



Two venues lurking not so quietly in the shadows of Taipei's dance scene are Rank and DV8 (not to be confused with the bar of the same name near the terminus of Fuxing South Road).

Last Saturday, Rank, formerly Red Carpet, hosted one-off club night Frantic; its name derived from the week of rushed promotion between the party's conception and its advent.

The name may have changed in late November last year, but it seems little else, including the two-room basement setup, has.

However, for Frantic the main room's previous hip-hop focus went four-to-the-floor, while the second room was closed off completely.

"We had six DJs spread over six hours, we all did one-hour sets ... so the DJs were really energetic, really trying to show off their better tracks ... We did some techno, some electro and some tech house and the crowd seemed to get quite into it," said Saucy.

As for DV8, formerly Taiwan's "Bethlehem" of hip-hop TU, "The floor space is the same [as TU] but it looks fairly different," said Saucy, who'll be playing there next month. "They've got a really nice sound system, a pretty crazy LED visual at the back and they've got a really nice setup for the DJs. We're looking at doing a show there in March. A show called Interhouse that's going to be tech house and a little bit of progressive house."

But not everyone is as taken with DV8.

"It's exactly like every other club that existed in Taoyuan and a long time ago in Taipei, like in Ximending ... There used to be clubs like it all over Taipei," said Luxy resident Hooker. "It's just kinda like a throwback ... The music that they play there ... is kinda like a hard-house, Cantonese trance, really, really sped up and being played over 150 bpm (beats per minute)."

What about Rank?

"I don't think they have principles or vision for the music," said Hooker. "They'll do anything to bring people in. It's not a bad place. It's not a bad sound. But it doesn't seem to appeal to too many people."

As clubs come under increasing pressure with the economy nosediving and a sense of apathy spreading among the dance music crowd at large, innovation could take a back seat to lowest-common-denominator music.

The scene "seems less enthusiastic," Hooker said. "More jaded ... Maybe that comes with education ... Or maybe it's a reflection of the Taiwanese love for new things, and clubbing is not really new to them anymore."

For Saucy, more venues would provide impetus for dance music.

"It would be nice to see places in the middle of the city that are open to doing more live acts or alternative acts, like maybe a trip-hop night or drum 'n' bass," he said. "It seems like a lot of established clubs are sticking to hip-hop and some electronic music."

Rank, B1, 279 Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段279號B1). For more info, check out www.rank-club.com.tw (Chinese only). Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10pm to 4am. Call 0980-479-068 for more information and to make table reservations.

DV8, B1, 249 Fuxing S Rd Sec 1 Taipei City (台北市復興南路一段249號B1). — JACK HEWSON



Thomas Hu and the rest of Skaraoke play VU Live House tomorrow night. PHOTO: ALITA RICKARDS

Get ready, rock steady

It's a reggae night tonight with Unruly visiting Taipei from their home base of Kaohsiung where they have been making waves with their dry and heavy rock-steady tunes. Previously known as Uli and the Rulers, this group, with members of former Tainan-based funk ensemble the Mooks, has been playing at events like Mid-November Madness and Down South in December of last year. This will be their first show in Taipei.

Joining Unruly is Skaraoke, an eight-piece band with two vocalists, bass, guitar, drums, keyboards and a horns section that includes trombone, saxophone and trumpet for a full-on cacophony of sound. The musicians put on an energetic performance and have a dapper style. Their sound ranges from ska and rock steady to reggae, Latin, improvisational jazz and pop rock.

Finishing up the night will be Gregory Dion Russell in his newest incarnation as DJ Ting, a name he says "refers to the Jamaican pronunciation of 'thing,'" which he "ran with for years in New Zealand and it

just sort of stuck."

"Basically I'm just playing what I was listening to a lot in New Zealand. New Zealand is the second-biggest consumer of reggae music in the world per capita, behind Jamaica of course. I verge towards dub more than the traditional roots/lovers style although they are one and the same," he said.

Reggae fans in Taiwan will know Russell primarily as the drummer for High Tide, another popular reggae band on the island.

"Since playing in High Tide, which features all elements of reggae, I have seen that there is a love for the more sparse reggae style of dub," Russell said. He is also involved with the Dub Selector series with DJ Saucy from ESPDJs.

Tomorrow's show is from 11pm to 4am at VU Live House, B1, 77, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1). NT\$350 admission includes one drink. Call (02) 2314-1868 for more information.

