

POP  
STOP

Who is rigging the music charts and mocking those who play fair and square?

The story so far: Pop idol **Alan Luo** (羅志祥), also known as Little Pig (小豬), beats ABT heartthrob **Wang Lee-hom** (王力宏) and secures the top spot in G-music's sales charts. Wang's label, Sony BMG, strikes back and accuses Luo's label, Gold Typhoon (金牌大風), of cheating on the sales figures. To maximize the news value of its barb, Sony held a press conference calling for an "honesty movement" to eradicate corrupt practices from the music chart industry.

What intrigues gossip journals more, however, is Wang's conspicuous absence from the event that was held under his name. According to dirt dug up by *Next* magazine, Sony is far from the innocent bystander it claims to be.

Facing the prospect of losing Wang's contract should his album not triumph, the label's alleged attempt at buying off record retailers failed, and the sore loser put on a show of bravado in a desperate move.

Wang's no-show at the press conference was interpreted as a refusal to get involved in the "war of words."

Those who did attend couldn't be blamed if they felt used, especially **Jay Chou** (周杰倫). The Mando-pop king was the center of the attention at the confab. A couple of years ago he implied that **Chen Tse-shan** (陳澤杉), the celebrated music impresario, had knowingly manipulated the charts for his clients who include **Jolin Tsai** (蔡依林).

In other star-studded news, actress **Jessie Chang** (張本渝) is proving to be highly sought-after in the singles market following her split with B-list star **Ben Pai** (白吉勝), also known as A-Ben (阿Ben). Having recovered from an ailment that last month prompted two concerned males to offer their TLC services, the belle was spotted having lunch with top-drawer bachelor **Niu Chien-chiao** (牛建群).

Born to an affluent family that made its fortune in the textile industry, the 46-year-old businessman and designer is, apparently, a big player in the dating game. He reportedly had a short affair with former Mando-pop queen **Coco Lee** (李玖) and was one of local sweetheart **Patty Hou's** (侯佩岑) rumored boyfriends.



Wang Lee-hom, top, and Alan Luo's record labels are duking it out for Mando-pop chart supremacy.

PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

Niu is said to have had his eyes on Chang for a long time, and decided to make his move when the void left by A-Ben opened up.

Another celebrity who has a void to fill is **Jack Sun** (孫道存), the former chairman of Pacific Electric Wire and Cable. The practiced Casanova got beaten at his own game by **Chiu I-lin** (邱靜森). Previously a young model of little import, Chiu rose to the dizzy heights of the tabloid front pages after she was romantically linked with the gray-haired tycoon who is old enough to be her father.

As fame and job offers came her way, the fair maiden wasted no time in ditching her sugar daddy, saying she has no feelings for Sun.

Will she return the NT\$200,000 Cartier watch Sun gave her as a gift? "I wanted to, but was afraid that he might feel hurt if I did," Chiu was quoted as saying in the *Apple Daily*. Pop Stop thinks that sounds about as genuine as a NT\$3,000 "Rolex" procured in the back alley of a night market.

— COMPILED BY HO YI



Sons of Homer lead vocalist Brandon Thompson, whose band plays two shows this weekend in Taipei.

PHOTO: ALITA RICKARDS

## Sons of who?

Irreverent, tongue-in-cheek lyrics can be so distracting and amusing that the actual talent of a band is dismissed. With more exposure to the music, however, some bands stand out and stick in your mind. You realize that the irreverence can be, in itself, a talent, a skill, and often a path to honesty.

When I first heard Sons of Homer, I assumed that their name was a reference to Homer Simpson, or even a joking aside to Homer the Greek poet. In fact the name is an homage to their friend Homer Pastore. "He was a Filipino worker here. We were in a Taiwanese cover band with him," said vocalist Brandon Thompson. "Man he's an amazing guitar player, guy is like a juke box, could play anything, and if he didn't know it you could give him the MP3 and he'd go home and learn it. His contract ran out and he had to go back to the Philippines. Me, Andrew, and Stew were all in the cover band with him, and after he left his son died, and he never came back [to Taiwan]. We decided to call ourselves Sons of Homer, and then we went there [to the Philippines] to visit him and we brought him the CD, as a memorial to his son."

Guitarist Andrew Davis, bass player Stew Counce and Thompson have been together since 2007. "You lose a lot of momentum because you have the vagabond musicians, people always going home," said Thompson. Now the band includes a second guitarist, Jesse Helton, and drummer Greg Russell.

