AROUND TOWN 發光的城市 15

AIPEI TIMES • FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2008

alifornia power-pop quartet Melee hasn't made it to the top of the charts in their own country, but that hasn't stopped them from building up a huge following overseas.

Built to Last, the first single off the Orange County band's major-label debut album Devils and Angels, was a Top 5 hit in South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan, where the band plays on Thursday at Riverside Live House in Taipei.

The single, released in January of last year, also reached No. 2 on radio airplay charts in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, and climbed to No. 25 on the Euro Pop charts.

"We had only toured the United States until [Devils and Angels] came out. Our managers turned to us a week after [the album was released] and said, 'It's kind of taking off in Japan," Melee frontman Chris Cron recalled in a phone interview from his home in southern California earlier this month. "Then the next thing we knew we got in a plane and headed to Japan and

then it spread throughout Asia from there."

Cron (vocals, keyboard) and childhood friends Ricky Sans (guitar) and Ryan Malloy (bass, vocals) played music together during high school and got serious about it during college. They added drummer Mike Nader and selfreleased an EP, followed in 2004 by a fulllength album, Everyday Behavior, with indie label Sub City.

That album - which reflected Melee's early love of bands like Blur and Weezer and late-1990s ska — sold 15,000 copies and led to the four-piece signing with Warner Bros Records in September 2005.

Melee has by now drifted solidly into melodic pop. Songs on Devils and Angels — which Cron has said are about "being in your 20s in modern America" — range from power ballads to **pop-rock anthems** and are characterized by slick production, catchy hooks, soaring vocals and lots of piano. The band cites Elton John, Coldplay and John Legend as recent influences.

When asked about Melee's swing to

more pop-oriented music, Cron said: "We started Melee saying that we weren't going to put any labels on ourselves. If we wanted to write a surf-rock song then we'd do it, if we wanted to write a bossa nova song we'd do it, if we wanted to write a metal song then we would do it."

"Then we kind of honed it into something because we realized that doesn't necessarily make for a very convincing album," he continued. "But I think we still hold true to [ourselves]. We never completely repeat ourselves.'

Melee has even achieved considerable success in the UK, despite being panned by some critics there (the BBC called Devils and Angels a "pop missile designed by computer for maximum payload yield"). Built to Last hit No. 16 on the British radio charts and the band played several shows in England and Scotland this past summer.

Cron attributed his group's warm reception among British fans to the fact that "we joke around about who we are

and aren't too serious all the time."

"I always thought that people were going to be very pretentious and very critical of music in the UK, and sometimes they are. But they also can really appreciate people who don't take themselves too seriously, which I don't think Americans can all the time," he said.

- RON BROWNLOW

WHAT: Melee live in concert

WHERE: Riverside Live House, 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號). For more information call (02) 2370-8805 or go to www.riverside.com.tw WHEN: Thursday from 8:30pm to 10pm TICKETS: NT\$1,500 advance tickets available

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

online at tickets.books.com.tw and at 7-Eleven stores; tickets purchased at the door are NT\$1.800

ON THE NET: www.meleerocks.com





C punite, one of the most influential \mathbf{D} online dance music communities in Taiwan, was originally created to host

Taipei to party with my friends from the US. But the ABC [American-born Chinese] scene I was in, especially in Taiwan, was simply about social status and getting laid. I quickly became disenchanted with the whole thing," Tsai says.

"One day, some guy gave me a flyer to a rave party in Tainan. I went to the event and loved everything about it — the



Often we are misunderstood as being very 'commercial," he says. "But our ultimate goal is to get more people involved."

Tonight Spunite hosts Playground, a trance-oriented party at Luxy featuring DJs Ju, Code, Blue and Racy, along with some games, giveaways and a special 40minute slot dedicated to classic tracks by Paul van Dyke.

RESTAURANTS

My Sweetie Pie Bakery & Cafe

Address: 3, Ln 93, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路93巷3號) Telephone: (02) 3365-3448 **Open:** Daily from 11am to midnight Average meal: NT\$300 Details: English and Chinese menu; free Wi-Fi; credit cards accepted

Back in the day when reasonably priced Western restaurants were few and far between, Grandma Nitti's was already providing comfort food for forlorn Westerners who had had enough of beef noodle soup and potstickers. Nitti's location off Shida Road has become a wellknown gathering place,

and while the food on



My Sweet Pie's portions of American-style cakes are American-style, too. PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIME

offer has drawn reviews ranging from the wildly enthusiastic to the derisive, the restaurant's appeal has never faded for expats longing for a taste of home.

My Sweetie Pie Bakery & Cafe, located almost directly opposite, looks like it might have been transplanted from Taipei's up-market East District (東區), but is in fact an extension of the Grandma Nitti operation. Clean lines, whitewashed walls and abundant natural light generate an air of casual sophistication.

My Sweetie shares some elements of Grandma Nitti's menu, but according to Rainbow Lin (林虹惠), the driving force behind both operations, her new project is restricted to smaller brunch and snack dishes. The reason for this is to highlight the cake selection, which is displayed in a way that seems to wink alluringly at passersby.

Priced at around NT\$90 a slice, the large portions of American-style cakes fill a niche in a market dominated by elaborately decorated production-line sweets or chichi concoctions of French or Japanese-inspired patisseries. Offerings such as carrot cake (NT\$90) and warm chocolate cake (NT\$80) make an appealing pairing with a large mug of coffee (hot NT\$100; iced NT\$110), and the banana chocolate cake (NT\$90) is recommended for its robust textures and fresh banana flavor. This is comfort food, but there is an admirable restraint in the use of sugar and fat, and the cakes are nicely presented without being drowned in whipped cream.

For more savory palates, there are a number of brunch variations on offer, such as pouched eggs with pesto sauce, ham and toast (NT\$180), or light lunch meals that include homemade beef lasagna (with homemade pasta, NT\$270). The prices include regular coffee or tea. A slice of cake or pie can be added to all orders for an additional NT\$60, making for a very reasonably priced meal.

Apart from the restaurant service, My Sweetie Pie also sells cakes to order. Four-inch (10cm), 6-inch (15cm) and 8-inch (20cm) sizes are available, with prices for an 8-inch cake around NT\$800.

The usual range of coffees, slushies, smoothies and milk shakes are available. My Sweetie serves also Mighty Leaf specialty teas as an added attraction.

The large airy space, open kitchen with gleaming surfaces, comfortable sofas and side tables with individual table lamps make this a location equally suited to work or relaxation. The friendly service and free Wi-Fi are icing on the cake.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Chez Moi Cafe (來我家吧)

Address: 1F, 1-4, Ln 23, Nanjing W Rd, Taipei City (台北市南京西路 23巷1-4號1樓)

Open: Daily from 7:30am to 10:30pm; closed on the first Tuesday of February, April, June, August, October and December

videos related to the rave scene. With more than 10,000 registered members, it has evolved into a popular forum for dance music fans and DJs, a reliable source of party information and a production brand that runs events across Taiwan.

Spunite's founder, Brian Tsai (蔡家偉), organizes and funds the brand's parties.

Tsai grew up in the US and moved to Taiwan after graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles. He now runs a manufacturing, marketing and import business in Tainan. So how did a businessman get so deeply involved with the dance music scene in the first place? "When I first got back to Tainan, I'd go to

people, the music, the inspiration. The more I learned about the rave scene, the more I saw myself getting involved."

Masago Beach Party in Tainan is the second and perhaps best-known of Spunite's events. Held annually in October for the past eight years, Masago is reputed among ravers to be a must-go gathering. Revelers come all the way from Taipei and Taichung to participate, and despite each year's struggle to obtain a permit, Tsai keeps the bash up and running. "I think most people really enjoy

Masago," he says. "They like the venue and overall vibe. They can let go and be a little crazier. Maybe it's the uncertainty of



Spunite keeps hands up in the air and the old-school flame burning. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPUNITE

it all — people always come to the event thinking it will be the last. It makes for a little bit of the carpe diem vibe that I love."

Tsai describes Spunite parties as an "introductory course" in electronica. "We try to make them more comprehensive and welcoming to people outside the scene.

Playground at Luxy, 5F, 201, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段 201號5F). Admission is free before 11pm, NT\$600 after.

On the Net: www.spunite.com/phpBB/ And now a little something for tomorrow: Down to the Nitty Gritty at Deluxe — one of the last JAM sessions before hosts Jr and Megan return to Canada. Joining them will be Scottyballer, Vdub, Schizm, Digit and Cap spinning house and hip-hop until 5am.

Nitty Gritty at Deluxe, 2F, 2, Nanjing E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市南京東路四段2號 2樓). Admission is NT\$400.

— QUEEN BEE

Telephone: (02) 2567-4677 Average Meal: NT\$250 per person On the Net: blog.roodo.com/chezmoicafe Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted

The homey, retromodern vibe of Chez Moi Cafe will soothe the tired shopper and surprise the passerby. Located in the gentrified alley of fancy hairdressing salons and fashion boutique stores behind Zhongshan MRT Station's (中山

捷運站) exit No. 2 on

Nanjing West Road



Ladies who lunch and the office worker crowd should feel at home at Chez Moi Cafe. PHOTO: DAVID CHEN. TAIPEI TIMES

(南京西路), this low-to-mid priced bistro serves food on the healthier side of the diner-style spectrum.

