

## RESTAURANTS

## Darling Cafe (秦大琳私房菜)

**Address:** 2F, 34, Roosevelt Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路二段34號2樓) **Telephone:** (02) 2394-8587  
**Average meal:** NT\$200 **Open:** 11am to 10pm; closed Mondays  
**Details:** Credit cards not accepted; free Wi-Fi  
**On the Net:** darlingcafe.blogspot.com

Darling Cafe, a former art space located near exit No. 7 of the Guting MRT Station (古亭捷運站), looks like it belongs on a list of tiny hip restaurants serving Western-style food. However, with its all-day “brunch” and sandwiches falling short on quality ingredients, the cafe is little more than a fashion victim.

The omelet set (NT\$180) offers two choices for filling: cheese, mushroom, vegetables, bacon and ham, or minus the meat. It looked good — the focaccia was fresh and the omelet shaped in a neat pocket. But the side dishes were throwaways. The salad consisted of limp iceberg lettuce that tasted like it had been in the fridge for two days soaking in an overly sweet creamy dressing, and the tiny hash brown triangles were of the frozen variety. All might be forgiven if this were Dante Coffee — but at this price, it's inexcusable, even though the set also comes with corn soup and coffee or tea.

My dining companion wanted to like the meal, but halfway through decided that the omelet was too greasy and the salad wasn't worth finishing.

The Italian chicken sandwich (NT\$200 for a set meal) sounded appealing, but the focaccia was its only redeeming feature. The smoked chicken was unremarkable, and then, there it was again — soggy iceberg lettuce, this time lathered in sweet mayonnaise, accompanied by sliced processed cheese. You're better off just ordering the bread.

Other brunch items on the menu included bagels with eggs or quiche for NT\$180 each for the set menu, which includes soup, salad and coffee, tea or a soft drink.

There's also a selection of Chinese food, which looks overpriced, especially given the “value” you get from the brunches. The menu recommends “fry the sauce” noodles, or zhajiang mian (炸醬麵, NT\$180) and braised pettites — pig knuckle — and rice (精緻琥珀豬腳飯, NT\$240). Sides include assorted vegetables, coffee or tea and dessert, which was green tea jelly on our visit.

Darling Cafe barely salvages points for its artsy but homey interior. The owners clearly put an effort into making the most of a small space — a long, narrow room on the second floor with linoleum tiles that look very 1970s.

The room has a modern vibe, with clean white walls and round mirrors and funky lamps hanging everywhere; there's also a hint of Shanghai-chic, with ebony tables and chairs contrasting with the bold red floor and ceiling.

The restaurant seats around 20 to 25 people, and there's also a bar with seating for individual diners, complete with vintage chairs that look like they once sat in a 1950s American diner.

The owners are clearly having fun with details like the purple rattan placemats that match the velvet cushions of a sofa bench, and designer tableware such as tilted soup bowls and oblong-shaped drinking glasses.

With the attention given to comfort and appearances, Darling Cafe could be a decent bistro. It's too bad the food doesn't match the design savvy.

If you must go, go for drinks and free Wi-Fi. Espresso drinks and hot chocolate range from NT\$80 to NT\$130. English style and herbal teas, which include Earl Grey, Assam and rose, are NT\$140 for a pot. There's also a selection of European organic beers, including Calvinus, Naturperle and Vollmond, at NT\$250 per bottle.

— DAVID CHEN

## Instant Noodles House (泡麵達人館)

**Address:** 2, Alley 19, Ln 283, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段283巷19弄2號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 3365-2375 **Average meal:** NT\$130  
**Open:** 11am to 11:30pm **Details:** Chinese menu

The Taiwanese love affair with instant noodles is a lifelong passion that begins early on. Bowls are gulped down in childhood with wanton disregard for the admonitions of health-conscious parents, provide sustenance for college students with small budgets and large appetites, and remain a familiar sight in many a household in later life.

No one ever made a restaurant business out of the convenient meal from a packet — that is, until the arrival of Instant Noodles House. While Taiwan boasts innumerable noodle houses, Instant Noodles House is the only one that literally serves packs of instant noodles. Now with four branches, including ones in Shida (師大), Taida (台大) and Gongguan (公館), the chain store is, according to its proprietor, frequented primarily by neighborhood college kids.

