

FEATURES

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Shooting for the stars

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the images of Clive Arrowsmith, photographer for the Free Tibet Campaign in Taiwan, could fill a library

BY ERIC SHIH
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Clive Arrowsmith snaps pictures of film directors Cheng Wen-tang (鄭文堂) and Wu Mi-sen (吳米森) standing in the middle of a Taipei photo studio forming a "T" with their hands. The shutter on the high-end Hasselblad camera clicks with each shot, the captured images showing up instantly on a large computer monitor in the corner of the room.

The renowned London-based fashion photographer spent a week in Taiwan in May to take pictures for a Free Tibet awareness campaign organized by Guts United, Taiwan, which culminates with a concert today in Taipei. Arrowsmith was also the photographer for the "T for Tibet" campaign during last year's Summer Olympics.

"To have Clive ... be the official photographer of all the campaign ... it means a lot," says the organizer of Free Tibet, Freddy Lim (林經佐), also the front man of the death metal band, Chthonic (閃靈). Having the same photographer for both, Lim says, links the drive for Tibetan freedom in Taiwan with the larger global effort.

Some of the other celebrities photographed by Arrowsmith for Free Tibet are singer-actress Enno Cheng (鄭宜農), writer Wu Yin-ning (吳音寧), SET-TV news chief editor and anchor Chen Ya-lin (陳雅琳), folk singer Panai (巴奈), and Chthonic, Aphasia (阿飛西雅), Kook (庫克), LTK Commune (濁水溪公社) and FireEx (滅火器).

Arrowsmith's photos for the campaign have since been posted around Taipei, with a large Free Tibet poster featuring Lim and his bandmate and wife Doris Yeh (葉湘怡) displayed at the Vieshow Cinema Square in Xinyi. The images have been broadcast on platform monitors at Taipei's MRT stations.

Arrowsmith is one of the few photographers

who take portraits of the Dalai Lama in an official capacity. He's also taken portraits of countless other celebrities over the past three decades. A longtime photographer for British *Vogue* magazine, he shot the Pirelli calendars for 1991 and 1992. A quick flip through a draft of his soon-to-be published book is like going through a who's who of the entertainment world.

Just a sampling shows actors Michael Caine and Helena Bonham Carter, musicians George Harrison and David Bowie, writers Hunter S. Thompson and Roald Dahl, naturalist David Attenborough and cooking show host Nigella Lawson.

Behind each of the photographs, Arrowsmith has a story to tell that illuminates the lives and personalities of his subjects.

He detailed the time he was commissioned to snap Prince Charles for his 50th birthday. Arrowsmith remembers putting on a lot of cologne because he was very nervous, causing Prince Charles to say to him, "That cologne you're wearing ... isn't it what old Italian playboys wear?" He said they had a laugh over that.

And the time he took a portrait of a smiling Yoko Ono in London. Arrowsmith said when he first started shooting she was just standing still. To loosen her up, he asked her to sing a song. She started singing The Beatles' *When I'm Sixty-Four* because, she told him, she turned 64 that year.

Or the time he took a photo of Liv Tyler wearing a diamond necklace for DeBeers. Arrowsmith says the company paid her in diamonds for the shoot.

Arrowsmith counts many of his celebrity subjects as his friends. He regularly plays guitar with Richard Gere and Paul McCartney calls him "Spike."

At the photo shoot in Taipei, it's clear Arrowsmith is efficient. He doesn't take long



Aboriginal folk singer Panai, above far left, post-rock outfit Aphasia, right, and neo-folk singer/guitarist Enno Cheng, below, were photographed by Clive Arrowsmith and perform at today's Free Tibet Concert.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLIVE ARROWSMITH

with each subject. Arrowsmith says it's all about capturing a moment when the picture, the person and the camera all get together. He says it's also about trying to put the subject at ease because if a photographer imposes his or her will on someone, "you can see the stress in their face."

And when asked what difference photographs make, Arrowsmith, a practicing Buddhist, gets passionate. He says he got a friend to sneak some of his photographs of the Dalai Lama into Tibet to distribute to monks and the photos are treasured. "Absolutely photographs make a difference in peoples lives," he said.

For more information about today's The 50th Spring: Tibetan Freedom Concert (西藏自由音樂會) in Taipei, visit the Web site www.freetibet.tw.



PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: The 50th Spring: Tibet Freedom Concert (第50個春天—西藏自由音樂會)
WHEN: Today from 1:30pm to 9:40pm
WHERE: Parking lot, A8 Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Xinyi Department Store (信義新光三越A8旁廣場停車場), 12 Songgao Rd, Taipei City (台北市松高路12號)
ADMISSION: Free
ON THE NET: www.freetibet.tw

SCHEDULE

1:30PM Kook (庫克)
2:10PM Enno (鄭宜農)
2:50PM 13 (密)
4:15PM Aphasia (阿飛西雅)
5:10PM FireEx (滅火器)
6PM Panai (巴奈)
6:40PM Message to the people of Taiwan from the Dalai Lama
6:55PM Dog G (大支)
7:55PM Chthonic (閃靈)
8:55PM LTK Commune (濁水溪公社)

[MUSIC]

Rock like the wind

Yearning for rock stardom? Even without musical talent, you can experience the rush and the glory of being on stage in front of a wild, cheering audience. Just pick up the one instrument that anyone can play anytime, anywhere — the air guitar.

No longer confined to the bedroom, where rock fans might have put on their favorite Cream record and pretended to be Eric Clapton, air guitar has become both a stage art and worldwide phenomenon.

Air guitarists have been congregating annually in Finland since 1996 for a world championship that boasts participation from countries like Australia, Japan, Kenya, Russia, the US, and now Taiwan.

The first annual Taiwan Air Guitar Championships, which had its first round two weeks ago in Kaohsiung, concludes tonight at Carnegie's in Taipei.

The winner receives a round-trip plane ticket to Oulu, Finland, to represent Taiwan in the world championship.

The Taiwan competition was born out of a late-night, drunken conversation between two expat friends, Bill Allen of the US and Todd MacMillan of Canada. MacMillan had just seen *Air Guitar Nation*, the 2006 film that followed two American contestants to the world championship.

"One of our first thoughts was: can we enter Taiwan in a world organization as Taiwan?" said MacMillan.

"Not that [Chinese] Taipei bullshit," said Allen.

It turned out to be easy, the two said, after contacting the championship organizers in Finland.

All they had to do was hold a national competition according to prescribed rules: contestants must play an "invisible" instrument on stage, and compete in two rounds, each lasting 60 seconds.

In one round, contestants play along to a song of their own choosing; in the other round, a "compulsory song" is chosen for the contestants, who hear it only

Tonight Taiwan decides on its first ever representative for the Annual Air Guitar Championships in Finland

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

just before the competition.

The more Allen and MacMillan learned about "Air Guitar ideology," the more they knew they wanted to hold the contest.

"Their manifesto says the idea is, if everybody's holding an air guitar, you can't hold a rifle. So it's all for world peace," said Allen.

Everything else will be hunky-dory, too, according to the manifesto: "... all bad things disappear from the world and the climate change stops if everybody plays the Air Guitar."

The pair managed to get Nokia Taiwan to sponsor the winner's plane ticket to the championship, thanks to help from Finland's trade office in Taipei, Finpro Taiwan, which Allen said was "pumped" about the idea.

At its worst, an air guitar performance is cheesy and embarrassing. At best, it's still cheesy and embarrassing, but fun to watch as the participants go to great lengths to inspire a crowd as if they were really at a rock show.

A search on YouTube easily leads to renowned air guitarists like Craig "Hot Lixx Hulahan" Billmeier of the US — the current reigning world champion — and Ochi "Dainoji" Yosuke of Japan.

Yosuke, who was the world champion in 2006 and 2007, is a good example of how an air guitarist can play out the rock 'n' roll fantasy to the extreme.

At the 2007 world championships, he got into character by mimicking a rock guitarist warming up before a show. He adjusted the knobs on his amp (which surely

went up to 11) and gave instructions to imaginary roadies standing on the side of the stage, eliciting laughter from the crowd.

As soon as the song started (The Offspring's *Come Out and Play (Gotta Keep 'Em Separated)*), the portly and nerdy-looking Yosuke transformed into a rock god with one leap into the air; he swung his arms and kicked his legs in perfect timing with the guitar riffs. The crowd clapped along and roared with approval.

Tonight's contestants in Taipei compete in two rounds. As with all officially sanctioned air guitar contests, a panel of judges scores each performance on a scale of 4.0 to 6.0 (which contest organizers often note is the same system as Olympic Figure Skating).

The criteria listed on Air Guitar Taiwan Championship's Web site are "originality, the ability to be taken over by the music, stage presence, technical merit, artistic impression and airness."

Up to 20 air guitarists compete tonight to decide the Taipei finalist, who then immediately faces off with the finalist from Kaohsiung, Scott "Indie Mayhem" Weatherall. The winner of that contest becomes the national champion.

While it's too late to register to compete for tonight's contest, aspiring air guitarists might take heed of Weatherall's advice on the "art."

"The essence of air guitar is that you're by yourself usually when you're doing it. So when I get up on stage, the crowd reminds me that they're there. But when I'm up there [on stage], you just gotta put yourself back in front of your mirror and that's when you rock out the hardest," he said.

Allen and MacMillan have advice of their own.

"Close your eyes and picture yourself in front of a million people and think about how you'd want to look and act, if you could be and do whatever you want. If you had one wish, and that was to be a rock star, what would that wish really be?" said Allen.