Greeted with warm lighting and the sounds of jazz playing softly in the background, diners sit in comfort on upholstered chairs that look straight out of the 1950s. One side of the room is covered in wallpaper with lime-green patterns, making it feel as if Doris Day might burst into the room.

The all-day brunch (NT\$200) is not quite authentic greasy spoon grub with its side dish choices, but it offers plenty of homemade goodness and decent value for the price: organic eggs cooked to order; French fries; sausage, bacon and ham; as well as a choice of coffee or tea and fresh juice or milk. One puzzling side dish was the vegetables — fresh string beans cooked with mushrooms and baby corn, both of which tasted like they were canned.

But this flaw was easily overlooked since the brunch also comes with toast made of homemade fresh bread and herb butter. The bread is also available with the ladies breakfast (NT\$140). which replaces the meats in the all-day brunch with several forkfuls of "spice chicken" (香料雞肉) and a serving of salad.

Chez Moi's homemade cheeseburger (NT\$150), which comes with a side of fries and a side of steamed vegetables, makes for an easy and satisfying lunch with its slightly spicy beef patty. The menu recommends an accompaniment of bottled Guinness (NT\$170), but those who know better can opt for Erdinger (NT\$180) or Grolsch (NT\$190). For local exotica, go for North Taiwan Brewing's (北台灣麥酒) lychee (荔枝) or melon (哈密瓜) beers at NT\$170 each.

While such standards were more than passable, the star of the menu was the humble French chicken sandwich (NT\$140), which hit the right combination of ingredients. The toasted fresh bread and lettuce give it the right crunch, and the chicken breast slices mingle well with the Dijon mustard and a light spreading of mayonnaise. Sliced tomato and a few onion slices round out this sandwich's wholesome, classic taste.

Also on offer is a full assortment of teas, hot chocolate and espresso drinks (NT\$100 to NT\$160). Desserts include homemade cheesecake (NT\$90), a brownie sundae (NT\$100) and the ujikintoki waffle (抹茶紅豆鬆餅, NT\$140), made from green-tea batter and served with green-tea ice cream. On a warm day, try the refreshing raspberry frozen (覆盆子凍飲, NT\$140), made of frozen raspberries blended with ice.

The food overall is noteworthy for its emphasis on fresh ingredients, but don't go to Chez Moi to satisfy a craving for Western fare — it's more suitable as a peaceful escape from the hustle of the city, and a stylish one at that. - DAVID CHEN

The owners of the **Riverside Cafe** recently opened the **Riverside Live** House (西門紅樓展演館), located

in Ximending's historic Red House Theater (西門紅樓). Tomorrow it's Mala Sound with Sticky Rice frontman Ma Nien-hsien (馬念先) and friends, who include Taiwanese rap pioneer **MC** Hot Dog; Van Fan (范逸臣), the Amis pop singer and star of the local hit movie Cape No. 7 (海角七號); and pop wunderkind Joanna (王若琳). ▶ 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西 寧南路177號). Call (02) 2370-8805 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for more information

▶ Show goes from 8pm to 10pm ▶ Entrance is NT\$700, which includes one drink

Mandinga Latin Band appears tonight at **Sappho de Base**. Reggae and dub fills the house tomorrow night, with **High Tide**, which recently won ICRT's battle-of-the-bands contest. On Tuesday night the Sappho Jazz Band performs, with an open jam afterwards, while **Double J Band** plays disco, funk and hard rock on Wednesday. On Thursday night the venue hosts **T and** T Jazz and Friends.

▶ B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1). Call (02) 2700-5411 (after 9pm) or visit www.sappho102.biz for more information

▶ Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends; 10pm on weekdays ▶ No admission fee

Soma plays rock and pop covers tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**. Tomorrow it's house band Loaded, which plays everything from "rock

classics to today's hits." On Sunday, Doug, Mingwei and Friends take to the stage for an acoustic jam. ▶ 1F, 56, Minguan 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 (復興北) and Minquan East (民權東) roads Call (02) 2517-3869 for more information

Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30am tonight and tomorrow; 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays ▶ No admission fee

Taking to the stage tonight at **Bliss** is "loud and proud" **QvQ**, an expat rock band. Also appearing is solo act Matt Nicodemus. Tomorrow it's folk and rock sounds with Shane Lazarowich, Pat Reid and Tyler Dakin and the Long Naked Bottles. [See story on

Page 14.] ▶ 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北 市信義路四段148號), one block east of Dunhua South Road (敦化南路). Call Bliss at (02) 2702-1855 or log on at www.bliss-taipei.com. For more information on live performances at Bliss, visit www.myspace.com/ blisslivehouse

Tonight and tomorrow at 10pm. Bar/ kitchen open daily from 7pm. Ladies' night Fridays; women get one free cocktail of their choice Entrance to the bar is free. Tonight's show is free; NT\$200 entrance fee

Underworld(地下社會) hosts Wu Yin-ning (吳音寧) and indie-folk

tomorrow

group 929 (九二九) tonight. Tomorrow it's taike (台客) band Children Sucker (表兒) and The Shine and Shine and Shine and Shine (閃閃閃)

On Wednesday punk band **Inhuman** Species (非人物種) and newly formed noise rock group Shebang-a (死蚊子) are scheduled to perform.

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

▶ 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 Music shows on Fridays and Saturdays are from 9:30pm to 11:30pm;

9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays ▶ Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow, includes one drink; NT\$100 on Wednesday, no drink included

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's a blues open mic held by the **Blues Societv** on Taiwan. All are welcome to bring their instruments and sit in on guitar, bass or drums ▶ 1F, 218 Changchun Rd, Taipei City (台

北市長春路218號1樓). Call (02) 2508-0304 or visit www.cosmo.com.tw for more information ▶ Wednesday from 8pm to 11pm

▶ No admission fee

Exhibitions

Stunning Decorative Porcelains From the Chienlung Reign (華 麗彩瓷—乾隆洋彩泰展) examines the complex methods by which these ceramics were assembled and painted. The pieces presented in this exhibition, most of which were made

between 1741 and 1744, when the Qing Dynasty's Qianlong Emperor ruled China, represent two styles of vase painting that were developed in the mid 18th century. One aspect of the exhibition deals with the subtle

differences that distinguish the fa-langtsai (琺瑯彩) and vana-tsai (洋彩) styles. ▶ National Palace Museum (國立故宮博 物院), 221, Zhishan Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段221號). Open Mondays through Sundays from 9am to 5pm; Saturdays until 8:30pm. Tel: (02) 2881-2021 Until Aug. 15, 2009

Taiwan International Video Art Exhibition (居無定所—2008台灣

國際錄像藝術展). Featuring 20 works selected out of 121 entries submitted from 21 countries, the exhibit examines the global cultural landscape through topics ranging from cultural diversity, terrorism, and migrant labor to memory, nostalgia and land. ▶ Hong Gah Museum (鳳甲美術館), 11F, 166 Daye Rd, Taipei City (台北市大 業路166號11樓). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10:30am to 5:30pm. Tel: (02) 2894-2272 Until Dec. 28

Shadow of Light — Modern Ink Painting by Huang Kuangnan (流影—黃光男現代水墨展). The

renowned artist and academic's latest works combine traditional subjects and Western compositions. ▶ German Cultural Center Taipei (台北 德國文化中心), 12F, 20, Heping W Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市和平西路一段 20號12樓). Open Mondays through Fridays from 10am to 8pm. Tel: (02) 2365-7294 Until Dec. 16

Flowering Body — Li Tseng-hao Solo Exhibition (開花的身體—李 增豪個展). Taking the human body as its visual cue, Li's series of images and

interactive installation works examines the power of social conventions. ▶ Juming Museum (朱銘美術館), 2 Sheshihu, Chinshan Township, Taipei County (台北縣金山鄉西勢湖2號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2498-9940 Until Jan. 4, 2009

Home — Taiwan Biennial 2008 (家-2008台灣美術雙年展) brings

together more than 120 works by 60 artists and probes how changing ideas of home have been presented in contemporary Taiwanese art. ▶ National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (國立台灣美術館), 2, Wuchuan W Rd Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市五權西路一 段2號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Tel: (04) 2372-3552

▶ Until Feb. 8, 2009

Event

Dissident, academic and former Secretary-General of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, Samuel Lee will be in Taipei next week to give a lecture in English titled Why We Are Where We Are: A Personal Account of South Korea's Path to Democracy. Lee spent many years in Europe as a dissident in exile and his personal life is inextricably linked with South Korea's recent social and political history ▶ GIS Convention Center, B1, 85, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市 羅斯福路四段85號B1) Nov. 29 from 2pm to 5pm Admission is free but participants must pre-register by calling (02) 3322-4907, or online at www.civictaipe.org