My dining partner and I visited the Taida branch on a weekend night. The joint may look like a makeshift hut on someone's front yard, but it is reasonably clean, cozy and well air-conditioned.

The heart of the establishment is its two shelves filled with instant noodles from Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan that cost between NT\$30 to NT\$60 per pack. After selecting a pack of noodles from these shelves, customers decide if they want to add a combo, of which there are four varieties of meat and/or vegetables. The restaurant then cooks the selected concoction and delivers a bowl of steaming noodles to the table. For an additional NT\$40 to NT\$130 diners can choose from a selection of vegetables, eggs, pork and beef, or order a glass of iced tea.

For a classic Taiwanese flavor, the President braised pork noodles (統一肉燥麵) is the perennial favorite among locals that long ago reached comfort-food status. Other options include Korean varieties, known for their spiciness, or Japanese types, recommended for their light taste.

For my late-evening snack, I chose the salt-flavored ramen from Nissin Foods, since it is, after all, the company's founder, Taiwanese-Japanese Momofuku Ando, who is credited with inventing instant noodles. My expectations weren't high: not only are instant noodles usually too strongly flavored, overly salty and greasy for my taste, in unskilled hands, the noodles can be undercooked and too crispy, or overcooked and too soggy. So I was quite surprised by a broth that was pleasantly light and noodles that were well cooked but still al dente. It helped that the extra greens and egg partially alleviated my guilt for consuming a meal high in sodium, fat and MSG.

Instant Noodles House also offers a few non-instant noodle items, including a braised pork rice bowl (冰糖肉燥飯, NT\$50) and a Japanese rice bowl (日式蓋飯, NT\$80) that comes with beef, pork and eel. The spicy stinky tofu bowl (麻辣臭豆腐, NT\$50), with stinky tofu, duck blood chunks (鴨血) and huakan (花干), or fried bean curd stewed in broth, is recommended.

Final verdict: the novelty of dining at an instant-noodle eatery alone is worth a visit to Instant Noodles House.

— HO YI

## ‘2012’: The end is nigh?



Each of the seven pieces in 2012 is based on one of the seven chakras, or energy centers, of Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOBIUS STRIP THEATER

energy points, which, according to Hindu and Buddhist Tantric beliefs, exist in the human body. In the simplest terms, the opening of these chakras to allow the free flow of energy is fundamental to health and spiritual advancement. The production will progress through separate pieces that represent each of the chakras. According to Liang, the production is a mixture of ritual and theater in which the line of separation between performer and audience will at some points be deliberately blurred. It will end with a U-Theatre-like drumming session.

This is the second major production by Mobius Strip in Taiwan, and Liang said that they are still learning to negotiate the byzantine complexity of Taiwan's arts funding organization.

Given its inexperience, the fact that the group has been able to book the underused Jingmei Culture Park (景美文化園區) for 2012 show is a remarkable and fortuitous achievement. The park, a former detention center for political prisoners, has received little publicity since its conversion to an art space in the manner of Huashan Culture Park (華山文化園區), largely due to controversy over its political associations. Questions have been raised in the media over whether the site should, as a memorial to those who suffered for democracy, be open to art performances, and also over whether the park should be called the “Jingmei Human Rights Culture Park.”

For a production that looks closely at issues dealing with the search for personal

liberation or some form of redemption in the run-up to the dawning of a new age, the venue seems remarkably appropriate. The guard towers, the razor wire and the stark concrete buildings that form the main features of the park strongly suggest the sense of imprisonment, often self-imposed, felt by individuals wandering through this world. — IAN BARTHOLOMEW

## PERFORMANCE NOTES:

**WHAT:** 2012 by Mobius Strip Theater

**WHEN:** Thursday to June 28 at 7:30pm

**WHERE:** Jingmei Culture Park (景美文化園區), 131 Fusing Rd, Sindian City, Taipei County (台北縣新店市復興路131號)

**TICKETS:** NT\$500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

**ON THE NET:** www.wretch.cc/blog/mstheatre



For the electronica team, there is only one route to Sunday morning in Taipei this weekend, with very little time for sleep. And for the serious party animals, a Vinyl Word challenge.

Tonight sees the second installment of Freakout, a “straight night” at Jump nightclub, which boasts a fabulous sound system and recently refurbished interior and is usually frequented by an eclectic gay crowd.