"Come to be a rock star," said MacMillan.



Scott "Indie Mayhem" Weatherall, right, won the Kaohsiung round of the first ever Air Guitar Championship in Taiwan. He'll be at Carnegie's tonight, waiting to face off with the finalist of the Taipei round. The winner will represent Taiwan at the World Air Guitar Championships in August in Oulu, Finland.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AIR GUITAR TAIWAN

Winning songs from past World Air Guitar Championships

CHOSEN BY PAST WINNERS:

- 2007 *Come Out and Play* by The Offspring
- 2006 *Are You Gonna Be My Girl* by The Jets
- 2005 *Medley* by Daft Punk
- 2004 *Eruption* by Van Halen and *Hot for Teacher* by Van Halen
- 2003 *Play With Me* by Extreme
- 2002 *Fell in Love with a Girl* by The White Stripes
- 2001 *Song 2* by Blur
- 2000 *Cross Hope* by Deuteronomium
- 1999 *Let There Be Rock* by AC/DC

COMPULSORY SONGS:

- 2007 *I Don't Wanna Stop* by Ozzy Osbourne
- 2006 *Who's Your Daddy* by Lordi
- 2005 *American Idiot* by Green Day
- 2004 *Walk Idiot Walk* by The Hives
- 2003 *Get Your Hands Off My Woman* by The Darkness
- 2002 *Last Nite* by The Strokes
- 2001 *Hash Pipe* by Weezer
- 2000 *Ace of Spades* by Motorhead
- 1999 *Locomotive* by Guns N' Roses
- 1998 *Are You Gonna Go My Way* by Lenny Kravitz
- 1997 *Smells Like Teen Spirit* by Nirvana
- 1996 *Smoke on the Water* by Deep Purple

The Kaohsiung Air Guitar Champ, Scott "Indie Mayhem"

Weatherall has enjoyed a fast rise to air guitar stardom since he arrived in Taiwan seven months ago. After winning the Kaohsiung round of the first ever Air Guitar Taiwan Championship, the 26-year-old Canadian will be at Carnegie's tonight, waiting to face off with the winner of the Taipei round. Here are some tidbits from a *Taipei Times* interview last week with "Indie Mayhem."

Taipei Times: What was your winning song in Kaohsiung?

Scott "Indie Mayhem" Weatherall: *I Believe in a Thing Called Love* by The Darkness.

TT: Were you nervous at the Kaohsiung competition?

SIMW: I'm going to have to say no — I wasn't nervous because ... I'm in the improv league here in Kaohsiung. So the last eight weeks, I've been performing on stage and making an ass of myself, so I was used to it at this point. I was more worried that the shorts I wear are really, really short — they're cut off jeans — so I was really more worried about exposing myself. If I was nervous about anything, I guess it was that.

TT: Do you play a real instrument?

SIMW: No, but I can play air drums.

TT: What was the first song you "air-guitar" to?

SIMW: *Ghostbusters* (by Ray Parker Jr.)

TT: Who's your favorite real guitarist?

SIMW: Angus Young (AC/DC)

TT: Why air guitar?

SIMW: It's a performance piece. You can have it anywhere, you don't need anything ... if you're on the street, if you're in front of the classroom, if you're on the bus, it doesn't weigh anything. Travel with it all over the world. It can be acoustic, it can be whatever you want it to be.

TT: What's your favorite move?

SIMW: I don't want to give away my secret move. But I'm going to say that I really do enjoy the Angus [Young of AC/DC] — the trot across the stage on one foot while playing ... I think of him when I'm doing it all the time.

TT: Describe the thrill of playing air guitar.

SIMW: I guess it would have to be like riding a sailboat, where you grab on and the wind just takes you, like the songs, and you go with it. You and the song become one and you just ride off, and it all works and you hit your marks when you hit your marks — it's all worth it to hear the crowd when you get those big roars.

TT: What kind of guitar do you play?

SIMW: I play, uh, a Fender Stratocast [sic].

TT: Any plans for a Taiwan tour?

Hey, I'm always open to any opportunity that comes my way.

TT: Do you have a message for your competitor in Taipei?

SIMW: Good luck, and bring it — bring the rock, make me step up my game. I don't want to feel like I just walked into it and got it, I want to feel like I earned it, so make me earn it, make me earn it.

(THIS INTERVIEW WAS EDITED AND CONDENSED)

EVENT NOTES:

WHAT: Air Guitar Championships Taiwan
WHEN: Today at 6pm
WHERE: Carnegie's, 100, Anhe Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市安和路二段100號)
Telephone: (02) 2325-4433
ENTRANCE: NT\$300 at the door
ON THE NET: www.airguitar.com.tw, www.airguitarworldchampionships.com