

FEATURES

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Fearless in hell

Tizzy Bac, from left to right: Drummer Lin Chien-yuan, singer Chen Hui-ting and bassist Hsu Che-yu. The band just released their latest studio album, *I'm Not Afraid of Demons If I'd Seen Hell*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WONDER MUSIC

Tizzy Bac, one of Taiwan's pioneering indie bands, has just released their latest album, inspired by the braveness of a child

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

"I was terrified," said singer and pianist Chen Hui-ting (陳惠婷) of one of her first experiences on stage with her band Tizzy Bac.

The venue was Spring Scream, Taiwan's first alternative music festival and college party haven, and for Chen and two fellow classmates at National Central University (國立中央大學), putting together a band and a set of songs back in 2000 almost seemed like an excuse.

"We weren't thinking of anything big, we just wanted to go to Spring Scream. So we wrote songs, sent a demo and then got in," she said.

The rest is history for indie rock in Taiwan. Tizzy Bac immediately stood out in a scene full of punks and metal heads — here was a band with a female vocalist and pianist that wrote all original songs, and decidedly did not have a guitarist.

And they still rocked. Since then, the trio's quirky mixture of synthpop and jazzy rock earned them awards, accolades and prominent gigs: they won Ho-Hai-Yan's battle of the bands in 2002, opened up for the Beastie

Boys at the Tibet Freedom Concert in 2003, and landed a spot at Japan's Fuji Rock Festival in 2005.

Tizzy Bac also appears to be one of the indie scene's more successful groups, regularly selling out at venues like Taipei's The Wall (這牆). Their label, Wonder Music (彎的音樂), declined to share the band's record sales figures, but a representative said that Tizzy Bac is a full-time job for the trio.

Chen overcame her stage fright long ago, but fear has returned as a prominent theme for the band. Last week, the group released its third studio album, *I'm Not Afraid of Demons If I'd Seen Hell* (8 · 我就不怕魔鬼).

The album title comes from the grammar homework of a 10-year-old girl who was the student of a schoolteacher-friend of bassist Hsu Che-yu (許哲毓). Hsu's friend thought the sentence was so "cool" that he told the band.

The fact that the girl wrote it on her own — the teacher had asked her to make up her own "If ..." statements — stirred the band's imagination. "For [her] to have written a sentence

like this, she must have a lot of personality, a lot of spirit," said Chen, during an interview with the *Taipei Times* at the band's studio in Taipei's East District.

To the band, the innocent bravery expressed in the title resonates with the album's themes. (Although the student didn't seem to care when told her homework would grace an album cover, according to Hsu).

"We hope to convey that if you have big problems in life, you can't run away from them," said Chen. "Perhaps you can learn to accept them. But don't be afraid because you'll definitely run into bad situations you can't hide from — this is the concept behind the album."

Many of Tizzy Bac's songs are vignettes on loneliness, alienation and love, and Chen says they draw inspiration from cartoons and films from pop culture. They named a song after a character from *The Simpsons* (*Sideshow Bob*, from their 2006 album *It's All My Fault* [我想你會變成這樣都是我害的]). Chen wrote the new album's title track after seeing a Korean horror movie and *Shall We Dance* after watching the 2006 film *Paris Je T'aime*.

Chen sings mostly in Mandarin, but often sprinkles English phrases and verses into many of the band's songs. But she denies aiming for a sense of exoticism.

"I think it's strange — when I write melodies, I feel that I can only use English — it doesn't necessarily have a meaning — but I'll [naturally] use English words to sing a melody out. Then I use Chinese to complete it," she said. "It's not that I'm great at languages, it's just that they have a useful function."

Chen put her French degree to use on a past Tizzy Bac project, *La Rose de Victor* (維克多的玫瑰), an EP of Chanson-style songs.

Even though Chen writes the lyrics, the three band members insist the songwriting process for Tizzy Bac is fully collaborative. When writing and arranging, the songs undergo a vetting process where they must also "pass the gates" of co-founder and bassist Hsu and drummer Lin Chien-yuan (林前源), who used to play with indie-pop band 13 (拾參) and joined Tizzy Bac in 2003.

The band says they still take a DIY approach to production, taking an active

part in the entire process from recording to final packaging of the CD.

And with *I'm Not Afraid of Demons If I'd Seen Hell* they feel more confident than ever as musicians. "When we recorded the album [this time], we went in knowing exactly how it was going to turn out," said Hsu.

"We're older, more mature ... we've grown on our instruments, and we're listening to more and more things. So now we can really use our instruments to express the emotions we want to express," said Lin.

For all the care and attention the band puts into their musical growth, do they consider their music like their children? "We are their children," says Hsu. "They created us. It's these songs that have created Tizzy Bac."

