the nation's troubles

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER



Clockwise from left: The first Love Love Rock Festival takes place Saturday and Sunday in Miaoli County's Tunghsiao Township; Bobby Chen headlines on Saturday at Love Love Rock Festival; Kimbo Hu plays on Sunday; Puyuma folk duo Hao-en and Jia-jia headline on Sunday. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAIWAN COLORS MUSIC



As the economy slows, bitter political bickering gathers pace and there seems no escaping melamine, musician and record label boss Zhang 43 (張43) says there's a remedy to Taiwan's woes — love: "If you have love, then you can have mutual tolerance ... we should have more love."

Enter the first ever Love Love Rock Festival (愛愛搖滾帳棚音樂節), organized by Zhang and his alternative rock and folk label TCM (Taiwan Colors Music, 角頭音樂).

The festival takes place this Saturday and Sunday at the Tung-hsiao Beach Resort (通霄海洋渡假村) in central Taiwan's Miaoli County (苗栗縣), and features beachside performances from Taiwan's indie music circuit regulars, including TCM artists like 88 Balaz (八十八顆芭樂籽) and Puyuma folk duo Hao-en (吳恩) and Jia-jia (家家), as well as Aboriginal folk legend Kimbo Hu (胡德夫) and pop and rock icon Bobby Chen (陳昇).

But the festival is not just about rock 'n' roll, says Zhang. He hopes the scenic beach and forest at this 32-hectare resort will create a "romantic, slow-paced" atmosphere, in contrast to the crowded summer annual Ho-Hai-Yan Rock Festival, which was also started by TCM.

With Love Love Rock, Zhang wants to cultivate among Taiwanese a different appreciation for their homeland — "a love for the island" — through camping. The resort's

campground is located in a wooded area; festivalgoers are encouraged to bring their own tents or rent one from the resort, which has 3,000 available.

The festival has another goal: to bring people together. Zhang thinks the nation's youth would benefit from looking beyond social relationships forged on the Internet. "So many [young people] can't communicate ... they can only use MSN ... This is so dangerous," said Zhang. On both days of the festival, the Love Love Friendship Team (愛愛交友團隊) will be holding ice-breaking activities at the piano stage.

But if such formalities are of no interest, there's always the white sand beach, or the outdoor movie theater screening Taiwanese oldies.

The resort offers plenty of dining options with restaurants, vendor stalls and a barbeque area, with food and supplies available on-site. The music takes place on three small stages from 1:30pm to 5:30pm, and the main Love Love Rock stage, which holds performances from 4:45pm to 11pm.

Zhang hopes Love Love Rock will become an annual arts event in central Taiwan, and eventually have a more "international" feel. He says with the site's camping vibe, backpackers would feel particularly welcome.

While the festival's love mantra is unlikely to stop Taiwan's political strife, Zhang remains optimistic. "We still have to have a dream ... Only when we have dreams can we move forward."

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: Love Love Rock Festival (愛愛搖滾帳棚音樂節)

WHEN: From Saturday at 11am until Sunday at 10pm

WHERE: Tung-hsiao Beach Resort (通霄海洋渡假村), 41-1 Haibin Road, Tunghsiao Township, Miaoli County (苗栗縣通霄鎮海濱路41-1號)

TICKETS: NT\$500 per person for both days; tickets available at the door and at ERA ticketing (www.ticket.com.tw). Advance tickets available until the end of today; NT\$1,325 for couples, includes tent; NT\$2,400 for families of four, including tent; NT\$4,000 for groups of 10. Call TCM records at (02) 2812-1921 for details

CAMPING AND ACCOMMODATIONS: Resort guesthouses are already full. Tents are available for rent. To reserve a tent, call (03) 776-1777

HOW TO GET THERE: The resort is a 5 to 10 minute walk from the Taiwan Railways Administration's (TRA 台鐵) Tonghsiao Station (通霄火車站). Signs for the resort will be posted outside the station. Trains leave Taipei nearly every hour; the journey takes around 2 hours. Visit new.twtraffic.com.tw/TWRail_en/index.aspx for a full schedule. See the festival's Web Site for a detailed map.

