For those in the business of singing about love, Valentine's Day is likely to be more business than love. Stuck in Beijing for a television appearance last Saturday, pop singer A-mei (張 惠妹) wasn't able to celebrate Valentine's with her beau,

Super Basketball League star Sam Ho (何守正), reports The

Liberty Times, the Taipei

Times' sister newspaper. During the taping of the Chinese program, A-mei was asked what her ideal Valentine's would be: "Two people spending the day together, of course." Perhaps that had the diva rushing to a midnight flight back to Taipei so she could at least make it in time for Ho's birthday, which happens to be Feb. 15.

Another beloved female songstress, indie singer-turnedstar Cheer Chen (陳綺貞), spent Valentine's dishing out love to Kaohsiung fans at a CD signing event by autographing 1,800 copies of her new album, Immortal (太陽). But Chen's boyfriend, musician and producer Chung Cheng-hu (鍾 成虎), probably didn't notice, suggests the Liberty Times. He was just as busy fulfilling his duties as manager for Chen's fellow star Crowd Lu (廬廣仲), who was holding a Valentine's concert of his own.

And there's not much love coming Jay Chou's (周杰倫) way lately, who has suffered a few "injustices" in the eyes of the Apple Daily. The paper reports that Chou and his mother got a bum deal on two luxury apartments totaling 260-ping (860m²) now under construction on Taipei's Aiguo West Road (愛國西路). Apparently the more than NT\$300 million they're paying is almost twice as much as former first lady Wu Shu-chen (吳淑珍) paid at the same building. To add fuel to the fire, pop singer Jolin Tsai (蔡依 林) has recorded a new song about suffering "betrayal from a boyfriend," which the Apple Daily presumes is aimed at the Chairman.

But Chou may have his mind on other things, like the silver screen. The *Liberty Times* published a rumor that Hong Kong action flick director Wilson Yip (葉偉信) wants to cast Chou as **Bruce** Lee (李小龍) in his next film. Chou's record company, JVR Music (杰威爾音樂), says it has yet to receive a formal invitation and the singer is



on Valentine's Day.

already committed to shooting

Malaysian-born, Taiwanbased auteur Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮) is back from Paris to promote his upcoming film Visages (臉), a film about a Chinese filmmaker who goes to the Louvre to shoot a film about a lurid biblical myth. At a press conference earlier this week, Tsai said the film, which was shot both at the Louvre and in Taipei, would be his "most controversial," according to the Liberty Times.

But the press were likely more dazzled by the presence of iconic French actress Fanny Ardant, who plays a film producer in Tsai's movie. Fresh off a plane, a tired and jet-lagged Ardant kicked off her heels during the press conference and said that despite the flight she had already been "conquered" by Taiwan's charms

Singer Harlem Yu (庾澄慶) remains tight-lipped about his apparently imminent divorce with actress Annie Yi (伊能靜), who was caught on camera holding hands with Victor Huang (黃維 德) last year. Yu dodged questions about the divorce at a charity event for Taiwan's Deaflympics cycling team earlier this week, speaking only of his bicycling habits as a spokesperson for the team: once or twice a week for two hours on mountain roads and unaccompanied by his son.

Taiwan's box office smash Cape No. 7 (海角七號) has finally crossed the strait and will be shown in theaters in a censored version with 30 minutes chopped out. The parts that were cut out contained ʻslang and vulgar language with a uniquely Taiwanese flavor," reports the *Apple* Daily. But no reason to fear for our "mainland compatriots" missing out on the good jokes — black market DVDs of the full version are available in China for 5 renminbi (NT\$25), says the paper.

— COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN



From left to right: Russell Allen, Michael Romeo, Michael Pinnella, Michael Lepond and Jason Rullo of Symphony X.

