



Thought you'd already put 2008 to bed? Wait a minute. Here's a list of top tunes from last year selected by some of the country's top vinyl junkies.

KINK FEATURING RACHEL ROW — WET

"This track is a definite floor-stomper. Bulgaria's tech house hero brings his signature acid/bouncy sound as a backdrop to Row's sexy and seductive vocals. The stutters midway make for an excellent buildup to an all-out acid bonanza. This tune destroyed the dance-floor many times while I was on tour this fall." (Sona)

THE SUNBURST BAND — JOURNEY TO THE SUN

"It's a 2008 release though it sounds like it came from some disco lab orbiting Earth since the early 1970s. Imagine a millennium party on the *Starship Enterprise*, all hands on deck and in the air, and you begin to get a feel for this timeless tune. To me, it's not only the perfect musical embodiment of the Citrus party vibe, but reaffirms that house music can be great live music as well." (SL)

PHOTONZ — SHABOO (ANDY'S EDIT)

"In the era of MP3 downloads, there is still room for underground music: Dissident Distribution release single-sided vinyl, each limited to 500 copies, and each of their 12 inches is just the bomb. This track sounds like a lost gem from [the] 1988-Chicago House era. Aciiiiid!!" (BB)

SIGUR ROS — MEO SUO I EYRUM VIO SPILUM ENDALAUST (ALBUM)

"I've been hunkered in the studio listening only to my own stuff for a long time. However, I cannot recommend discovering Sigur Ros highly enough. Their summer album was a perfect follow-up to the delicious *Takk* a few years back." (Viba)

MIA — PAPER PLANES

"A Clash sample, finger snaps, four gunshots and a cash register ka-ching gets song-of-the-year honors. MIA's brilliant *Paper Planes* pokes fun at immigrant life and confirms that *Diplo* is the sound of the 21st century. The song had legs all year because of the notable remixes (DFA) and TT's hood anthem *Swagger Like Us* sampled MIA on the chorus. (Marcus Aurelius)

AUDIO SLINGERS FEAT. LESLEY WILLIAM — RADIO NOISE (KELEVRA REMIX)

This is a big-bass electro track with a female vocal. I find that you can get away with playing some really dirty sounding bass-driven tracks that have a sexy female vocal. It seems to even each other out and you end up with a phat-sounding track. (Matty D)

LIL WAYNE — A MILLI

"It's like the minimalism of hip-hop. A *Milli* is a timeless track that's not only made *The Carter III* a platinum album, it also shows the world what an outstanding rapper Lil Wayne really is. There's nothing but dense rhymes plus hypnotic repetitive chanting of "A Milli" throughout this song. The more you listen to it, the more you will get hooked on it." (Biggz)

JUNKIE TOWN — EL RITMO

"If you like your dance music with a lot of grooves, you'll definitely get a kick out of this unconventional electro-tinged house release from Argentina. It's got Latin-style trumpet riffs over snappy beats so smooth and funky that they set the floor burning nice and slow." (Queen Bee)

— QUEEN BEE



Digging into the crate.
PHOTO: QUEEN BEE



Formosa-Zephyr's *Murder in a Snowbound Inn* is a *gezai* take on Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FORMOSA-ZEPHYR OPERA TROUPE

A 'gezai' whodunit

The Formosa-Zephyr Opera Troupe (臺灣春風歌劇團) has done some strange things with the *gezai* opera (歌仔戲) format in the past, and it is up to its antics again with *Murder in a Snowbound Inn* (雪夜客棧殺人事件), a take on Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* that opens today at Taipei's Experimental Theater.

The show is being presented just prior to the National Theater going into its pre-Lunar New Year hibernation and refurbishment, and follows hard on the heels of the New Idea Theater Festival (新點子劇展), which focused this year on giving classical opera a modern twist. This is hardly an ideal time slot, but the group is uniquely well-placed within the *gezai* opera establishment because it is composed completely of students and alumni of National Taiwan University (國立台灣大學) and National Taiwan Normal University (國立台灣師範大學) and thus represents a new demographic of young, highly educated people who are interested in preserving traditional culture. With its ability to draw on student audiences, backed by a strong track record, it is not surprising that all four performances this weekend are already sold-out.