— ALITA RICKARDS

RESTAURANTS

Osmanthus Farm (桂花農園)

Address: 4 Sinsingeng, Longsheng Village, Shihding Township, Taipei County (台北縣石碇鄉隆盛村新興坑4號)
Telephone: (02) 2663-4011
Open: 11am to 9pm
Average meal: NT\$400
Details: Chinese menu; credit cards accepted
On the Net: www.osmanthus.biz

Osmanthus Farm is located in one of the many nooks in the hills around Taipei that with a bend in the road seem to take you deep into the countryside. It is a scenic restaurant that allows visitors to sit on verandas and enjoy the view and the breeze during their meal, but it has the distinction of actually being an osmanthus farm, with food that draws heavily on its own produce.

The farm, which has a large orchard with over 700 mature osmanthus trees, serves up a menu of more than 20 dishes and 12 types of blended tea featuring osmanthus. This might seem rather monotonous, but in fact considerable ingenuity has been exercised in how the flower is used, creating a wide range of very different tasting dishes. Some of these are twists on conventional Taiwanese cuisine, while others were inspired flights of fancy. The most notable of the latter was the osmanthus honeyed tomatoes (桂花蜜番茄, NT\$50), a single peeled tomato sweetened with osmanthus honey and topped with the preserved flower. The bitterness of the tomato made a stunning combination. While the name of this dish had led me to expect something unusual, other items on the menu such as osmanthus drunken chicken (桂花醉雞, NT\$250) seemed perfectly conventional, aside from the addition of osmanthus flowers as a topping.

It was delightful to discover that the drunken chicken, with the faintest hint of Shaoxing wine, was one of the best I had tasted in terms of tenderness and subtlety of flavor; the topping of flowers was not simply tokenism, but contributed to the unique qualities of the dish.

The osmanthus honey tea (桂花釀蜜茶, NT\$150) had plenty of character, a herbal bitterness cutting sharply across the sweetness of the honey.

Osmanthus tofu wraps (桂花豆腐卷, NT\$150) were most notable for their clever use of tofu, a specialty of Shihding Township. Tofu mixed with minced shrimp, chicken and fermented osmanthus, wrapped in tofu skin and deep-fried, these unusual spring rolls were another splendid discovery. There was much else on the menu that beckoned for further visits.

The main dining area is rather dingy, in the manner of many mountain chicken establishments (土雞城), but pushing through you come to terraced verandas out back of the restaurant, which overlook the hills of Shihding and Shenkeng (深坑) townships. This area, though simply furnished with rough wooden benches and sunshades, is extremely pleasant. Service was fast and unfussy, and presentation was invariably elegant, though the use of disposable paper rice bowls somewhat spoiled the effect of refined outdoor dining.

Banquet menus are available, ranging from a "lover's feast" at NT\$780 for two, to a 12-person banquet for NT\$4,500. A wide range of osmanthus products, from teas and chips to soap and perfume, all locally made, are available. If you are not up for a meal, it is an excellent location for afternoon tea, which can be served, need it be added, with various osmanthus-flavored tea snacks.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



One restaurant, one flower, and a veritable feast of ideas.

PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES



Kaoru tickles the turntables at Rank.

PHOTO BY GRP, COURTESY OF KAORU

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS JAN. 23 TO JAN. 29

1 Fish Liang (梁靜茹) and *Fall in Love & Songs — Don't Cry for Him Anymore* (靜茹&情歌 — 別再為他流淚) with 23.67 percent of sales

2 Alan Luo (羅志祥) and *Trendy Man* (潮男正傳) with 11.55%

3 Cheer Chen (陳綺貞) and *Immortal* (太陽) with 10.49%

4 Fahrenheit (飛輪海) and *Love You More and More* (越來越愛) with 8.56%

5 Jacky Cheung (張學友) and *The Year of Jacky Cheung World Tour Taipei* (學友光年世界巡迴演唱會07台北場) with 3%

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

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Tonight at **Riverside Live House** (西門紅樓展演廳) in Ximending's historic Red House Theater (西門紅樓), it's **Color Band** and **Hsiao Hung-ren** (蕭闈仁). Tomorrow night popular indie-pop band **Tizzy Bac** takes to the stage.