Symphonic tap

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

T eo-classical" is a term more commonly used in fine art and architecture than heavy metal, but this is one of the epithets ascribed to head-banging troupe Symphony X, which plays Jiantan Overseas Youth Activity Center (劍潭海外青年活動中心)

"I don't even know how I'd categorize ourselves, I just like to say that we're a metal band," says founding member and lead guitarist Michael Romeo. "Every album is always a little different. Early on maybe there was more of the neo-classical thing ... a couple of albums went a little more progressive, with a little bit of influence from some of those '70s bands like Rush and Kansas ... We'll use any kind of other influence we can just to make the music interesting."

Taking the interview by telephone from his hotel room in Hong Kong, Romeo sounds relaxed.

"The audiences have been great, everything's been really good," he says of this, the New Jersey ensemble's latest visit to Asia, where they initially had more success in generating a fan base than back home in the US.

"When we first started the band together in the mid '90s metal really wasn't popular in the States anymore ... Around town a lot of the metal clubs were going away, there really wasn't a scene," says Romeo, of a period some metal-heads refer to as the "evil grunge era." "The

WHAT: Symphony X, with Eternal WHERE: Jiantan Overseas Youth Activity Center (劍潭海 外青年活動中心), 16. Zhongshan N Rd Sec 4. Taipei City

(台北市中山北路四段16號) WHEN: Sunday at 8pm

TICKETS: NT\$1,000 to NT\$2,400 presale tickets, available online at www.rockempire.com.tw or by calling (02) 3765-1861; NT\$1,200 to NT\$2,600 tickets available through www.ticket.com.tw or at the door

ON THE NET: www.myspace.com/officialsymphonyx

more technical guitar stuff, I think they still appreciated everywhere else except the States."

And technicality is very much what Symphony X is about. Though making for a rather portly big-haired crew that wouldn't look out of place in a Spinal Tap sequel, the band's musical prowess is nothing to be sniggered at. It is, however, Romeo's simply boggling fret-board mastery that is the preeminent attraction. Widely respected as one of the most virtuosic soloists or "shredders" in the business,

the lead guitarist gives an insight into the dedication required to develop his astonishing musical dexterity.

"When I was younger ... I really got into guitar playing and Randy Rhoads, Van Halen, Steve Vai and Malmsteen and some of the really great guitar players. That's when I really practiced a lot ... I don't practice eight hours a day [anymore], but if I feel a little rusty, I'll go a couple of hours and then I'm back to where I was.

Touring in the wake of their seventh and most successful studio album, Paradise Lost, set lists are dominated by new material, but revelers can expect to hear older crowd-pleasers like Sins and Shadows or Sea of Lies. "Smoke and Mirrors is another song that always goes over well," says Romeo, who thinks guitarmusic fans of different walks could enjoy themselves this Sunday should they wish to indulge.

"[T]he stuff that we do does cross over to a lot of different things. I think people that like metal would like it, I think that people who like rock would enjoy it too. You know we're more of a rock band live ... maybe [we'll] goof around a little bit and have fun with the audience. So it's definitely more of a rock show.

For information about upcoming heavy metal concerts organized by Rock Empire Music Entertainment, go to www.rockempire.com.tw.

— JACK HEWSON

Hard-core hippies

Taiwan has few hippie festivals — the annual Peace ▲ Fest in Taoyuan County's Kunlun Herb Plant Tourism Garden (崑崙藥用植物園) and the new Earth Fest (地球藝 術節) are the two that come to mind — but now it has another: the Rainbow Gathering.

The first Rainbow Gathering, Taiwan started on Jan. 25 and continues through Wednesday in Taitung County's Dulan Township (都蘭村), a coastal village home to mostly Amis Aborigines and a few artists and musicians. Planned as a shared living experience in an alternative community, the gathering takes the hippie ideology to a new level.

"The goal is to identify the ways to live light, to have less of an [ecological] footprint, to identify where our products come from and to have less of an impact," said Chris Anderson, one of the organizers of the gathering, though he insisted there are no real organizers since the gathering is a communal effort.