Director Su Chih-yun (蘇正雲) has a degree in veterinary science, scriptwriter Hsu Mei-hui (許美惠) has a degree in social work and lead performer Li Pei-ying (李佩穎) graduated with a law degree and a master's in sociology. All three have achieved a strong track record in theater, most notably with

their production of *The Venetian Twins* (威尼斯雙胞胎), a modern *gezai* opera based on a story by Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni, at the Sixth Taishin Arts Awards (第六屆台新藝術獎) in 2007.

Formosa-Zephyr is the only non-professional *gezai* troupe with the resources to mount an original production from scratch. "There are some groups of young people who are trying to make a go of being *gezai* performers. We are distinct from the older generation, but want to carry on this local tradition," troupe director Yeh Mei-ru (葉玫汝), who graduated with a law degree from National Taiwan University and has dedicated herself to work in *gezai* opera for past last five years, told the *Taipei Times* in an interview last June.

In the case of *Murder in a Snowbound Inn*, Formosa-Zephyr aimed to explore a new format using *gezai* opera. According to lead performer Li, the group wanted to get away from *gezai* stereotypes in which the lead male is always something of a romantic hero. In this case, she said, there are no moonlit assignments and eternal partings, just the calculated pushing forward of a plot to discover who committed the murder. The sense of suspense that *Murder in a Snowbound Inn* creates is very different from judicial-themed operas, where the audience almost invariably knows more than the performers. Keeping the audience in the dark is quite a new departure for *gezai* opera, she said.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW

RESTAURANTS



The curry chicken and turmeric rice is a fancier twist on the usual Japanese curry at Danbo Fun.
PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Danbo Fun (蛋蛋屋新洋食館)

Address: 7F, 300, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (SOGO 復興館 · 台北市忠孝東路三段300號7樓)

Telephone: (02) 8772-1658

Open: Open from 11am to 10pm

Average meal: Meal: NT\$300 to NT\$400 per person

Details: English and Chinese menu; credit cards accepted

On the Net: www.zoe-grp.com/tamago; www.sogo.com.tw

Nestled in a corner on the seventh floor of Sogo Department Store's Fuxing branch, Danbo Fun (蛋蛋屋新洋食館) is a mid-priced restaurant serving Japanese-style curries and Western entrees in an unusually decorated but comfortable space.

The decor in this long, narrow corridor-like space has an odd charm, with a combination of 1950s colors, 19th-century grandeur and a sci-fi vibe. On one side of the restaurant are several large booths that seat four people each, shaped in a semicircle and upholstered in orange vinyl; on the other is a long cream-yellow booth sofa. Four large chandeliers hang on curved beams, a crystal-bead curtain dangles above the kitchen area, and neon lights glow and shift color from behind a tall curtain. Mirrors on the two-story-high walls make the space appear larger than it really is.

Danbo Fun is the upscale sister of Tamago Ya (蛋蛋屋), a small chain of restaurants that claims to be Taiwan's first establishment devoted to omurice (蛋包飯), the popular Japanese invention of fried rice stuffed inside an egg omelet.

Omurice features on the menu and is offered in combinations such as classic curry and breaded pork cutlet with salad (NT\$280), or for a little of everything, the "fried skinned" potatoes, salad, spaghetti and hamburger (NT\$300).

But Danbo Fun aims to offer more than just comfort food. Its "chef's recommendations" include roasted chicken leg with herbs, roasted vegetables and rice (NT\$320) and pan-fried salmon with risotto (NT\$380). The curry chicken and turmeric rice (NT\$320) was well presented, with the curry served in a small brass pot, and a side of roasted cherry tomatoes, snow peas, cucumber and pumpkin. The chicken was pan-fried and cooked in a sauce surprisingly light for Japanese curry. The rice was fragrant and prepared pilaf-style, with cooked onions, chopped mushroom and turmeric.