A fortnight ago was the big opening, but many prospective punters were put off by the six-day workweek. “It wasn't as busy as we would have wanted it,” said **Esteban “Mr Positive” Carballo**, one of the promoters alongside **Shaun Kidd**, **Andrew Gilberts** and **Jimmy Chen**, “but it still had a really nice vibe and as the first installment of this new night gave us the chance to check details again.”

With the gay and straight party crowd only overlapping slightly, throwing a night aimed at the latter at Jump is a calculated risk. To get a mix of all persuasions, “would be ideal,” said Carballo, “however, Freakout is an open-minded, gay-friendly straight night at what is usually a gay venue. Our first initiative to promote a night at Jump was because of the great space and the crispy clear loud sound of the club, not its sexual orientation.”

Carballo said since he last threw a party a year ago, “the scene has slowed down ... maybe because many of its members have grown up or because people are investing their money differently ... We want to bring that excitement back and make Taipei's club scene into what it was only one year ago and create a new scene.”

To launch yourself into this weekend at Jump prepare

for some top-class DJs. **F Dragon**, **Deborah and Wendy**, **Tiger**, **Stone**, **Jimmy Chen**, **vDub** and **006** will play a mix of tribal, minimal, dance rock and progressive.

Freakout is tonight at Jump, B1, 8, Keelung Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市基隆路一段8號B1) from 10pm until late. NT\$500 with a drink. Ladies get in free before midnight (members of the deadlier sex usually pay twice the door damage for men to get into Jump). On the Net: www.club-jump.com.

Oasis was first last week; now it's Havana's turn, and with that the pool party season has kicked off once again at Taipei Country Club. Matt Barker, chief promoter for Havana, formerly Summer Swank, begins his quest for the perfect pool party tomorrow, this spot being the second venue to dive into this weekend after tonight's do at Jump.

Barker now has bragging rights for being the first Taipei promoter to sign up **3b** and **Miamla** (formerly **Kriz**).

A huge welcome back, by the way, to these two who left Taiwan almost a year ago and recently returned to Taipei.

Following **3b** and **Miamla** will be Jimmy Chen — getting all horny (wait and see) after his set tonight — and finishing off hard is **SL** (劉軒), the connoisseur of deep house.

Havana Pool Party, tomorrow from noon until 9:30pm at Taipei Country Club, (台北鄉村俱樂部), 1 Qingyun Rd, Taipei City (台北市青雲街1號). Entry is NT\$250 for the ladies and NT\$350 for the boys.

The third stage of the weekend is a classic. After a day of schmoozing with stunning, shaven beauties with perfectly buff bodies, and their beautiful girlfriends, by the pool, it's off to the sweat-dripping-off-the-walls basement at Roxy Vibe for the venue's last ever night. No pressure on **Marcus Aurelius** as Vibe's final deejay. What Aurelius will choose for the last track is a closely guarded



You have been challenged to a three-party summer weekend, starting at Jump tonight.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIMMY CHEN

secret. How will he capture Vibe's essence in one set. Is it possible? Again, no pressure.

Roxy Vibe Farewell Party: The Last Stand tomorrow from 9pm until 7:30am at Vibe, B1, 155, Jinshan S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市金山南路一段155號B1). Entry is NT\$400.

The Vinyl Word challenge has been set. A three-party weekend beginning at 10pm today, finishing at 7:30am Sunday morning, and taking in the old and new along the way. If by that time, you can answer these three questions, then you'll be up there with the party legends: Was it possible to catch the best bits of Jimmy Chen and vDub's sets (both clash at 12:30am)? Why was Jimmy Chen so “horny” at the pool party? And what was Aurelius' last track at Vibe? If you find out the answers but forget them by Sunday night, however, you rank a little higher.

Vinyl Word takes no responsibility for sunburn, liver damage or beer-goggle shame come Sunday afternoon.

