

POP

STOP

COMPILED BY HO YI



Jet Li did his part for typhoon relief last Saturday.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

More than 200 celebrities from Taiwan and Hong Kong attended large charity events held by television stations last weekend, all with the goal of raising money for the victims of Typhoon Morakot. Participating glitterati included **Andy Lau** (劉德華), **Leon Lai** (黎明), **Sandra Ng** (吳君如), **Chang Fei** (張菲), **Hu Gua** (胡瓜), **Shu Qi** (舒淇) and **Judy Chiang** (江蕙).

One of the weekend's most enthusiastic volunteers, Chinese action star-turned-philanthropist **Jet Li** (李連杰), accompanied aid workers from Taiwan's Red Cross Society on a visit to nine locations in Kaohsiung County on Saturday.

On a sadder note, Aboriginal star **A-mei** (張惠妹) lost both her uncle and brother-in-law to the typhoon in her hometown in Taitung County.

In the latest installment of the developing drug-taking controversy in Japan's showbiz firmament, police are reportedly investigating possible links between **Noriko Sakai** and her surfer husband **Yuichi Takaso**, both arrested for drug possession, and J-pop singer and actor **Manabu Oshio**, who was arrested on Aug. 3 on suspicion of drug use and has been connected to a 30-year-old woman found dead at an apartment in Tokyo's Roppongi district.

Oshio, 31, tested positive for ecstasy and admitted he had fled the scene after the unidentified woman, a bar hostess and his mistress of six months, took two pills and lost consciousness.

According to the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times'* sister newspaper), police suspect that Oshio, Sakai and Takaso are part of an intricate network of drug trading that involves big-name stars.

Wang Lee-hom's pen may be mightier than his sword.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

Other celebrities implicated in the snowballing scandal, according to *Tokyo Sports*, a Japanese daily, include actors **Hideaki Ito** and **Shinji Takeda**.

Following news that **Jay Chou** (周杰倫) has joined the cast of Michel Gondry's *The Green Hornet*, assuming the role of Kato alongside **Seth Rogen**, **Nicolas Cage** and **Cameron Diaz**, pop idol **Wang Lee-hom** (王力宏) revealed last week that he has been working on a film script for the past six months.

While keeping mum about the story, the first-time scriptwriter said that he will soon begin looking for prospective investors, as well as a suitable director to shoot the NT\$100 million movie starring none other than Wang himself.

When asked by the *Liberty Times* if he would make a better martial arts sidekick than Chou, whose English is less than fluent, Wang brushed off the question, saying: "I heard that Chou already began intensive English courses. He should do fine."

In local showbiz pseudo-news, *Apple Daily* snappers spotted divorcee **Annie Yi** (伊能靜) shopping for toys with her son at Breeze Center (微風廣場) last week. The paper printed a detailed account of the trip, gleefully reporting that the boy played with a toy sewing machine and read comic books for girls after being left unattended by his mother.

The concerned newspaper concluded that Yi failed as a mother by exposing her precious son to the danger of kidnapping.



PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Blue Man Group Megastar World Tour

WHERE: Taipei Arena (台北小巨蛋), 2, Nanjing E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市南京東路四段2號)

WHEN: Tonight at 7:30pm; tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

ADMISSION: NT\$400 to NT\$4,000, available through ERA ticketing outlets, online at www.ticket.com.tw, or at 7-Eleven ibon kiosks

ON THE NET: www.bluman.com; www.2009deaflympics.org

Three men walk into a stadium — and learn to be rock stars, all in one evening.

That's the basic story line behind the Blue Man Group's Megastar World Tour, which runs until Sunday as part of the 2009 Deaflympics' arts program. The musical theater troupe arrived in Taipei earlier this week and held an extra performance on Thursday afternoon, donating all ticket sales to the Red Cross for the victims of Typhoon Morakot.

The Blue Man Group, which features three bald and mute men covered in blue paint and dressed in black, has become a global franchise, with permanent shows running in Las Vegas, Berlin and Tokyo. They gained wider fame for their appearances in a series of Intel advertisements, and a tour with Moby inspired the group to step onto larger stages.

