

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009

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Shots from the underground



Heavy social messages always get screen time at Urban Nomad, but the fest mainly showcases light-hearted content about the weird and subversive.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF URBAN NOMAD



Get yer Log on

Outrageous one-man band Bob Log III headlines Urban Nomad Film Fest's opening party tomorrow night

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

Punked-out blues, boob scotches and women bouncing on his knees while he plays guitar and drums at the same time — this is just another day in the life of Bob Log III.

The Tuscon, Arizona, native brings his rock 'n' roll madness to Taipei tomorrow night for the Urban Nomad Film Fest's opening party at Taipei's Paris Night Club in Ximending.

Full of bizarre, hilarious and possibly fictitious tales and a sense of humor worthy of *Spinal Tap*, Log is both one-man band and vaudevillian spectacle.

He plays a salvaged 1950s electric guitar, a kick bass drum with one foot, and a cymbal and electronic drum machine with the other.

On stage, he wears a shiny, full-body "cannonball man" suit and motorcycle helmet with a darkened visor (you can't see his face, but he says he can't see the audience either). He sings through a telephone strapped to the front of his helmet.

"I've been singing through telephones since 1990," he said in a mock serious tone on the phone from Melbourne, where he just finished a three-month tour that included stops in Europe.

"People say, dude, that's so strange, singing through a telephone. Then they talk on a telephone all goddamn day. Look! We're doing it right now, the telephone is perfect," he said.

And so is his music, says Log. His latest album, *My Shit Is Perfect*, carries his vision of the best things about rock 'n' roll: slide guitar, boobs and silly fun.

"I've got songs about absolutely nothing," he said proudly. "My newest song — *Bump Pow! Bump Bump Bump Pow! Bump Pow! Bump Bump Bump Baby! Bump Pow! Bump Bump Bump Pow! Bump Bump Bump* — there's no reason for that song. But when I play it, people jump around."

But Log's ribald numbers get the most attention. Before playing *Boob Scotch*, he invites audience members to dip their breasts into his whiskey (or their neighbor's drink).

For another show standard, *I Want Your Shit on My Leg*, Log calls on two audience members, usually female, to sit on each of his knees while he plays.

Judging from videos posted on YouTube, audiences in Australia, the UK and Japan have enthusiastically obliged.

However, fans generally draw the line at his song *Clap Your Tits*. "It's a very rare thing when somebody actually claps their tits with me. But it's happened," he said.

The songs and antics might be over the top for some, but Log stresses that anything that happens is between consenting adults. "People that come to my shows are the people that would think that's funny."

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PARTY NOTES:

WHAT: Bob Log III at the 2009 Urban Nomad Film Fest's Opening Party, also appearing are *My Skin Against Your Skin*, *The Deadly Vibes*, *Rock In Hose Burlesque* and *The Money Shot Horns*

WHEN: Tomorrow night. Films starts at 7:30pm, music starts at 10pm
WHERE: Paris Night Club (夜巴黎舞廳), 5F, 89, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段89號5樓)

ON THE NET: www.boblog111.com, urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com
ADMISSION: NT\$700, NT\$500 tickets available in advance at MolRelax, 20, Ln 60, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街60巷20號); KGB, 5, Ln 114, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路114巷5號); Bliss, 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段148號); Mei's, 16, Ln 37, Yongkang St, Taipei City (台北市永康街37巷16號); Nanhai Gallery (南海藝廊), 3, Ln 19, Chongqing S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市重慶南路二段19巷3號); Mary Jane's Pizza (台北市溫州街89號), 89 Wenzhou St, Taipei City

Bob Log III delivers his punk and techno-infused blues to Taipei tomorrow night at the 2009 Urban Nomad Film Fest's opening party.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB LOG III



FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: Urban Nomad Film Fest (城市游牧影展) **WHEN:** Through May 9

WHERE: Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號); Paris Night Club (夜巴黎舞廳), 5F, 89, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段89號5樓); Nanhai Gallery (南海藝廊), 3, Ln 19, Chongqing S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市重慶南路二段19巷3號)

ADMISSION: One-day tickets are NT\$200 or NT\$150 for students, NT\$750 for five tickets purchased in advance at the following locations: MolRelax, 20, Ln 60, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街60巷20號); KGB, 5, Ln 114, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路114巷5號); Bliss, 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段148號); Mei's, 16, Ln 37, Yongkang St, Taipei City (台北市永康街37巷16號); Nanhai Gallery (南海藝廊), 3, Ln 19, Chongqing S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市重慶南路二段19巷3號); Mary Jane's Pizza (台北市溫州街89號), 89 Wenzhou St, Taipei City. NT\$350 for the May 2 Sonic Youth documentary and band show. Free on May 3 for Filipino nationals

ON THE NET: urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com

Urban Nomad offers an inspiring mix of subversive spirit, raw creativity, alternative visions and films that address political and social issues and subcultures from different regions

BY RON BROWNLOW
STAFF REPORTER

Sonic Youth. Brutal backyard wrestling matches in suburban Southern California. American Indians getting kicked off their land — in the 21st century. Documentaries on these subjects are among the highlights of Urban Nomad Film Fest (城市游牧影展), which runs through May 9 at Taipei Artist Village, Paris Night Club and Nanhai Gallery.

Urban Nomad is an annual festival for experimental and digital film founded in 2002 by Taipei-based journalists David Frazier and Sean Scanlan. Much of the content is light-hearted shorts submitted by Taiwanese directors, while a significant portion of the international documentaries treat social and political topics. Each evening has two programs: a series of (mostly) Taiwanese shorts, and one international feature.