Danbo Fun's extensive menu also includes gratin dishes and pasta. One nice surprise was the penne with wild mushroom, bacon and tomato (NT\$260). The pasta had the right al dente texture and the sauce tasted freshly prepared.

Cheesecake (NT\$130) is a popular choice for desserts, staff said, but it was sold out on my last visit. The panna cotta (NT\$120) was rich and creamy, but doused in a caramel sauce that made it a little too sweet.

— DAVID CHEN



Dr Chicken is in the pot.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Lung Hsian Chu (龍涎居)

Address: 57 Longquan St, Taipei City (台北市龍泉街57號); 18, Ln 39, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路39巷18號)

Telephone: (02) 2368-4899 (Longquan Street); (02) 2363-7989 (Shida Road)

Open: Daily from 11am to 1am

Average meal: NT\$250

Details: Chinese and English menu; cash only

On the Net: www.g-soup.com

Chicken soup is an oft-prescribed remedy for the common cold, but at Lung Hsian Chu (龍涎居), the curative properties of this most humble of dishes go far beyond that. The chain restaurant claims its selection of soups, all made with herbs and organic chicken, improve blood circulation, increase energy, strengthen the stomach, spleen and kidneys, reduce swelling if you are feeling bloated and meliorate the skin.

But don't mistake Lung Hsian Chu for a pharmacy. Its broths are made with many of the same herbs found in traditional Chinese medicine but are nonetheless very palatable.

The concept is simple. You choose the broth first and then the kind of poultry, which determines the price of the dish. Options include common pheasant (山雞, NT\$120 per bowl), whose Chinese name translates literally into "mountain chicken" but is called "imitation free-range chicken" on Lung Hsian Chu's English-language menu, free-range chicken (土雞, NT\$150), black-skinned chicken (烏骨雞, NT\$170) and vegetarian chicken (素雞, NT\$160). The menu also features chicken hearts and gizzards (下水, NT\$30), as well as rooster testicles (雞佛, NT\$100), which are supposed to ramp up virility in men.

We ordered wild grape chicken broth (山葡萄雞) with black-skinned chicken and fleece flower root and chicken broth (何首烏雞) with free-range chicken. According to the menu, the wild grape chicken broth is good for the liver and eyes, helps regulate menstruation and improves blood circulation. The broth was mild but complex in flavor, its savoriness cut with a hint of sweetness. The black-skinned chicken was delightful. Chopped into thin, boned slices, the meat absorbed the flavor of the soup but retained its own hearty gaminess.

The wild grape chicken soup did not taste at all like medicinal herbs, but the fleece flower root chicken broth was another matter. It is made from the root of Chinese knotweed and had the very pungent bittersweet flavor often associated with concoctions from *zhongyao* pharmacies. Neither of us found the flavor objectionable, however, and we were encouraged by the fact that the soup is supposed to strengthen your body and improve your skin. The free-range chicken was somewhat bland when contrasted with the rich flavor of the broth, which probably would have been better matched with the black-skinned chicken.

— CATHERINE SHU

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

DEC. 19 TO DEC. 25

1 Khalil Fang (方大同) and *Orange Moon* (橙月) with 7.71 percent of sales

2 Stanley Huang (黃立行) and *We All Lay Down in the End* (最後只好躺下來) with 6.51%

3 Rachel Liang (梁文音) and *Poems of Love* (愛的詩篇) with 5.68%

4 Mayday (五月天) and *Poetry of the Day After* (後青春期的詩) with 5.47%

5 Da Mouth (大嘴巴) and *Da Mouth 2008 Album* (王元力口口) with 4.83%

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

All-girl industrial band **Go Chic** and emotronic/breakcore outfit **Dynatac** perform at **Underworld** (地下社會) tonight. Punks **Inhuman Species** (非人物種) and **Mr Dirty** play tomorrow, while emo-pop band **Emotion Gate** (情緒出口) and alt-rockers **The Fever Cats** (發燒貓) take to the stage on Wednesday.

