

## All change

From Aug. 5 the Features Section will sport a new look. The pastel shades are going and in their place will be bold, bright colors that present content in a more approachable format. We're rearranging the daily sections to form a more logical sequence, with art stories and art exhibition listings, for example, being published together on Wednesdays. The CD, technology, book and DVD reviews will run on Sundays rather than Wednesdays, and there will be new puzzles and new cartoons. If you have any comments or queries, send an e-mail to features[at]taipeitimes.com or find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/taipeitimes](http://www.facebook.com/taipeitimes) and leave a message.



What would you do if you won the lottery? Would you donate a quarter of the winnings (NT\$210 million) to charity like an anonymous winner did in Tainan last month? Or would you hide it from your family and friends so you wouldn't have to share?

That is the central conceit in Tafeng Musical Theater's (大風劇團) latest musical comedy *It's a Wonderful Life* (美好的人生), which runs tomorrow at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. The 21-member cast features some of Taiwan's top stage actors, including Wang Bosen (王柏森) and Huang Shih-wei (黃士偉).

Playwright Lian Yi-chou (連乙州) based his production on *Le Million*, a 1931 French film about a struggling artist living in a rundown garret who spends much of his time trying to find a lost lottery ticket and hoping to strike it rich.

*It's a Wonderful Life's* plot centers around four struggling artists — a conductor, playwright, costume designer and actress — who try to produce a play while barely making ends meet. They borrow money to keep their production, and dreams of fame, alive. But creditors soon come banging on their door demanding payment, right at the very moment

Wang Bosen, right, stars in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAFENG MUSICAL THEATER

## More money, more problems

one of the artists wins the lottery.

The remainder of the play investigates what it means for a poor person to strike it rich and how suddenly accumulated wealth reveals one's true character.

Will the winner share the earnings? Is the lottery a boon or will it destroy the already tenuous relationships of four close friends? Will their play ever make it to the stage? *It's a Wonderful Life* rises to a denouement that, although somewhat kitsch, offers a hilarious insight into how people deal with big wads of cash.

— NOAH BUCHAN

## THEATER NOTES:

**WHAT:** *It's a Wonderful Life* (美好的人生)

**WHERE:** Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館), 2F, 505, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段505號2樓)

**WHEN:** Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

**ADMISSION:** Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$3,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at [www.ticket.com.tw](http://www.ticket.com.tw)



Genetically Modified Beats.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EBEN PRETORIUS AND MATT SCHISM

enjoyable than sliding a hand on the turntable and feeling the track drop in sweet on the 4/4.

"Not in the slightest," said Schism. "If anything, we have more hands-on time now, as we're being able to create new tunes on the fly by mashing up other tracks, slicing loops and samples, which is a lot of fun and makes it feel like more of an art form."

"We think this is the future of live electronic music performances," said Pretorius. "It is no longer track for track as with this new medium you're able to create and play with a living electronic soundscape. If you can imagine it you can create it live."

As for Genetically Modified Beats' sound, it's hard to define, said Pretorius: "We play a lot of different genres out live — house, electro, breaks and techno. We wanted to bring the dirty electro, sawtooth bass line sound to Taiwan and I think so far we've achieved that goal."

After more than two years of getting to grips with Ableton Live, "we aren't DJs in the traditional sense anymore," said Pretorius.

Genetically Modified Beats has gigs lined up at Summer Aquarian and Lost Lagoon in Wulai at the end of next month. Live mixes are available from [www.gmbbeats.com](http://www.gmbbeats.com), and a new EP is in production.

— TOM LEEMING

"but as my skills increased I found that medium started to limit what I wanted to do ... I wanted to create more of a live performance, not just rinse and repeat, mixing track for track."

"I won't say it's better than straight up mixing," said South African Pretorius, "it just allows us to bring the creative freedom that we have in the studio to our live gigs. We spend hours programming our MIDI controllers so we can have complete control over every single aspect of the sound you hear us play."

Others, meanwhile, bad-mouth Ableton Live because of the lack of manual dexterity involved in using it to mix and say that DJs look like they're checking their e-mail when performing.

With vinyl or Serato, the DJ's hand to eye to ear coordination is of crucial importance — and is part of the show.

"Anyone who has seen us play already knows how involved we get in the booth," said Schism. "There is never a dull moment as one of us is manning the mixer, the other is handling looping and effects on the MIDI devices."

"We're both back and forth throughout the entire set," said Pretorius. "Actually the only time we're looking at the screen is to choose a track, loop and sample. Same as a DJ using Serato or any other laptop-based software."