Thousands of Rainbow Gatherings have been held over the last 40 years, starting in North America and spreading worldwide over the past decade. Some draw more than 30,000 people. They are typically in hard-to-reach places — but, being in Taiwan, this gathering is near a 7-Eleven.

Rainbow Gatherings have strict rules that participants will remind you to follow at every opportunity: no alcohol, all must eat in common and sit in a circle while doing so, no dogs, no meat and no cigarette butts in the fire pit. Attendees are also required to "leave [their] consumer addictions at home." Some of the rules are easily explained. Ash from the fires, for example, is used to cleanse dishes, and sometimes bodies.

I spent five days at Rainbow Gathering, Taiwan over the Lunar New Year. A typical day at the gathering goes something like this: People crawl out of their tents shortly before noon, waking up when the few early birds yell "food circle!" in unison, the cue that breakfast/lunch is ready. Attendees gather in a circle around the communal food and hold hands while singing a song about unity.

Still holding hands, they hum the Sanskrit word "om." Everybody is then invited to sit and eat, again in a circle. When the food is finished, someone takes up a guitar and walks around singing a song about the "magic hat" and how it keeps "our bellies full." This is the cue to make a cash donation.

After the singing and eating, a stickcouncil may or may not be held during which attendees, when holding a stick that is passed around the circle, voice their voice their opinions on what ought to be done

that day. This is how decisions are made: by consensus, although there is sometimes a good deal of whingeing.

After the stick council, each person volunteers their services or is suggested a task to perform. Tasks included cutting down the elephant grass that covered the site, digging toilet facilities, cleaning and cooking, collecting rocks, and building a sweat lodge. Around 6pm a dozen or more people call out "food circle!" signaling the final meal.

With no electricity, the only light as the day wanes is the fire pit, which naturally becomes the central gathering place. At night the party atmosphere picks up. Out come guitars, hand drums, flutes, didgeridoos and various improvised instruments. The music can be a cacophony of discordant sounds or a rhythmic jam that lasts all night.

Many Taiwanese who showed up were startled when greeted with the chorus, "Welcome home!" Some felt too uncomfortable to stay, calling those in the camp "hippie nazis" or "hippie fundamentalists." Of all the rules, the one Dulan residents found the most baffling was the alcohol ban. But some decided to give it a try anyway, and they seemed to have a good time. — TOM WALK

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: Rainbow Gathering, Taiwan

WHERE: Ask for directions at the Sugar Factory Cafe (糖廠咖啡屋) at Dulan Sugar Factory (都蘭新東糖廠藝術村), 20km north of Taitung City, at 61 Dulan Village, Donghe Township, Taitung County (台東縣東河鄉都蘭村61號). The campsite is a 45-minute walk from the Sugar Factory Cafe

WHEN: Until Wednesday evening **TICKETS:** Donations requested after meals

DETAILS: Bring camping necessities, a tent, cup, bowl, plate and eating utensils, change of clothing and all other essentials. No alcohol, dogs or illegal substances allowed

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS DEC. 26 TO JAN. 1

- Wang Lee-hom (王力宏) and Heart Beat (心 · 跳) with 22.62 percent of
- 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 9.67%
- Cheer Chen (陳綺貞) and Immortal (太陽) with 7.19%
- Fahrenheit (飛輪海) and Love You More and More (越來越愛) with 6.69%
- Wang Ruo-lin (王若琳) and Joanna and Wang Ruo-lin (Joanna&王若琳) with 6.03%



NTCH ticketing or online at www.