ON THE NET: www.loveloverock.com and www.eco-seaworld.com.tw (Chinese only)

Farmers' sporting prowess put to the test at 'peasant olympics'

After Chinese athletes cleaned up at the Beijing Olympics, the sporting skills of the country's farmers are in the spotlight with events like the grain collection race

BY DAN MARTIN
AFP, QUANZHOU, CHINA

Crouching at a starting line in a modern running outfit and trainers, Li Quanquan would look just like an Olympic athlete if not for the peasant-style bamboo carrying stick over her shoulders.

With baskets full of fake rice seedlings dangling from either side of the pole, she sprints down a track, then halts to "plant" each one in a simulated paddy field in one of the more bizarre races ever held in a large stadium.

Two months after China's elite athletes dazzled the world at the Beijing Olympics, the sporting prowess of its 900 million peasant farmers is getting its turn in the spotlight this week at China's 6th National Peasant Games.

"Back home, life is pretty hard, so this is our chance to show the country and world what we do and our skills and abilities," said Li, 23, whose family grows chilli peppers on a plot in Henan Province.

Fresh from hosting the biggest ever Olympics, China also is putting on its largest "peasant olympics," a quadrennial event held this year in Quanzhou City in the southeastern coastal Fujian Province.

A record 3,500 athletes are competing in more than 180 events, but these "olympics" come with

a barnyard twist.

Besides Li's event — the "60m rice-transplanting race" — others include the "60m snatch the grain and get it into storage," in which contestants load a "harvest" of sandbags onto three-wheeled bikes and sprint for the tape.

There's also the tire-pushing race and the "water carrying contest to protect the seedlings amid drought," to go along with more common sports such as basketball.

It might sometimes have looked like a bad reality TV show, but competitors took it seriously.

"Although we were not able to attend the Beijing Olympics, this is our dream, our farmer's olympics," said Xie Hong, 22, whose experience on the family's rice farm in southwestern China's Chongqing region helped her win her rice-transplanting heat.

"I do this back home, so it's closely matched to my daily life."

However, it ended in tears for Lin Shiyan, of Hunan Province, who was disqualified after mishandling one of the fake plastic "seedlings."

"I'm very upset. I trained very hard for this," she sobbed under a hot sun.

The special attention accorded China's farmers has its roots in Mao Zedong's (毛澤東) veneration of the peasant class, a political tradition that the Communist Party keeps up even as farmers are



Right: A Chinese farmer rides a tricycle during a grain gathering race at the 6th National Peasants Games in Quanzhou City on Tuesday.



Above: A Chinese farmer prepares to throw a bundle of rice at the 6th National Peasants Games in Quanzhou City on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

largely left behind in China's economic boom.

This year's games come as an ongoing exodus of millions of rural peasants into cities and industrial regions in search of work raises growing fears that it could hamper the nation's ability to feed itself.

The games are meant to teach peasants about sport, partly to keep them content and on the

farm, said Kang Wenbing, 18, who competed in the men's grain collection race.

"If farming life remains all drudgery, of course people will keep leaving the land. There are 900 million peasants in China. They need the release of sport," said Kang, of Fujian Province, still huffing after his heat.

Games contestants must hold a residence permit from a farming community and are selected via a combination of tryouts and invitations, organizers said.

But while China's state-run media have given the Peasant Games strong coverage, they look unlikely to even come close to the Beijing Olympics' attendance figures.

Quanzhou City's 32,000-seat stadium was virtually empty on Tuesday and no food or drink was provided at venues.

"There aren't enough people coming for that," said a stadium official.

"Besides, these are peasants. They would litter the food everywhere."

Once the games are over, people such as Yu Wenfang, a timid 14-year-old making her first trip outside her home region of Ningxia in the country's remote far north, must rush back to the family cornfield.

"The games are a great experience for me but I must hurry back. It's harvest time," she said.