The band appears on Saturday at 5pm at Rose Records in Ximending (西門町), 1F, 52, Hanzhong St, Taipei City (台北市漢中街52號1樓) for a CD signing and short performance. For details visit www.tizzybac.com.tw

The *Taipei Times* review of Tizzy Bac's CD appears on March 25.



Mike Myers comedy *The Love Guru* and celebrity socialite Paris Hilton were top of the flops at the 29th Razzie Awards, the annual eve-of-Oscars salute to the very worst of Hollywood.

Myers' critically panned movie picked up three of the movie industry's least coveted awards — a gold spray-painted raspberry — which organizers say are worth a whopping US\$4.97.

The alleged comedy, about an ice hockey player who enlists the help of a mystic guru to help him turn around his professional and personal fortunes, picked up worst picture, worst actor for Myers and worst screenplay.

"At 88 minutes, *The Love Guru* would have benefited from a trim of roughly 80 minutes," was how the *New York Post* described the film, which the *New York Times* described as "downright anti-funny."

Yet Myers was rivaled in the Razzie stakes by celebante Hilton, who made good on her pledge to seek a lower public profile following her 2007 prison drama by appearing in two movies last year that no-one watched.

Hilton scooped up the worst actress prize for *The Hot Chick* and *the Nottie*, a movie which Britain's *Daily Mirror* decried as a movie "of monumental dreadfulness."

Reality television star Jade Goody wed Jack Tweed yesterday. The brash young British reality TV star whose ups and downs have captivated the UK is approaching her death from cancer the same way she has lived — on television.

PHOTO: AP

The hotel heiress also scored a rare double, winning the worst supporting actress Razzie for her cameo in *Repo: The Genetic Opera*, which was condemned variously as "awful, disgusting and insulting" — all in one review.

Hilton also added to her Razzie haul with the worst screen couple dishonor, again for her performance in *The Hot Chick* and *the Nottie*.

Other notable winners on Saturday included former James Bond star **Pierce Brosnan**, who picked up the worst supporting actor for his performance in ABBA musical *Mamma Mia*.

Final preparations for the Oscars were being made yesterday, with uplifting drama *Slumdog Millionaire* poised to romp home in the race for the coveted best picture prize.

The red carpet was being vacuumed and streets surrounding Hollywood's Kodak Theater were sealed off to the public with the 81st edition of the Academy Awards less than 24 hours away.

The build-up to this year's ceremony has been dominated by the Bollywood-inspired *Slumdog*, which has dominated other awards shows and is considered the overwhelming favorite for the best picture statuette.

Rags-to-riches British reality TV star **Jade Goody** yesterday got married, the latest installment in her very public fight with terminal cancer which has

enchanted and unnerved Britons in near equal measure.

Goody, 27, who found fame after appearing in the show *Big Brother* in 2002, wed fiancé **Jack Tweed** at a country house north of London. Tweed said he would wheel her hospital bed up the aisle if she is too weak to walk.

Her publicist **Max Clifford** said Saturday evening that she was feeling "unwell" after perhaps "overdoing it" in the last-minute preparations for her wedding, but is expected to be fit enough to go ahead with the wedding. Their big day — media rights for which have sold for a reported US\$1.4 — was organized in the nine days since Tweed proposed in hospital after her terminal diagnosis.

Goody has defended her decision to live out what will likely be her last weeks in the public eye, saying the money she earns will help provide for her two young sons, aged five and four.

"I've lived in front of the cameras. And maybe I'll die in front of them," the star, who has lost her hair after chemotherapy for cervical cancer, told last week's *News of the World* newspaper. "I know some people don't like what I'm doing but at this point I really don't care what other people think. Now, it's about what I want."

Amid reports that the boys' biological father is keen to play a greater role in their lives, Clifford said discussions were ongoing over who would look after

Goody's children.

Goody's approach has prompted an agonized debate in Britain about the rights and wrongs of such a public death.

Some commentators admire her fortitude and determination to protect her children.

Others, though, see something ghoulish in the volumes of newsprint devoted to her in recent days.

Police in Los Angeles were investigating Friday the leak of a photo that appeared to show the battered face of pop star **Rihanna** after an incident involving boyfriend **Chris Brown** this month.

The celebrity news Web site TMZ.com published the photo of R 'n' B star Rihanna with a series of clearly visible scratches and bruises.

Singer-songwriter Brown is alleged to have attacked the Barbados-born star after an argument in Los Angeles on Feb. 8 that led to Rihanna canceling a scheduled appearance at the Grammys.

Brown surrendered to police for questioning and was booked on suspicion of making a felony threat before being released on bail.

The Los Angeles Police Department said in a statement Friday that an internal investigation was underway and that anyone found leaking information could be sacked.

— AGENCIES