Children's Performance Art

Festival (台北縣兒童表演藝術節)

Six Art Theater Troupe (六藝劇團) is

staging carnival-like performances

tomorrow in Yingge Township (鶯歌

Dance Company (歐陽慧珍舞蹈團) will

perform in Wugu Township (五股鄉)

▶ Jianguo Elementary School (建國國

り), 2 Yuying St, Yingge Township,

Taipei County (台北縣鶯歌鎮育英街

2號); Teying Elementary School (德音

國小), 2 Minde Rd, Wugu Township,

Taipei County (台北縣五股鄉民德路

▶ Shows run from 1:30pm to 4:30pm

artsticket.com.tw

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Classical music

Tribute to the Masters — Haydn, Father of the Symphony (向大師致敬 — 交響曲之父,海

頓) sees quest conductor Hansjorg Schellenberger leading the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra (國立 臺灣交響樂團) in a program that will include Hayden's Symphony No. 13 in D Major, Oboe Concerto in C Major and Symphony No. 90 in C Major as well as Stravinsky's Suite of Pulcinella.

- ► Today at 7:30pm (Chiayi) and tomorrow at 7:30pm (Taipei) ▶ Concert Hall of the Chiayi Cultural
- Center (嘉義市政府文化局音樂廳), 275 Chunghsiao Rd, Chiayi City (嘉義市忠孝 路275號); Taichung's Chungshan Hall (台中市中興堂), 291-3 Chingwu Rd, Taichung City (台中市精武路291之3號)
- ► Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$800, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

NSO Young Maestro Series — Symphonie Fantasique (NSO **發現未來大師系列** — 幻想 交響) is a

concert by the National Symphony Orchestra (國家交響樂團) under the baton of guest conductor Fabien Gabel and featuring Jean-Efflam Bavouzet on piano. The program includes a piano concerto by Saint-Saens, Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major and Berlioz's Symphonie Fantasique Op. 14. ► Tomorrow at 7:30pm

National Concert Hall, Taipei City

► Tickets are NT\$400 to NT\$1,500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Four Seasons by I Musici (I Musici義大利音樂家合奏團) will see

the renowned ensemble under its leader Antonio Salvatore perform a single concert in Taipei including Vivaldi's Four Seasons and works by Roberto Granci.

- ► Thursday at 7:30pm National Concert Hall, Taipei City
- ► Tickets are NT\$600 to NT\$3,500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Taipei Philharmonic Chamber Society — Piano Trio (台北愛樂 室内樂坊 — 鋼琴三重奏) will present piano trios by two Russian composers, Anton Arensky and Tchaikovsky, at a concert in Taichung. They will perform the same program in March at

- concerts in Hsinchu and Taipei. ▶ Tomorrow at 7:30pm ▶ Taichung's Chungshan Hall (台中市中 興堂), 291-3 Chingwu Rd, Taichung
- City (台中市精武路291之3號) ► Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

The **Open-Air International Arts** Festival (兩廳院廣場藝術節) will kick off the Taiwan International Festival

(台灣國際藝術節) tonight at the NTCH plaza with free concert Video Games Live. French hip-hop dance group Kafig will take to the stage tomorrow along with Taiwanese street dance companies Turn Out and Black Angel Crew (黑角). Sunday is Taiwanese opera day with performances by acclaimed Taiwanese opera troupes including Shiukim Taiwanese Opera (秀琴歌劇團) and Guoguang Opera Company (國光劇團)

- National Theater Concert Hall Plaza, Taipei City
- ▶ Today from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, Saturday from 6:30pm to 9pm, Sunday from 6:30pm to 9:30pm
- ▶ No admission fee

Inaugurated in Beijing in 1996, the Chinese Drama Festival (華

文戲劇節) is hosted by a different Chinese-speaking city once every two years with the aim of establishing a platform for cultural exchange and communication. Beijing's People's Art Theater (北京人民藝術劇院) will open the seventh edition of the festival in Taipei's Novel Hall (新舞台) with the family drama Some Kind of Poison (有 一種毒藥). Macao Conservatory (澳門演 藝學院戲劇學校) will stage Find One to Fly to Mars With Me (找個人和我上火星) at Taiwan Cement Building's (台泥大樓) Concrete Hall (士敏廳)