This weekend's performances take place in a setting suited for a megastar — the 10,000-seat Taipei Arena (台北小巨蛋), but the Blue Man's core character is still drawn from the group's roots as street performers in New York.

"The Blue Man just shows up some place and spends the next hour and a half trying to figure out what's going on," said



Megastar moves

The members of Blue Man Group entertain Taipei this weekend, as they learn to become rock stars in their Megastar World Tour performance. The group is performing as part of the official countdown to the 2009 Deaflympics.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUE MAN GROUP

Blue Man Group Director and performer Brian Scott, after a press conference in Taipei earlier this week.

"So with the Megastar tour, it's the Blue Man unwittingly thrust into the world of rock stars, but he doesn't really know what this rock 'n' roll business is really all about, because the Blue Man character is not a rock star."

The show both satirizes and celebrates the rock 'n' roll concert experience. The Blue Men, innocent and curious by nature, stumble upon a "how-to manual" that teaches them the basics of being a rock

star. They go step by step through the manual, which includes clinical instructions on how to gyrate their hips and lip-sync.

While the Blue Men draw laughter with their awkward attempts at becoming rockers, they impress audiences with their musicality. Backed by a five-piece band, the Blue Men pound out rousing, hypnotic rhythms on a variety of specially designed percussion instruments: PVC pipes, drums that spit out paint, and an old grand piano that's flipped on its side with the mallets exposed and is struck like a bass drum.

"There's an aesthetic to the music

that's tribal. It's very tribal but it has a modern vibe to it," said Scott.

And even though the group's Megastar show, its only touring performance, has a tighter script than its small theater shows, Scott says there will be some room for the Blue Men to engage in playful interaction with the audience.

Their quest to become rock gods often falls into parody, but at the end the Megastar show still carries all the elements of a great rock concert, said Scott. "It's a good vibe, it's the kind of thing that makes feel people feel closer."

BY DAVID CHEN

MUSIC

Rock 'n' relief

Another storm is brewing, but this one aims to ease the destruction and despair. A string of live music benefit events for Typhoon Morakot victims takes place this weekend in Taipei and Taichung.

Roxy Roots, located at 90 Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路90號), and radio station ICRT are holding shows at 10pm tonight and tomorrow.

Tonight's lineup includes Paiwan Aboriginal Matzka and his rock-reggae band DeHot and funk group Coach (教練). Black Reign International Sound spins Caribbean dance music afterwards.

Tomorrow features roots reggae favorites High Tide, ska-meisters Skaraoke, and Hoklo-singing reggae and dub group Dangzai Kongzhong (盪在空中). The evening ends with hip-hop, funk and reggae sounds from DJ Marcus Aurelius. On both nights there will be raffle prizes, which include round-trip plane tickets to Hong Kong and a 42-inch screen TV, with all proceeds going to Taiwan's Red Cross Society for its Typhoon Morakot relief fund.

The newly opened reggae and blues

club is suggesting a NT\$200 donation at the door for the Red Cross and will donate 30 percent of its bar revenues from both nights.

Bliss, located at 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北信義路四段148號), holds its fundraiser tonight at 10pm, featuring live music from rockers Killing Zoe and reggae outfit Taimaica Soundsystem. DJs Anti Hero and Marcus Aurelius will keep revelers dancing afterwards. Entrance is NT\$250 and all proceeds go to the Red Cross.

Tonight at 8pm, Capone's Restaurant, located at 312, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4 Taipei (台北市忠孝東路四段312號), hosts electric blues group Bopomofo (ㄅㄛㄇㄛ) and the Muddy Basin Ramblers, which plays vintage blues and swing. Capone's is donating 10 percent of its bar revenues and will hold a prize raffle, with all proceeds going to Red Cross.

Taichung's 89k, located at 21 Daguan Rd, Nantun Dist, Taichung City (台中市南屯區大觀路21號), starts its benefit tonight at 9pm with an auction and live performances from the European Jazz Ensemble, Bohemian, Russo, Point 22, Moss, Three Day Bender, Tyler Dakin and the Long



Skaraoke and High Tide are among a long list of bands performing at Typhoon Morakot benefit shows in Taipei and Taichung this weekend.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALYSON SCHILL

Naked Bottles and J and B. All proceeds from the auction and entry fee (NT\$300 per person) go to the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families (家扶基金會).