Pushing buttons though, must be less



Vinyl is old-school and classy, while CDs are useful, but lack soul. Serato is cool, sassy and bridges the technological divide. What other DJ tool takes the best of these worlds and comes in a laptop-sized box?

Meet the thinking DJ's bit o' digital crumpe, Ableton Live, a software sequencer that is used for mixing, arranging and composing music.

"With Ableton we have endless possibilities at our fingertips," said Eben Pretorius, one half of Taipei-based Genetically Modified Beats, formerly Too Bad It's Not Tronic.

"Modifying tracks and samples on the fly, with our current setup we can take control of four channels on a club mixer," said Matt Schism, the other half of Genetically Modified Beats, "then loop, cut up, edit and sample tracks on the spot. We can apply effects and warp music to our liking and if we like an eight-bar loop of a track or a vocal stab, then we play it. We're not confined to playing the entire track."

For a DJ, Ableton Live's usability is a step up from mixing one track to the next. "For the first couple of years here, I was using CDs," said Schism, from Toronto,

## EVENTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

Singer and guitarist **Marine** (馬林), accompanied by a pianist, plays tonight at **Witch House** (女巫店). She opens for Amis singer **Hsiao Mei** (小美), who is part of Wild Fire Music (野火樂集), an Aboriginal artist collective.

► 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](http://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

► Admission for music shows is NT\$300

Tonight **Riverside Cafe** (河岸留聲) hosts percussion virtuoso **Rich Huang** (黃瑞豐) and friends. Taking to the stage tomorrow is R'n'B singer **Raymond Hu** (胡恩瑞), who goes by the stage name **N-RAY**, and pop pianist **Chen Hsi** (陳熙). On Sunday **Alto Madness** makes an appearance, and on Monday it's the venue's weekly open jam.

► 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](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information

► Shows start at 9:30pm tonight and 9pm tomorrow and Sunday. Open jam starts at 9pm (for a list of standard songs and ground rules, visit the venue's Web site)

► Admission is NT\$450 tonight, NT\$400 tomorrow, NT\$350 Sunday and NT\$150 Monday

All day tomorrow **Riverside Live House** (西門紅樓展演廳) hosts the 2009 Taiwan Original Music Awards (臺灣原創流行音樂大獎), a songwriting contest for both upcoming and established artists. Taiwanese rock legend **Bobby Chen** (陳昇) will hold a brief performance before the announcement of the winners. On Thursday renowned fingerstyle guitarist **Dong Yun-chang** (董運昌) appears with singer **Koumies** (寇繡). They share the bill with Golden

Melody Award-winning singer-songwriter **Debbie Hsiao** (蕭寶碩).

► 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](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information

► From 1pm to 7pm tomorrow and from 8:30pm Thursday

► Entrance is free tomorrow, NT\$400 on Thursday

Tonight is a warm-up party for the Music Terminals festival [see story on Page 13 and **Highlight** on this page], featuring two Chinese bands in the program, **Carsick Cars** and **White**. No shows are scheduled for tomorrow.

Taking to stage on Wednesday are **Hsia Ning-shan** (夏寧杉) and **Bitter** (阿彭).

► 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](http://www.upsaid.com/underworld) for more information

► Music shows run from 9:30pm to 11:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays and 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays.

Underworld is open daily from 9pm, closed on Mondays

► Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink, NT\$100 on Wednesday

**Jason Hayashi Quartet** performs tonight at **Sappho de Base**.

Tomorrow night it's **Jazz Friends**, who will be jamming on "unorthodox instruments." The **Double J Rock Band** appears on Tuesday. On Wednesday **Chris Stiles Jazz Trio**, which plays modern jazz including interpretations of contemporary Chinese pop, takes to the stage. On Thursday it's Belgian expat bassist **Martijn Vanbuel** playing ethnic folk and jazz trio **Orbit Folks**.

► B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1). Call (02) 2700-5411 (after 9pm) or visit [www.sappho102.biz](http://www.sappho102.biz) for more information

► Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends, 10pm on weekdays. Sappho is closed on Sundays and Mondays

► No entrance fee

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's an open

mic hosted by keyboardist **Andrew Page**, with the music mainly covering blues and jazz. All are welcome to join in, 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](http://www.cosmo.com.tw) for more information

► 8:30pm to 11pm every Wednesday

► No entrance fee

**EZ5 Live House** hosts Mando-pop singers backed by a live band every night. Highlights this week include pug legend and songstress **Tiger Huang** (黃小琥), who performs every Monday. **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧) is another major draw who appears every Tuesday. Male crooner **Liu Wei-zen** (劉偉仁) performs on Tuesday and Wednesday.