► 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

► 9:30pm to 11:30pm tonight and tomorrow; 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays

► Entrance for the music shows is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink; shows on Wednesdays are NT\$100. Bar open daily from 8pm; closed on Mondays

Tomorrow **Bliss** hosts **Mixer T's** birthday jam, featuring "feel good jams and party tracks from every genre."

► 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

► Tomorrow at 10pm. Bar/kitchen

open from 7pm daily. Ladies night on Fridays; women get one free cocktail of their choice

► No entrance fee

Both established and aspiring Taiwanese pop musicians perform regularly at the **EZ5 Live House**. This homey pub and restaurant on Anhe Road, with a clientele that ranges from taxi drivers to prominent politicians, is one of the few places where people actually turn off their cell phones and listen attentively to the performers. The venue hosts three different singers every night. Recommended performers include beloved female crooner **Tiger Huang** (黃小琥), who performs two sets every Monday, and **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧), who appears on Tuesdays.

► 211, Anhe Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市安和路二段211號). Call (02) 2738-3995 or visit www.ez5.com.tw for more information

► Music shows run from 9:45pm to 12:30am

► Entrance fees vary, between NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer. Admission includes two drinks

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's a blues open mic, held by the Blues Society 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

► 8pm to 11pm every Wednesday

► No admission fee

Exhibitions

Black Friday — Jayne Dyer Solo Show (黑色星期五). For this installation Australian artist Jayne Dyer has made 3,000 black paper butterflies that cling to the walls, ceiling and windows of the gallery as a message of "nature in crisis."

► Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村), 7 Peiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號). Open Tuesdays through Fridays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 3393-7377

► Until Jan. 18

Bologna Annual Illustration Exhibition. The Bologna Children's Bookfair is one of the most important rights markets for children's publishers. In collaboration with Grimm Press,

Pethany Larsen Gallery is presenting works by four award-winning children's book illustrators, including Giuliano Ferri and Ariel Pand.

► Pethany Larsen Gallery (Pethany Larsen藝坊), 30, Ln 45 Liaoning St, Taipei City (台北市遼寧街45巷30號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11am to 8pm. Tel: (02) 8772-5005

► Until Jan. 6

Joint Exhibition by Wang Chisui and Lin Ren-hsin (文建會國外駐村藝術家王綺穗與林仁信雙個展). Promising young artists Wang Chisui and Lin Ren-hsin revisit Taiwan's culture, aesthetics and national identity after returning home from their residencies at Egon Schiele Art Centrum in the Czech Republic and Anderson Ranch Art Center in the US, respectively.

► Jia Art Gallery (家畫廊), 1F-1, 30, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段30號1樓之1). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2591-4302

► Until Jan. 14

One Hundred Years of Watercolor in Taiwan (台灣水彩100年). With 114 works by 53 local artists, this large-scale exhibition aims to provide a comprehensive review

of the development of watercolor painting in Taiwan. Works are divided according to style and period, with categories including "the First Generation of Local Taiwanese Artists" and "Masters from China."

► National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung (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. 22

Le Folauga — The Past Coming Forward: Contemporary Pacific Art From Aotearoa New Zealand (Le Folauga — 繼往開來: 紐西蘭當代太平洋藝術). A collaboration between Auckland War Memorial Museum and Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, this exhibition puts together art works that are representative of contemporary Pacific art in New Zealand, with the aim of promoting dialogue and exchanges among Austronesian communities in the Pacific region.

► Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (高雄立美術館), 20, Meishuguan Rd, Gushan Dist, Kaohsiung City, (高雄市鼓山區美術館路20號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Tel: (07) 555-0331

► Until April 5