Can't make it out this weekend but want to donate? A list of non-profit organizations and details can be found at

www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2009/08/12/20093450951.

For a list of organizations accepting clothing and goods in addition to monetary donations, visit typhoon.adct.org.tw/donation/comment-page-1/ (in Chinese only).

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

Hi Cheeze

Address: 35, Ln 51, Da-an Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市大安路一段51巷35號)
Average meal: Most burgers and sandwiches are between NT\$190 and NT\$240
Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted
Open: Noon to 11:30pm **On the Web:** www.wretch.cc/blog/hicheeze

Hi Cheeze in Taipei's East District (東區) is just as precious as its name suggests, with two cute and playful store cats, a cute and friendly wait staff and cute burgers and sandwiches. But despite its cuteness (and the little smiley-face tater tot that comes with each dish), Hi Cheeze's cheeseburgers pack a tasty punch, with thick, juicy beef patties cooked just right and freshly baked buns.

The homemade hamburger (NT\$200), the menu's signature cheeseburger, comes stacked with a sunny-side up egg, warm melted cheese sprinkled with a bit of pepper and plenty of fixings, including the requisite lettuce, tomato, pickles and red onion. This combination of ingredients creates a messy culinary adventure well worth the yolk and mustard that will inevitably get all over your hands. The plate comes with fries, a couple of onion rings and the aforementioned happy tater tot. Other burger options include the deluxe cheeseburger, made with bacon (NT\$240), the Mexican hot pepper burger (NT\$220) and the blowing chicken (NT\$200), which is stuffed with fried chicken.

The sandwiches on the menu are also made with home-baked

bread and, though not as exciting as the cheeseburgers, are sufficient to satisfy diners with hearty appetites. Classics such as cheese and beef "carpaccio," bacon and cheese, and tuna salad melt and egg can be sandwiched in bagels, ciabatta or subway rolls. The beef carpaccio ciabatta is not made with raw beef, as its name suggests, but rather with a thin slice of roast beef cooked rare, stacked with sliced tomato, lettuce and cheese, and served with lashings of mustard. While the ciabatta pales in comparison to the homemade hamburger, it is undoubtedly a healthier option.

An even healthier option (relatively speaking) is the Caesar salad, a mound of chopped romaine lettuce lightly tossed with dressing and served with crunch, perfectly textured croutons, diced cherry tomatoes and (for the cuteness factor, perhaps) a sprinkling of raisins. Hi Cheeze also offers plenty of what it refers to as "good old American-style appetizers," including cheese French fries (NT\$180), spicy buffalo wings (NT\$180) and mozzarella sticks (NT\$150).

As evidenced by the huge "Happy Birthday" banner draped across the wall on Sunday night, the restaurant is a popular choice for celebrations, perhaps as much



Service with a smile.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

because of its extensive drink list as its burgers. Most cocktails are NT\$170 each. Beers available include Hoegaarden, Guinness (NT\$180), Stella and Erdinger (NT\$160). For teetotalers, the restaurant's delicious signature drink, No Idea (NT\$90), is a mixture of several kinds of iced tea and a whole lot of syrup, and resembles candy in a tumbler.

Hi Cheeze's comfortable decor riffs off of Americana kitsch, with old tin signs and advertisements adorning the walls. Wireless Internet and a shelf full of magazines encourage diners to linger, but the real stars of the show are the restaurant's two friendly cats. The elder fur ball, a two-year-old named Miumiu, and his younger ginger sibling greet customers at the door, subjecting all diners to a sniff inspection of incoming bags. Watching the cats' antics as they chase each other around the restaurant is enough to make for an enjoyable dining experience, even if Hi Cheeze's burgers weren't as delicious as they were.

The Greasy Spoon is a small cafe that serves a soul-satisfying burger in an unlikely place, near Wanfang Hospital (萬芳醫院) in Taipei's Wenshan District (文山區).