► Music shows run from 9:45pm to 12:30am

► Entrance (including two drinks) ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer

**Franz and Friends** (城市舞台藝文沙龍), an upscale restaurant and performance space in Taipei's East District (東區), hosts music shows every night. The music tends to play it safe, ranging from wistful love songs and opera to lounge jazz.

Weekly highlights include **Denise Juan** (阮丹青), a former pop singer turned piano teacher and television presenter, 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](http://www.franzandfriends.com.tw) for more information

► Minimum charge of NT\$300 on Fridays and Saturdays, on other nights there's a one-drink minimum

## Exhibitions

**Wild Aspirations — The Yellow Sheep River Project** (野想—黃羊川計畫) is an exhibition of picture books created by Chou Ching-hui (周慶輝)

## HIGHLIGHT

**Carsick Cars** and **White**, two of Beijing's most well-known indie bands, make an appearance tonight at **Underworld** (地下社會). Last month **Carsick Cars** released their second studio album, *You Can Listen, You Can Talk*, which is packed with carefully crafted pop tunes colored by explosions of shimmering guitar. It's a formula that earned the band the honor of touring Europe in support of Sonic Youth and won it a growing legion of fans in Beijing and beyond.

**White** was born when **Carsick Cars** guitarist/vocalist **Shou Wang** (張守望) joined forces with then-Hang on the Box drummer **Shenggy** (Shen Jing, 沈靜) to make music that escapes the traditional verse/chorus/verse format. **White's** sonic experiments consist of numerous disparate elements laid side-by-side. It's far less readily

accessible than the music of **Carsick Cars**, but equally influential on Beijing's underground scene.

► **Carsick Cars** and **White**, 9pm tonight at **Underworld**, B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1)

► Admission is NT\$300, includes a drink

► On the Net: [www.carsickcars.com](http://www.carsickcars.com); [www.whitebeijing.com](http://www.whitebeijing.com)



Carsick Cars play a show at Underworld tonight, before hitting Terminals Music festival.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CARSICK CARS

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— TAYLOR BRIERE

that merge photography and painting and examine the relationship between children and the physical landscape in which they live.

► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, open until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656

► Until Aug. 30

Yang Hung-kuo's (楊紅國) fantastical pastel-colored oil paintings depict a surreal and mechanized world in **The Ultra-Dimensional Adventures of Pets** (寵物們之超時空冒險). The paintings use animal imagery to personify and critique contemporary society.

► Dynasty Art Gallery (朝代藝術), 41, Leli Rd, Taipei City (台北市樂利路41號). For a viewing, call (02) 2377-0838

► Until Aug. 15

**Look Toward the Other Side — Song of Asian Foreign Brides in Taiwan III** (望向彼方—亞洲新娘之歌

(三)) is the third part of Hou Shur-tzy's (侯淑姿) series that explores through photography the lives of female foreign nationals who marry Taiwanese men.

► Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (關渡美術館), 1 Hsuehyan Rd, Taipei City (台北市學園路1號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2896-1000

► Until Sept. 20

**Li Shao-ming** (黎少明) and **Yin Yu** (尹蕙) combine Chinese knotting with jade artifacts from their personal collections to create new works of art. **Old Jades, New Inventions: An Exhibition of Ming and Yu's Creation** (古玉新飾:明&惠創作展) brings together 170 of these intriguing sculptures that were created over the past decade.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270

► Until Aug. 30

## RESTAURANTS

## Mini Second Floor Cafe (小貳樓餐廳)

**Address:** 73-1 Zhouzi St, Neihu Dist, Taipei City (台北市內湖區洲子街73-1號)

**Telephone:** (02) 2659-2058

**Open:** Mondays to Thursdays 11am to 9:30pm; Fridays to Sundays 8am to 9:30pm

**Average Meal:** NT\$400

**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted

**On the Net:** [2floor.yi-fe.com](http://2floor.yi-fe.com)

Nestled in a jungle of office buildings, Mini Second Floor Cafe is a small pocket of fresh — and reasonably palatable — air.

A miniature of the original Second Floor Cafe at 14, Ln 63, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段63巷14號), the Neihu branch is an anorexic four stories high. Everything is almost uncomfortably petite, but all the more stylish for it. Even glasses hold a mere 18 centiliters or so, demanding constant visits from an already busy staff, especially since refills for fresh-squeezed orange juice, soda or coffee are free.

The place has been decorated meticulously, from a hanging basket of paper towels in the bathroom to artful photos of the Eiffel Tower to shelves stocked with books and condiments lining three sets of stairs. Perhaps in contrast to the surrounding cityscape of dark granite and mirrored glass, visible through large street-facing windows, the restaurant's lime-green wallpaper and sparkly gold curtains are particularly charming. Elpo, our waiter, looked just as cute in a baby pink polo and coffee-colored apron, handmade nametag sporting bubble letters in magic marker.