— TOM LEEMING

## [ EVENTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT ]

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** is an open mic session hosted by Jake Stanley of the acoustic duo **Stoked Pokey**. All are welcome to participate, and participants receive 20 percent off drinks.  
 ▶ 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  
 ▶ 8:30pm to 11pm every Wednesday  
 ▶ No admission fee

**EZ5 Live House** hosts Mando-pop singers backed by a live band every night. Highlights this week include **Huang Chung-yuan** (黃中原) tonight and male crooner **Hsing Lung** (辛隆) tomorrow. **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧), one of the venue's major draws, appears every Tuesday.  
 ▶ 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 (including two drinks) ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer. Call venue for exact fees

Taichung funk and rock-noir band **Point 22** (22) plays with **88 Balaz** (88顆芭樂仔) tonight at **Underworld** (地下社會). Tomorrow post-rock band **Collider** appears with **The Originals**. On Wednesday, it's punk band **Inhuman Species** (非人物種) and **Oh!Serena**.  
 ▶ 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  
 ▶ Shows 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 Wednesday

**Franz and Friends** (城市舞台藝文沙龍), an upscale restaurant and performance space in Taipei's East District, hosts music shows every night. The music tends to play it safe, ranging from wistful love songs and opera numbers to lounge jazz. Weekly highlights include **Denise Juan** (阮丹菁), a former pop singer turned piano teacher, television presenter and traveler, and her band **Sunshine Costa**. They play tonight. Tomorrow it's **Buona Sera**, a group featuring soprano **Chang Hsiao-ni** (張曉倪).  
 ▶ 25, Bade Rd, Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號B1). Call (02) 2579-0558 for reservations, or visit www.franzandfriends.com.tw for more information  
 ▶ Minimum charge of NT\$300 on Fridays and Saturdays; all other nights minimum charge is one drink

## Exhibitions

**Saint Anonymous** (微塵聖像—阿藍・陳志駒影像雙個展) is a dual exhibition by photographers Chen Chih-chu (陳志駒) and A-Lan (阿藍) that explores themes such as the material and spiritual, sacred and profane and good and evil.  
 ▶ Elsa Art Gallery (雲清藝術中心), 3F, 1-1 Tianmu E Rd, Taipei City (台北市天母東路1-1號3樓). Open daily from 1pm to 7pm, closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Tel: (02) 2876-0386  
 ▶ Until July 5

Lin Weimin's (林偉民) paintings question how televisions, computers, digital cameras and video represent

## Upcoming

Taichung partiers, who've been pulling out all the stops recently with trippy, matching day-glo caps at Sun Moon Lake, will be extremely excited about Beth Cox's latest Aphrobert party at new venue **Sudden Appearance Pub** (異軍突起). The theme is camouflage. There will be a large fake army tank outside the venue, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to help Iraqi and Palestinian refugees. This party has no curfew. The lineup consists of eight DJs, including new guys **Mr Blends** and **Bobby Bonestorm**, who play underground hip-hop and dub-step respectively. Drum 'n' bass, b'more, soul and funky house will also get a look in.  
 ▶ Tomorrow from 10pm until late at



All guns are blazing in Taichung.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BETH COX

**Sudden Appearance Pub** (異軍突起), 270 Wensin S Rd, Taichung City (台中市南屯區文心南路270號)  
 ▶ Entry is NT\$400 and includes one drink. Wear camouflage to get a free shot  
 ▶ To learn more about the problems faced by Iraqi and Palestinian refugees, visit photographer and filmmaker Kloe Picot's blog at www.hiddeninplainsightexhibition.blogspot.com

▶ Until July 12

**Between Dimensions — Li Hui Solo Exhibition** (維度之間—李輝個展) uses installation as a means of creating unique visual experiences. The artist combines modern materials such as LED lights, lasers and stainless steel to create a dreamlike world drawn from the transcendental ideas of Buddhism and Taoism.  
 ▶ Taipei National University of the Arts, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (台北藝術大學關渡美術館), 1 Xueyuan Rd, Beitou Dist, Taipei City (台北市北投區學園路1號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2893-8871  
 ▶ Until July 19

**X Beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space** (無中生有:書法 符號 空間)

truth in his solo exhibition **Flash** (Flash系列-1).  
 ▶ Capital Art Center (首都藝術中心), 2F, 343, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段343號2樓). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2775-5268  
 ▶ Until June 28

Self-taught artist Yu Cheng-yao (余承堯) updates the classical tradition of mountain and water painting (山水畫) in his solo exhibit **Among the Spirits of Heaven and Earth: The Best of Yu Cheng-yao** (與天地精神相往來—余承堯精選展).  
 ▶ Jia Art Gallery (家畫廊), 1F-1, 30, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段30號1樓-1). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2591-4302