Last year more than 2,000 people attended Urban Nomad-related events, says Frazier, and the fest is becoming an important forum for young Taiwanese filmmakers, much as Spring Scream (春天吶喊) established itself as a rite of passage for up-and-coming bands, according to Tony Wu (吳俊輝), an experimental filmmaker and professor at Shi Hsin University.

"What young Taiwanese filmmakers do now is often very experimental," says Wu, whose films have been screened at each Urban Nomad since 2002 and more recently has helped produce festival segments. "Urban Nomad attracts young directors because most film festivals in Taiwan, such as Golden Horse and Taipei Film Festival, focus on narrative films and feature documentaries."

One of the biggest draws this year is *Sonic Youth: Sleeping Nights Awake*, a 2008 documentary about indie-music legends Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon shot by a group of high school students given complete access to a concert in Reno, Nevada. It will show on May 2 at Taipei Artist Village, followed by a concert with Golden Horse nominee KbN (凱比鳥), and again on May 8 at Nanhai Gallery.

Tonight's program at Taipei Artist Village begins at 7:30pm with *Here Comes Greatness* (2009), made by a couple of directors who spent seven years filming amateur backyard wrestling leagues in the Los Angeles area, where teenagers throw each other against barbed wire in makeshift rings littered with broken fluorescent lightbulbs and thumbtacks, and the blood and pile-drives are real.

Tomorrow's program combines the serious (political documentaries from Singapore, China and Hong Kong) and a panel on how Asian filmmakers hope to effect change, from 2pm at Taipei Artist Village) with the strange (*Heavy Metal Jr.*, a documentary about a preteen Scottish metal band and their parents, then a party headlined by "Mississippi delta punk blues" one-man band Bob Log III, at Paris Night Club from 7:30pm and 10pm, respectively).

On Sunday at Taipei Artist Village, *Wholphin* editor-in-chief Brent Hoff will talk about what he looks for in short films and how his DVD magazine is creating a market for them. Hoff's talk is at 3pm and will be followed by a viewing of *American Outrage*, which tells the story of elderly Shoshone sisters who have been fighting the US government and gold mining corporations over attempts to expropriate land from their ranch.

Also this Sunday: a Q&A with Hong Kong's Freddie Chan (陳浩倫) and a screening of his film about a group of citizen journalists detained by Japanese authorities en route to protest the 2008 G8 Summit. Rounding out the evening will be a nightcap of eight shorts.

And that's just the beginning. Check the Web site at urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com for comprehensive information in English and Chinese about the movies, bands and other events. All films at Urban Nomad are subtitled for English and Chinese speakers.

'Wholphin' fishes for the rarely seen

BY CATHERINE SHU
STAFF REPORTER



Wholphin is a DVD magazine of short films launched in 2005 by Brent Hoff and Dave Eggers, the author and founder of the literary journal *McSweeney's*. Shorts from the publication will be screened next week during the Urban Nomad Film Fest ...

... but wait. What exactly is a wholphin? The magazine's namesake is the extremely rare hybrid of a bottlenose dolphin and a false killer whale. Hoff read about the sea mammal in a science journal while working on the magazine's first issue and was immediately taken.

"I thought that there are these amazing things out there that nobody has ever heard about before. How many weird hybrids are out there in the ocean that we have no idea about?" says Hoff. "Seeking out these amazing, unseen things was what we were planning to do with the magazine, things that no one has ever looked for before."

"Television won't program [the short films] because they aren't exactly 22 minutes and movie theaters won't put them anywhere," he adds. "It seemed like the perfect name that symbolized what we were doing."

Published quarterly, each issue of *Wholphin* gathers short films, animation and documentaries from around the world.

The diversity of subject matter is evident on *The Best of Wholphin*. The compilation DVD includes documentaries about a group of Scottish preteens whose heavy metal band is co-opted by their stage-managing parents; a Yemeni girl who refuses to wear a hijab; and two Native American grandmothers locked in a struggle with the US government and gold mining corporations over control of their land in Nevada, a case which made its way to the UN.

According to an interview with the film's makers in the DVD's liner notes, the topic of the last film, *American Outrage*, had been explored by *60 Minutes*, but the news program's piece never ran because it was deemed too "political."

Wholphin, however, doesn't shy away from controversial subject matters. *American Outrage* will screen at Urban Nomad on Sunday and *Please Vote for Me*, in which a miniature democracy in a Chinese classroom runs askew, with hilarious and eye opening results, was shown yesterday at the festival's opening. In an interview with the *Taipei Times*, Hoff talked about some of these short films, as well as the importance of having an outlet for filmmakers.

Taipei Times: Can you tell me about *Please Vote for Me*? I haven't seen it, but I've read a little bit about it, and I think that it is something that audiences at Urban Nomad will find interesting.

Brent Hoff: Oh God, it's such an amazing, hilarious, exciting film. You will love that film. It's about a democratic election for hall monitor, which, as it turns out, is sort of a big deal, a bigger deal than something like student council president would be here in the United States. Very quickly, within five minutes, the entire class is bawling and there are dirty tricks, backstabbing, underhanded tactics — and these are all young kids. The very process of democracy has brought out the inner politician in these sweet, innocent students. It's so hilarious and just so incredible that, somehow, the system encourages this kind of behavior — any system of government, for that matter — and it is just really profound because of that, not to mention that it's also a very captivating film.

TT: I watched *American Outrage* and was really amazed that there hadn't been more attention paid to it, especially since the case made it to the UN.

BH: No, and it's still going on. This is an international issue, that mining companies pay money to get the land they want at the expense of the indigenous population. It's just a real shock to Americans to see that it's not just something that happens [in other countries]. While we are all busy trying to free Tibet, less than a hundred miles away there was a similar situation going on.

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