"It's good that we are all friends because it gives us the carte blanche to say whatever we want. We can say, 'I don't like this, let's change this,' without hurt feelings, no walls up, can take the piss — the greatest part is we'll all get behind whatever someone brings in," said Thompson. "The two guitarists, Jesse and Andrew, they wrote a song about making love to my mother that my brother hates. It's possible they wrote it as a compliment to me."

The band is scattered across the country, with members in Tainan, Ilan and Taipei. "Andrew starts recording down south, sends an MP3 and Stew will add bass, we send the music back and forth and add to it, then get together and play it [live] and give feedback."

They are hitting Taipei this weekend, playing at Bliss tonight and at Underworld tomorrow night.

"I love to interact with the audience," said Thompson. "The crowd seems to be very receptive to what we bring. Our songs are catchy, maybe sometimes too poppy

## PERFORMANCE NOTES:

**WHAT:** Sons of Homer with Stokey Pokey (tonight) and The Originals (tomorrow)

**WHERE AND WHEN:** 10pm tonight at Bliss, 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段148號); 10pm tomorrow at Underworld (地下社會), B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1)

**TICKETS:** NT\$200 admission for Bliss; NT\$300 for admission and one drink at Underworld

**ON THE NET:** www.myspace.com/sonsofhome

— we'll play anything to make people happy."

"New songs we're going to debut, a song called *Outside* — reggae with a bit of ska, been listening to a lot of Alton Ellis who died last October and Prince Buster who has good dirty songs ..." said Thompson. "My beef with reggae is that they're always talking about making love but never say what they truly want, but Prince Buster does it, talks about having sex openly, overtly, and this was in the '60s!"

Now focusing more on originals, there are "at about 16 completed original songs and another 20 that aren't ready yet," Thompson said.

The Sons of Homer repertoire ranges from 1970s cock rock and surf punk in songs like *Missile* to beat-poetry songs that tell a story like *Peyote Coyote*, which is about a man lost in the desert who sucks a cactus in desperation. Then there are their ballads, blues and pop tunes, and to top it off the multilingual *Night Market Blues* in English, Mandarin and Taiwanese.

They were one of the best expat bands of last year. "We've been really impressed with the crowds," said Thompson. "We had a show at APA [in Ximending (西門町)] and so many people had heard us on MySpace or YouTube that I didn't even have to sing. I could hold the mic out and the audience knew all the words. I felt like a real rock star."

— ALITA RICKARDS



Shiny Shoes Children's Theater rings in the New Year with its entertaining take on a Chinese legend.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHINY SHOES CHILDREN'S THEATER

## Beware the Year Monster

An ancient Chinese legend holds that a human-eating beast called the Year Monster (年獸) emerges from the sea to wreak havoc on villages every Lunar New Year's Eve. Deathly afraid of the beast — which in the popular imagination appears with a long head topped with a ferocious-looking horn — villagers would flee their homes to the safety of the mountains.

Shiny Shoes Children's Theater (鞋子兒童實驗劇團) revives the Chinese tale with its version *The Year Monster Has Arrived* (年獸來了). The family performance begins tomorrow at Taipei Cultural Center's Wenshan Branch.

As the tale goes, one year an old man appears in a village requesting shelter for the night. He claims to possess powers that can scare the frightening beast away.

But no one believes him and the villagers continue their yearly custom of fleeing to the mountains. The man, however, stays behind and hangs lanterns and red banners throughout the village. When the beast arrives, it is met with firecrackers that the old man sets off.

The lanterns' bright lights and the loud banging noises scare the Year Monster and cause it to flee. When the townsfolk return the following day, they find their village intact and their livestock still alive.

From then on, every Lunar New Year's Eve, villagers hang red banners, set off firecrackers and light lamps the whole night through, thus ensuring that the Year Monster stays away.

Shiny Shoes Children's Theater has gained a following among parents and children by incorporating contemporary acting techniques and music into age-old tales.

*The Year Monster Has Arrived* will be performed tomorrow at 7:30pm and on Sunday at 2:30pm at Taipei Cultural Center, Wenshan Branch (社教館文山分館), B2, 32 Jingwen St, Taipei City (台北市景文街32號B2). NT\$200 tickets are available through NTCH ticketing or online at [www.artsticket.com.tw](http://www.artsticket.com.tw). Sunday's performance is already sold out.

— NOAH BUCHAN

TOP FIVE  
MANDARIN ALBUMS

JAN. 2 TO JAN. 8

- 1 Fahrenheit (飛輪海) and *Love You More and More* (越來越愛) with 28 percent of sales
- 2 Alan Luo (羅志祥) and *Trendy Man* (潮男正傳) with 14.87%
- 3 Mayday (五月天) and *Poetry of the Day After* (後青春期的詩) with 13.11%
- 4 Wang Lee-hom (王力宏) and *Heart Beat* (心·跳) with 6.23%
- 5 Khalil Fang (方大同) with *Orange Moon* (橙月) with 0.7%

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC ([WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW](http://WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW)), BASED ON RETAIL SALES

## Theater

Tony-award winning musical **Smokey Joe's Cafe** makes its Taipei debut tonight. Director Brook Hall has changed the work slightly to suit local tastes and the show's 13 multi-talented actors all hail from Taiwan. Performances are in English with Chinese subtitles.

► National Taiwan Arts Education Center (國立台灣藝術教育館本部及演藝廳), 47 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路47號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$900, available through NTCH ticketing

**The Village** (寶島一村) takes a nostalgic look at Taiwan's veteran villages through the lives of three families, from 1949 to the present day. Television producer Wang Wei-chung (王偉忠) teams up with respected director Stan Lai (賴聲川) to produce a dramatic and humorous work about the communities that did much to shape modern Taiwan.

► Taichung Chungshan Hall (台中中山堂), 98 Hsuehshi Rd, Taichung City (台中市學士路98號)

► Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$400 to NT\$2,800, available through NTCH ticketing

Tickets for Godot Theater Company's (果陀劇場) much-anticipated Chinese-language production of Shakespeare's **Othello** (針鋒對決) are running out fast. The production features accomplished Taiwanese stage actors Lee Li-chun (李立群) and Chih Shih-chieh (金士傑). [See Page 14 of the Sept. 19, 2008, edition of the *Taipei*

*Times* for a review of the production.]

► Metropolitan Hall (城市舞台), 25, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$1,000 to NT\$4,000, available through NTCH ticketing

**Human Condition** (人間條件) by Green Ray Theater (綠光劇團) centers on the life of a 17-year-old girl who rebels against her dysfunctional family's listless existence. One day, the grandmother's spirit returns and possesses her teenage granddaughter.

► Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館), 505, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段505號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$3,000, available through ERA ticketing

## Classical music

**Ariel Sung 2009 Concert** (宋文2009台灣演唱會) features Canada-based soprano Ariel Sung (宋文) in concert with the Evergreen Philharmonic Orchestra (長榮交響樂團) under Gernot Schmalfuss. She will perform arias by Offenbach, Puccini, Massenet and Mascagni.

► Tomorrow at 7:30pm

► Hsinchu Municipal Performance Hall (新竹市立演藝廳), 17, Tungta Rd Sec 2, Hsinchu City (新竹市東大路二段17號)

► Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$2,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at [www.ticket.com.tw](http://www.ticket.com.tw)

**Serenade, Dance, Intoxication — Philharmonia Moment Musical with Wang Si-ya and Giuseppe Cataldo** (舞·夜·迷

## Highlight

**The Nanwan Sisters** (南王姐妹花), a trio of Puyuma singers from Taitung, appear tonight at 8pm at Eslite Bookstore on Xinyi Road (誠品信義店) for a free performance to promote their debut album, *Nanwan Sisters, Honey Voices* (南王姐妹花 中古美少女篇).

[See Page 14 of the Jan. 14, 2009, edition of the *Taipei Times* for a review of the CD.] The album, a mix of contemporary and traditional Puyuma songs, was conceived and produced by Golden Melody Award recipient **Pau-dull** (陳建年), who is a childhood friend of the group's members. Pau-dull played a variety of instruments for the album ranging from the double bass to accordion and wrote half of the album's songs in their native Puyuma language. Other selections include traditional wedding and party songs. Pau-dull, who works as a police officer on Lanyu (蘭嶼), is also scheduled to appear at the show.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN COLORS MUSIC

The Nanwan Sisters, a trio of Puyuma vocalists from Taitung, perform in a free show with singer-songwriter Pau-dull tonight at Eslite Bookstore's flagship branch on Xinyi Road.