▶ Novel Hall (新舞台), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號); Concrete Hall (士敏廳), Taiwan Cement Building (台泥大樓士), 113, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市中山北路

- 二段113號) ▶ Shows at both venues begin at 7:30pm on Wednesday (Novel Hall) and Thursday (Taiwan Cement Building)
- ▶ Tickets are NT\$500, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

Divine Performing Arts. The new York-based Chinese dance and music company that aims to breathe new life to the ancient Chinese art forms, brings to Taiwan its latest touring shows of lavishly presented classical

- dances, music and songs. ▶ Tainan Municipal Cultural Center (台 南市立文化中心), 332, Jhonghua E Rd Sec 3, Tainan City (台南市中華東路三段 332號)
- Friday and Monday at 7:30pm, Saturday and Sunday at 2pm and
- ► Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$5,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

The sixth installation of the annual Dance Shoe series, initiated by Kaohsiung City Ballet (高雄城市芭蕾舞 團) in 2004 to provide a platform for nurturing new talent, **Dance Shoe 2009 (2009點子鞋)** features works by

- six up-and-coming choreographers. ▶ Eslite Bookstore (台南誠品書店), B2, 181, Changrong Rd Sec 1, Tainan City (台南市長榮路一段181號 B2) ▶ Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm
- **Contemporary**

▶ No admission fee

Tomorrow night at **VU Live House** it's the Hard, Fast and Heavy Show, with screamo metal band Vanish. [In last Friday's edition an incorrect concert schedule was published for the venue. The *Taipei Times* regrets

- ▶ B1, 77, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1). Tel: (02) 2314-1868
- ▶ Show begins at 11pm
- Admission is NT\$400, all you can drink

► Tickets are NT\$300, available through Tonight **The Wall (這牆)** hosts emo act **Hindsight** (光景消逝) and pop-punk outfit Fire Ex (滅火器), with DJ Eddie getting things started. As part of the touring **Taipei County** Tomorrow night nu-metal band Respect (尊敬樂團) holds a concert to celebrate the release of their latest EP. On Sunday a host of indie bands

鎮), Taipei County. Ou-yang Hui-jun Art Sing (用筆來唱歌), Tin Pan Alley (錫 盤街) and Wangwen (惘聞) of China. ▶ 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.

perform, including Sorry Youth,

Shebang-a (死蚊子), Use Pen to

- com.tw for more information ▶ Starts at 8pm tonight and tomorrow, 6pm on Sunday
- ▶ Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow, NT\$800 on Sunday

Tango Negro, which plays accordion music inspired by Argentinean tango composer Astor Piazzolla, performs tonight at Witch House (女巫店). Tomorrow there's intimate acoustic music with **Ding Ding and Xi Xi** (丁 丁與西西). On Thursday solo act lan (芮唯) takes to the stage, followed by indie singer Huang Pei-yu#(黃培育). ▶ 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 ▶ 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 fee for music shows is NT\$300, includes one drink

Yellow Funky Stuff plays a fusion of jazz, funk and rock tonight at Riverside Cafe (河岸留言). Aboriginal pop-rock band and Golden Melody Award nominees **Totem** (圖 騰) take to the stage tomorrow for a "mini-concert."

- ▶ 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 for more information ▶ Shows start at 9:30pm tonight and 9pm tomorrow
- ▶ Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow, includes one drink

Appearing tonight at **Riverside** Live House (西門紅樓展演館) is

Mando-pop singer Chi Hsin-pei (季 欣霈), followed by pretty-boy pop-rock group Rock Oriental Express (搖 滾東方). Indie-pop artist Ciacia (何欣 穗) performs with a 13-piece backing band tomorrow night. The **Fen-Fens** (紛紛樂團) and indie-pop singer **Bibi Chao** (趙之璧) appear on Thursday.

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Shows start at 8:30pm
- ► Entrance is NT\$450 tonight, NT\$500 tomorrow and NT\$400 on Thursday, includes one drink