The menu offers a decent range of American fare in portions that, looking around the room, don't match the restaurant's theme. I chose the smoked salmon salad with vinegar and olive oil (NT\$270). It should have been delicious: a bed of iceberg lettuce with slivers of carrot, onion and cabbage was encircled by a ring of baby tomatoes and egg slices, and topped by a perky coil of smoked salmon garnished with capers. Too bad everything was drenched in a sea of dressing that rendered all but the first bites too tangy. Saving the best for last was a mistake — I fished slices of limp salmon onto the dry rim of my plate, but its vinegar and olive oil bath had rendered the fish too pungent to relish.

My dining companion had the club omelet (NT\$230). When asked how it was, he replied with a shrug: "It's an omelet." Although described as club, the puffy yellow wrap tasted as if it contained only ham, and the standard corn, cheese and mushroom. The highlight of the meal was the accompanying steak fries and two fluffy slices of wheat bread toast dusted with garlic and butter.

For NT\$90, any meal can be upgraded to include the daily soup, bread and a drink.

All in all, the food and portions are decent enough that I didn't mind paying a bit more to enjoy the quaint atmosphere, or wouldn't mind coming back to try the open-air dining on the rooftop patio in less scalding weather.

— LAI AN-YU

## Alohas Restaurant (Alohas 野草餐廳)

**Address:** 3, Ln 138, Yanji St, Taipei City (台北市延吉街138巷3號)

**Telephone:** (02) 8771-5430

**Open:** 11:30am to 2pm and 5:30pm to 10pm

**Average Meal:** NT\$350

**Details:** English menu; credit cards accepted

**On the Net:** [www.alohas2008.com](http://www.alohas2008.com)

The Lohas movement, short for "lifestyles of health and sustainability," continues to generate plenty of interest among increasingly health-conscious Taiwanese, and has sparked the establishment of many restaurants providing healthy eats. Alohas, a relatively new arrival on the scene, sets off on the right foot with its airy and well-lit interior, giving it immediate appeal.

This is just as well, as the menu itself doesn't at first sight look particularly interesting or innovative, but having settled down comfortably at one of the tables around the spacious and immaculately clean open-plan kitchen, the atmosphere disposed one to be optimistic about the gratin vegetables and rice (NT\$220) and the French lamb stew and cheese with rice (法式起司嫩羊肩飯, NT\$260), two of 10 set menus on offer.

The bread basket arrived with thick slices of the restaurant's flax seed and rice bread (亞麻籽米麵包), which was not only unusual, but also extremely tasty. A large loaf of this bread goes for NT\$350 from Alohas' bakery, which also sports a range of other interesting breads using unusual or unprocessed grains. Staff were clearly motivated, and were happy to answer questions about the food on offer.

Given that the price of Alohas' set menu includes bread, salad and a drink, the portions are quite generous. And while Alohas is not breaking any new ground in either flavor or presentation, the food is tasty without being either oily or salty. The meat of the lamb stew was tender, though the sauce was a tad one-dimensional. The vegetables were crisp, and the rice, into which flax seed had been mixed, had the virtue of novelty. The vegetables with rice was a brightly colored mix of fresh vegetables over Alohas' flax seed rice in a tasty sauce that still allowed individual flavors to stand out. The topping of melted mozzarella cheese on both the lamb and vegetables was not particularly inspired from either an aesthetic or gastronomic perspective, an ill-considered attempt to add a recognizably European signature touch that, while emanating from a Western tradition, had made many concessions to Taiwanese taste. As with the flax seed rice, this is not necessarily a bad thing.

The menu has been given plenty of thought, with a nice balance between the different courses. The cold green tea that is available as part of the set menu is particularly excellent. The coffee was above average. A wide range of herbal teas (NT\$80 to NT\$100) are also on offer.

Apart from bread, the bakery also produces a number of sweets. The ubiquitous panna cotta (NT\$80), which has become the dessert of choice for lost-cost Western set menus, was in this case distinguished by the presence of real vanilla, and a yogurt cheesecake was deliciously light, with a hint of sourness that raised it above the usual coffee shop fare.

If you take the menu items at face value and walk in expecting authentic Western bistro food, you are going to be disappointed. Making allowances for Alohas' priority on healthy food over authenticity, and taking into account its price point, this restaurant offers up a very enjoyable dining experience and some delightful surprises.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



At Mini Second Floor Cafe the portions are anything but small. PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES



Allo Lohas. PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES