

FEATURES

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[THE WEEKENDER]

Flute fun from the family

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Sweden's Anders Norell is Principal Flute with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and he's married to fellow flautist Chiang Shu-chun (江淑君), a professor in the Department of Music at the Taipei Municipal University of Education (教育大學音樂學系). They performed together on Nov. 30 at the National Recital Hall in an exceptionally enjoyable program of music for two flutes, including one world premiere.

The intention from the start was clearly to establish an atmosphere of pleasant informality. Norell entered at the back of the auditorium playing Bach, walked forward slowly, still playing, and ended up sitting on the front of the stage, legs dangling over the edge. A light then came on revealing Chiang's silhouette behind an improvised screen, and the two of them then completed Bach's "Ghost" Partita for two flutes — in reality a work Bach wrote for solo flute but which was expanded into a duet by the flute teacher Gary Schocker.

The premiere followed, Hsiao Ching-yu's (蕭慶瑜) *Flying in the Dark Night* for two flutes and piano. Specially commissioned for this concert, it would have been hard on most ears present, but the composer nonetheless received several enthusiastic requests for signatures during the interval.

The event continued with five more items, including one for two alto flutes. They were all beautifully played, and it was wholly in the spirit of the occasion that during the final piece, a *Swan Lake* fantasy based on Tchaikovsky's ballet, the daughter of the two flautists came on stage and executed a short dance. This cemented the ambience of good-natured family music-making — just as it might have been, say, in Vienna in Beethoven's day.

This concert suggested that moves away from the usual classical performance format can't be less than very welcome. The musical standard was of the highest, but the audience-friendly approach was the linchpin that transformed the event into something particularly memorable. Taipei needs more concerts like this.

Special mention should be made of the piano accompanist Tang Wan-chun (湯婉君), whose deeply-felt playing added greatly to the effect in many places.

There wasn't a large audience at the NSO's concert in Taipei's National Concert Hall on Friday. The performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8, though, was masterly, and prompted wild applause. When I asked my companion at the event, however, what kind of film it might accompany he replied, "Man's first journey to Mars — years and years when nothing ever happens."

But Bruckner is a cathedral-builder in music, and Gunther Herbig, the son of an architect, clearly knows how to keep such vast structures in shape. The NSO handled the big climaxes and much else with aplomb, and Herbig appeared very pleased at the audience's reaction. Everyone, my friend perhaps excepted, seemed to go home happy.



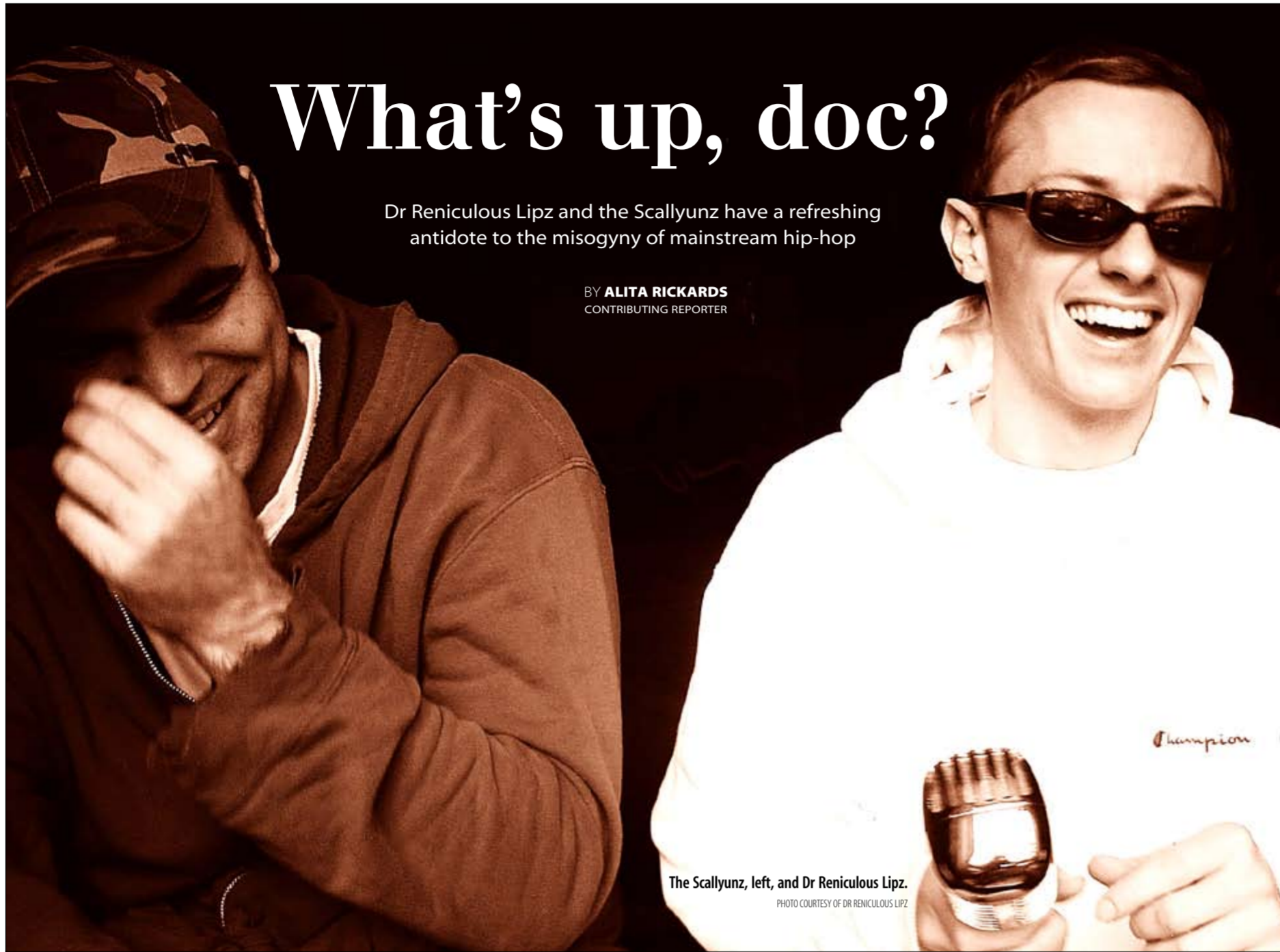
Anders Norell, top, and his wife, Chiang Shu-chun, dispensed with formalities for their performance on Nov. 30.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE NSO

What's up, doc?

Dr Renculous Lipz and the Scallyunz have a refreshing antidote to the misogyny of mainstream hip-hop

BY ALITA RICKARDS
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER



The Scallyunz, left, and Dr Renculous Lipz. PHOTO COURTESY OF DR RENCULOUS LIPZ

Clear your mind of preconceptions about rap. Picture The Streets, the mock stars of *Flight of the Conchords* and Dr Seuss spawning a new band. An unpolished band. A live hip-hop band — with no DJ — composed mainly of expats who live in Taichung. The one Taiwanese member is bass player Molly Lin (林孟珊).

Meet Dr Renculous Lipz and the Scallyunz.

Their new CD, *Journey to the East*, was released in Taipei on Saturday night at VU Livehouse. Supporting acts at the party included alt-country Point 22 (.22), which also plays with the Scallyunz, and alternative rock, blues and funk outfit New Hong Kong Hair City.

Dr Lipz and the Scallyunz' live show had a jam band feeling that was a bit chaotic at times and could have done with more rehearsal to work out some of the kinks with the wide array of musicians performing.

With lyrics like, "For your majesties pleasure getting highnesses/Rizla licking when I'm kicking it with herbalists," it seemed a case of life imitating art as we held an interview on my patio at the end of last month while Dr Lipz (Nick Sylvester) and Daddy Fat Saks (Gavin Poole) were visiting Taipei. Both are Londoners, with Lipz hailing from the UK and Saks from Ontario, Canada.

Lipz is the slighter of the two, fair, and gregarious — wordy, as befits the lyricist

and rapper of the group.

Saks, large, dark and calm, is more reticent. He is the hype man in the band.

What exactly does a hype man do? "I was bought with a white towel. [The] hype man is the guy in the show who shouts and repeats what the guy who is rapping says. You've got to have a white towel. Once we had a band, I had to start singing," Saks says, looking mournful. "I occasionally play a cowbell, a triangle, an ocarina!"

He is a natural in this role, often finishing Lipz's sentences. It's difficult to get a straight answer to questions; these gentlemen are not hip-hop posturing in their songs, they are off-the-wall whether on the CD, onstage or on a stranger's rooftop.

The song *Burn Your Money* maker is a little disturbing and references anal sex.

"Primarily it's supposed to be funny. People come to have fun, you should be having fun, too," Lipz says. He "can't believe how misogynistic" hip-hop can be, and says that, his English accent becoming quite prim, "everyone has lost their manners." The song parodies typical bling and bitches hip-hop that "women get up and dance to."

"[It's] supposed to be a joke. I'm 34 years old. I used to be an English teacher. I write poetry," Lipz says. He smiles. "Yeah, I write poetry. I pick daisies. I like windy walks. Someone smashing one of my nuts. These are things I'm into."

"I'd rather smash in one of my nuts

with a prosthetic limb than witness the depravity of ladies' night at Carnegie's again," Lipz says. He vents in *Burn*:

*A daddy that was fatter better get another drink
Ching ching oink oink nudge nudge wink wink
Cause I'm a swine I gotta get mine
The piggy getting jiggy with the wimin and the wine*

Lipz has lived in Taichung for four years. When he first performed in Taiwan, the staff at the venue had "never heard of a party MC." At one gig they made him don a "shot thing on my back and serve drinks. I was completely humiliated, though I would drink from the thing."

He came up with the Chinese moniker The White Monkey King (白悟空) soon after: "Like the monkey with the organ grinder, Taiwanese threw coins at me. 'Hey look at me, I'm the white monkey!' standing there and sweating for 18 people."

Now he and Saks have joined up with Point 22, a talented and experienced band with equally eccentric tastes, though its members usually prefer a different genre. "Point 22 is the crux of the band since we lost our [last] bass player and drummer," Lipz says.

What does Point 22 add to the group?

The couple play a camcorder video of a farting competition between Wade Davis, Steve Taylor and Pete Holmes. (Holmes was the obvious winner, utilizing glass as his medium, which produces a certain resonance. Davis and Taylor kept up a

good rhythm section on the tiled floor.) In the band they play their instruments: Davis on guitar, Holmes on drums and Taylor on bass.

Gavin McLaughlin, also on guitar, is "forgotten Colin, 'deep fried,' the only Scottish man in hip-hop," Saks says. "Colin's got this thing called 'musical integrity.' He takes the tune from, like, *Super Freak*..." Saks imitates a Scottish accent. "He says 'don't worry boys, I've changed it enough so we can't be sued.'"

"Hip-hop is a unique art because it can borrow and no one cares," Lipz says. "[I] take songs I like and tell them to play something like it."

Playing with a band "changed everything completely. There aren't many live hip-hop bands. It's funky; you can dance to it," Lipz says.

On bass is Lin, best known from Nekojam, a local all-girl Mando-pop and folk band with a light, indie sound.

Many of Lipz's songs have Chinese lyrics integrated into them. "If you can write, you can write in any language, because it's just putting words together and you can hear the rhythm," he says. His lyrics, phrases and slang are strung together with an intrinsic beat.

This is the real crux of the band: Lipz a wordsmith. With Holmes on percussion, Saks hyping the mic, musicians Davis, Taylor, Lin and McLaughlin, and Lipz's ridiculous, rhythmic lyrics, it's alternative funk-hop and it's as fresh as an early morning fart against a cold patio door.

PLANET POP

Madonna in provocative pose is to embody the latest collection designed by US stylist Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton, the French luxury house said Thursday.

Dressed in little but mesh stockings and head-spinningly high stilettos in the first pictures released,



The material girl: out with husbands and in with high fashion. PHOTO: AP

the diva of pop represents the designer's "vision of the quintessential Parisienne" embodied in his 2009 spring-summer ready-to-wear collection for Louis Vuitton unveiled in October.

"I wanted the campaign to be very bold, very sensual and very atmospheric," Jacobs was quoted as saying in a statement.

Photographed in a smoky Paris 1940s-style bar touting the latest Vuitton bags, the just-divorced 50-year-old is shown striking provocative poses in very, very short skirts and ethnic-inspired footwear and jewels.

The advertising campaign is to launch worldwide in February of next year.

Bollywood fever has hit Malaysia as Indian movie icon Shah Rukh Khan flew in to be awarded the nation's equivalent of a

knighthood.

Khan was presented with an award from Malacca that carries the title *Datuk*, equivalent to a British knighthood, after the 2001 film, *One 2 Ka 4*, which was set in the southern state, boosted its profile as a tourist destination.

The actor was decked in a gold and black traditional Malay outfit for the ceremony on Saturday, which was attended by more than 500 invited guests.

The crowd — including the wives and teenaged children of diplomats and politicians — shrieked his name and mobbed the star.

The 42-year-old heartthrob is well-loved in Malaysia, where Indian films have a huge following among ethnic Indians, majority Muslim-Malays and the ethnic Chinese community as well.

"It is a wonderful honor, it is very, very prestigious for me and ... for all the people who act in films in my country," Khan told reporters.

Meanwhile, Australian actress Cate Blanchett on Saturday accepted the role of an Oscar-winner honored with her own star on Hollywood's old-school Walk of Fame.



Cate Blanchett took a star turn on the Hollywood Walk of fame. PHOTO: EPA

The new name on star number 2,376, Blanchett was joined for the ceremony by directors Steven Spielberg, with whom she worked on the fourth installment of *Indiana Jones*, and David Fincher, whose *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* opens in the US this month starring Blanchett and Brad Pitt.

Now 39, the mother of three won an Oscar in 2005 for her portrayal of Katharine Hepburn in *The Aviator*.

The Italian film *Gomorra*, a harrowing drama about the Naples Mafia by Matteo Garrone, won five top prizes at the 21st European Film Awards in Copenhagen on Saturday.

Gomorra took the awards for best film, best director, best actor (Toni Servillo), best screenplay (Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni de Gregorio, Matteo Garrone, Massimo Gaudioso and Roberto Saviano) and the Carlo di Palma award for best photography (Marco Onorato).

Oscar-winner Angelina Jolie has proven again how handsomely it pays to combine gun-wielding action with serious roles, as she topped *The Hollywood Reporter's* list of highest-earning actresses on Friday. But salaries are plummeting for top actresses and still lag the earnings of leading men, the trade paper said.

The *Reporter* on Friday named Oprah Winfrey the most powerful woman in entertainment on its annual Power 100 List. Winfrey, whose *Oprah* talk show began in national syndication 22 years ago, played a role in the victory of President-elect Barack Obama by endorsing him early in his run and by supporting him throughout the campaign.

British soccer star turned tough-guy Hollywood actor Vinnie Jones was hospitalized and arrested Friday after he got into a bar fight over his role in the film *X-Men*.

Witnesses said the fight began when Jones tried to join a game of pool in the small town of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Jones took offense when one of the men identified him as Juggernaut from *X-Men: The Last Stand*, which he apparently took as a slight against his more significant roles.

"He started pushing my other friends around," said Juan Barrera, 24, who sat nearby while his roommates played pool.

"He said he's been in so many other movies or whatever." Police said Jones charged at a local patron, 24-year-old Jesse Bickett, who then hit Jones in the face with a beer glass.

His face bloodied, Jones was walking to the restroom when he saw Barrera and punched him in the face, Barrera said.

Barrera said he hit Jones once or twice in the face before bar staff kicked him out.

Jones was treated for facial injuries at a local hospital where he was arrested for misdemeanor assault early Friday morning, police said.

Formal charges have not been filed, and no court date has been set.

— AGENCIES