- The Nanwan Sisters with Pau-dull, 8pm tonight at Eslite Xinyi Music Store (信義誠品音樂館), 4F, Esite Xinyi Store (誠品信義店), 11 Songgao Rd, Taipei City (台北市松高路11號)
- Entrance is free
- On the Net: [www.tcmusic.com.tw/cd/045/Default.htm](http://www.tcmusic.com.tw/cd/045/Default.htm)

online at [www.artsticket.com.tw](http://www.artsticket.com.tw)

**35th Yamaha Junior Original Concert** (第35屆山葉兒童創作曲發表會) is a concert for child composers and performers. Performances will be on piano or Electone, as solo pieces or with orchestral or choral accompaniment. More information, about this international event for children can be found at [www.yamahaks.com](http://www.yamahaks.com).

► Tomorrow at Chungshing Concert Hall, Taichung (台中中興堂), 291-3 Chingwu Rd, Taichung City (台中市精武路291-3號), and Sunday at Novel

Hall (新舞台), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號)

► Tickets for tomorrow are NT\$150. The concert on Sunday is sold out

## Contemporary

Tomorrow night at **VU Live House** the Dub Supervisors, a group of reggae bands and MCs, take over the house, with live music from **High Tide** and **The Originals**. Also appearing will be trip-hop musician **Ritchie Partridge**, formerly of **Massive Attack**, MCs Rankin Kim of **Pan Africana** and **Shaman** of

**THC**, along with DJs **Saucey**, **Ting**, **Katzu** and **Taili**. [See Vinyl Word on Page 15.]

► B1, 77, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1). Tel: (02) 2314-1868

► Show starts at 11pm tonight

► NT\$350 admission includes one drink

Tonight **The Wall** (這牆) hosts Scottish post-rock legends **Mogwai**, who christened the venue when it opened in 2003. [See story on Page 15.] Tomorrow's show organized by Back 2 the Future (B2TF, 回到未來) and featuring **Melt Banana**, an experimental Japanese noise-rock band with a large following in the US and Europe, has been canceled due to a bandmember's illness. Melt Banana plans to perform in Taipei later this year. Sunday's show, which features indie-rock groups **1976**, **Tizzy Bac**, **929** and **Orangegrass** (橙草), is already sold out.

► B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號B1). Call (02) 2930-0162 or visit [www.thewall.com.tw](http://www.thewall.com.tw) for more information

► Shows start at 8pm tonight and 8pm Sunday

► Entrance is NT\$2,800 tonight and NT\$400 on Sunday (sold out)

Tonight at **Witch House** (女巫店) indie rockers **Peppermint** (薄荷葉) take to the stage, while tomorrow it's **Ricepublic** (愛吃飯創作合作社), an acoustic group that combines guitar and bass with video presentations based on the theme of organic rice farming. On Thursday **Yujun** (榆鈞) will read poetry to the music of Japanese sitar player **Yo**, followed by indie-folk duo **U.T.A.** (屋塔樂團).

► 7, Ln 56, Xinsheng S Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市新生南路三段56巷7號). For more information, call (02) 2362-5494 or visit [www.witchhouse.org](http://www.witchhouse.org)

► Performances start at 9:30pm. Restaurant/bar with queer/feminist bookstore and large collection of board games open 11am to midnight Sundays through Wednesdays; 11am to 1am Thursdays through Saturdays

► Entrance for music shows is NT\$300 and includes one drink

Session guitarist **Mike McLaughlin** and bassist **Brian Chi** (邱培榮) perform original blues, jazz and funk compositions with a drummer and keyboard player tonight at **Riverside Cafe** (河岸留言). Mando-pop singer **Shen Tung-ching** (申東靖) makes his debut tomorrow night.

► B1, 2, Ln 244, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段244巷2號B1), next to Taipower Building (台電大樓). Call (02) 2368-7310 or visit [www.riverside.com.tw](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information

► Shows start at 9pm

► Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and NT\$500 tomorrow, includes one drink

Tonight at **Riverside Live House** (西門紅樓展演館) in Ximending's historic Red House Theater (西門紅樓), it's Mando-pop singers **La You-shi** (藍又時) and **A-pay** (阿霽). Pop singer **Victor Wong** (品冠) performs a "New Year's concert" tomorrow night.

► 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](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information

► Shows start at 8:30pm

► Entrance NT\$450 tonight and NT\$500 tomorrow, includes one drink