► 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 starts at 8:30pm
► Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and NT\$500 tomorrow, includes one drink

Kate's Jazz Trio plays tonight at **Sappho de Base**, while New Orleans funk group the **Kenyatta Trio** appears tomorrow. Tuesday marks the return of the venue's open jam, led by the **Sappho House Band**. The **Jason Hayashi Jazz Trio** performs on Wednesday.

► 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

Tonight at **Bliss**, electro house, minimalist techno and disco punk are some of the sounds coming from DJ collective **Sinister Sound Syndicate**. Tomorrow is the Caribbean Sun Party, featuring Jamaican sound system **Black Reign International Sound** and **Pan Africana**, a drum ensemble of African and Caribbean ex-pats.

► 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 Fridays; women get one free cocktail

of their choice
► Free tonight, NT\$200 tomorrow

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

Both established and aspiring Taiwanese pop musicians perform regularly at the **EZ5 Live House**. This homey pub and restaurant on Anhe Road 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. House favorites include **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧), who appears on Tuesdays, and **Liu Wei-zen** (劉偉仁), who appears on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

► 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 fee ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer, includes two drinks

Tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar, Rubber Band** plays rock, pop and dance music. No bands are scheduled tomorrow as the venue will be showing English Premier League soccer live on TV. On Sunday there's an open acoustic jam.

► 1F, 56, Minquan 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 Road (復興北路) and Minquan East Road (民權東路). Call (02) 2517-3869
► Music shows go from 9:30pm to

12:30am tonight, and 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sunday
► No admission fee

Taking to the stage tonight at **Underworld** (地下社會) are **Sonic Deadhorse**, a one-man electro-rock band, and newcomers **Windmill** (風籜坊). Party crew **Back 2 the Future** (B2F, 回到未來) throws a heavy metal bash tomorrow, featuring live music from **Hardcase** and DJs from metal bands **Revilement**, **Bazooka**, **Infernal Chaos** and **Beyond Cure**.

On Wednesday it's emo-pop band **Emotion Gate** (情緒出口) and **Kenny From Casino** (賭場肯尼), a group that combines emo, punk, Brit-pop and garage rock.
► 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 tonight and tomorrow are from 9:30pm to 11:30pm and 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays
► Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink; NT\$100 on Wednesdays, which does not include a drink

Exhibitions

Exhibition of Calligraphy Works by Tung Yang-tse (沈默是金董陽秋作品展) displays the work of one of Taiwan's most highly regarded contemporary calligraphers.

► Esliet Art Space (誠品敦南店B2藝文空間), B2, 245, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (敦化南路一段245號B2). Open daily from 11am to 10pm
► Until Sunday

New Animamix (新動漫) features works by such renowned figures in Asian art as Yoshitaka Amano, from Japan; Kim Don Yoo, Kwon Kisoo, Eddie Kang and Lee Lee Nam from South Korea; China's Tang Zhigan (唐志岡); and Taiwan's Liao Yu-an (廖瑋

安) and Hung Yi (洪易). Also included in the exhibit are works by super-realist, post-pop artist duo Thukral & Tagra, from India. Animamix is an art movement that draws from the aesthetics of anime and comics.

► Metaphysical Art Gallery (形而上畫廊), 7F, 219, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段219號7樓). Open daily from 11am to 6:30pm, closed Mondays. Tel: (02) 2771-3236
► Until Feb. 28

Tree With Arteries — Su-Chen Hung Solo Exhibition (樹是有血管的—洪素珍個展) is a solo exhibition that investigates cultural and individual memory and the relationship between humans and the environment.

► Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, 台北當代藝術館), 39 Chang'an W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open daily from 10am to 6pm, closed Mondays
► Until March 12

Those wanting to gain a deeper understanding of one of Asia's oldest trade routes can check out **Legends of the Silk Road — Treasures from Linjiang** (絲路傳奇—新疆文物大展). The exhibit provides viewers with a glimpse of life in the ancient world by displaying 150 items unearthed along the Silk Road, including a 4,000-year-old mummified body of a woman in sandals known as the Loulan Beauty (樓蘭美女) and artifacts from the Tang Dynasty.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei (台北市南海路49號). Open daily from 10am to 6pm; closed Mondays
► Until March 15

Mind as Passion (激情心靈) explores the ideas behind art that is created using new media technologies such as video as well as two-dimensional and three-dimensional images. The exhibition features work

by 17 artists from Japan and Taiwan.
► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181 Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closed Mondays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656
► Until March 29

Lee Ming-tiao Photography Retrospective (李鳴鐸攝影回顧展). Lee is considered one of the foremost figures in the history of Taiwanese photography. The exhibit features Lee's black-and-white and color photographs and memorabilia dating from the Japanese colonial period up until the 1990s. His camera captured the anonymous, the rural and the poor at work, home and play.

► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181 Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closed Mondays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656
► Until April 5

Ancient Pottery of the Paiwan Tribe in Taiwan (組置的居所—台灣排灣族古陶壺特展) reveals how ceramics are closely associated with the legends of the Paiwan tribe's origins, and how pottery helps to perpetuate the tribe's social hierarchy.

► National Museum of Natural Science (國立自然科學博物館), 1, Kuanchien Rd, Taichung City (台中市館前路1號). Open daily from 9am to 5pm, closed Mondays.
► Until May 17

The God of Earth in Taiwan (台灣土地公特展) explains the origins of the Earth God (土地公) and why it continues to play an important role in folk worship throughout the island.

► National Museum of Natural Science (國立自然科學博物館), 1, Kuanchien Rd, Taichung City (台中市館前路1號). Open daily from 9am to 5pm, closed on Mondays.
► Until May 31



Peacock's popular beef carpaccio appetizer comes festooned with parmesan shavings, rocket leaves, lemon juice and salt and pepper.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Peacock

Address: 5, Ln 93, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路93 5號)
Telephone: (02) 3365-2997
Open: 6pm to 2am Sundays to Thursdays, 6pm to 3am Fridays and Saturdays, closed Tuesdays
Average meal: NT\$300 to NT\$500
Details: Chinese and English menu, credit cards not accepted

Located near the Shida night market, Peacock is known for its hookahs, thin crust pizzas and cozy, lounge atmosphere. Thanks to the new smoking regulations, the hookahs are currently on hiatus while Peacock awaits a shipment of nicotine-less tobacco, but everything else is just the same, including the popular covered porch, overstuffed sofas, eclectic wall murals, large selection of imported beers and special cocktails, and a menu that features dishes inspired by Italian and Indian cuisine.

Judging by the amount of chilled porcelain bowls being trotted out of the kitchen on any given weekend night, Peacock's beef carpaccio appetizer (鮮嫩生非力牛肉卡帕丘, NT\$250) is a customer favorite. The thin slices of raw filet mignon are bedecked with thick shavings of Parmesan, chopped rocket leaves, lemon juice and salt and pepper. The quality of the beef is always excellent, but the portion of carpaccio served seems to vary noticeably from night to night; if you are lucky, your plate will come festooned with a little rosette of beef slices.

Peacock's salads are served on a bed of butter lettuce, which is more satisfying and heartier than its insipid cousin iceberg lettuce. The fresh duck breast salad (鴨胸蘋果沙拉, NT\$160), with slices of cucumbers and apples drizzled in very tart balsamic vinegar, is a standout, but the caprese salad (莫札瑞拉起司蕃茄沙拉, NT\$160), with balls of soft mozzarella cheese, tomato slices and basil, is an equally delicious alternative.

The kitchen's thin crust pizzas are deservedly popular. The white flour crusts are light and crispy, the mozzarella creamy and the amount of tomato sauce calibrated just right for each different version. It is spread more thickly on the mushroom pizza (蒜味蘑菇, NT\$280) to counterbalance the pieces of soft, baked garlic next to the soft bites of mushrooms, while the sauce on the napoli (拿波里, NT\$280) takes a backseat to the pungent bits of anchovies, red onions and black olives. The margherita (瑪格麗特, NT\$250), with its bountiful sprinkling of fragrant basil leaves, is another satisfying option, particularly for vegetarians (who get their own section on Peacock's menu). For more variety, we recommend ordering the half-and-half (雙餅, NT\$320), which allows you to combine any two pizzas.

Premium wines are available by the glass or bottle, but we ordered a glass each of Peacock's house red and white wines (NT\$180) to go with the carpaccio and a napoli pizza. The bar serves the wine properly, with the red at room temperature and the white chilled. The house wines won't blow you away, but both are pleasant enough despite their price tags.

If you are ordering one of Peacock's Indian-inspired appetizers or entrees, consider pairing it with one of the menu's lassi (tart Indian-style yogurt) drinks, which come plain with honey or salt (NT\$120) or flavored with banana, tomato, lemon, apple or mango (during the summer) for NT\$150.

— CATHERINE SHU