But the locale suits owner and area resident Jim Chan (吉姆) perfectly. The San Francisco native loves the neighborhood but decided that the restaurant choices, consisting mostly of non-descript cafeterias, and cheap stir-fry and fast food restaurants, needed a little more "color."

The menu appears to favor espresso drinks and teas at first glance, with just four burgers and two pasta dishes, ranging from NT\$200 to NT\$300.

But the food is definitely the star of the show, thanks to some homemade goodness and a little sweat. Chan says he heads to Neihsu every morning at 7am to fetch the day's ingredients at a fresh produce market and Costco, then rushes back to grind the beef and whip up hamburger patties before opening at noon.

The mushroom melt burger (NT\$250), topped with sauteed white and shitake mushrooms and sliced jack cheese, was so good the first time I ordered it again on two follow-up visits. The beef patties, about 1cm thick, have a hearty, brothy flavor

and are cooked medium rare, unless diners request otherwise. Chan says he uses USDA beef as opposed to Australian beef for its heavier bacon-like taste. The side of French fries was crispy and not too oily.

The burgers, which Chan calls "Texas-style," come as a towering mass of beef patty, lettuce, tomato and raw onion sandwiched between a tall, buttery bun. Managing the first bite was a bit of a challenge, but also part of the fun. Make sure to ask for extra napkins.

The restaurant's name aptly describes the food but is out-classed by the shop's interior, which has a minimalist gallery look: white walls, gutted ceiling painted black and halogen lights. Chan attributes his obsession with keeping things "simple and clean" to his military past — the 37-year-old is a US Marine veteran who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. A severe head injury from a friendly fire incident put him out of commission for several years and forced him to retire.

But maybe this also drives him to keep this 20-ping shop cozy and soothing. Ambient electronic or jazz always plays in the background, and natural light coming through wall-sized windows on two sides of the shop

The Greasy Spoon (格力鋸)

Address: 254, Xinhai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市辛亥路四段254號)
Open: Tuesdays through Sundays from noon to midnight; kitchen closes at 9pm
Average Meal: NT\$220 to NT\$440 **Telephone:** (02) 2932-9698

gives the space warmth And he even manages outdoor seating on wooden patio decks.

Chan says openly that he adjusts a few recipes for local clientele, such as the spaghetti with Bolognese sauce (NT\$200), which is labeled "meatball spaghetti" on the already-outdated menu. He would prefer to make it less sweet and does so on request. Nonetheless, his rendition tastes like a classic, and it's the rare instance in Taiwan where one finds fresh celery and carrot properly cooked in a Bolognese sauce.

Another concession to local customs to look out for: the burgers come already loaded with toppings and condiments like ketchup for the burgers and a zesty wasabe-mayonnaise in the case of the teriyaki chicken burger (NT\$300). Those who don't like surprises should advise the wait staff, who are supposed to ask but unfortunately never asked me.

The Greasy Spoon is located near the southeast corner of the intersection of Xinhai (辛亥) and Xinglong (興隆) roads.



The Greasy Spoon's bacon cheeseburger is a welcome find in Muzha.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

TIDBITS

Baking bread at home — it's enough to fill culinary novices with dread. Ikea takes the pain out of *pain* with its Swedish Rye Bread mix, which retails for NT\$150. "Just add water," the Web site says. Tidbits took some for a spin.

The mix comes in a carton, to which warm water is added, and then shaken. The carton shakers at Ikea must be Olympians, as after three attempts globs of unmixed flour stuck to the corners. Far easier to plop the lot into a glass bowl for a thorough mix through.

Next, let it rise. Left to its own devices in the carton, the rise wasn't much of one. For superior results, put the bowl in the oven at 50°C. And finally the baking. The instructions call for a greased loaf tin — a 12-inch by 5-inch one works well. But if left uncovered, a thick crust develops, which makes the loaf difficult to cut. To avoid this, cover the tin with aluminum foil. The result: freshly baked, nutty rye bread, with no artificial additives or preservatives, a glow of satisfaction and a home filled with a wholesome aroma.

The lesson learned: recipes are made to be broken.

In next week's Around Town, we review Hook, a restaurant and bar on Zhongxiao East Road (忠孝東路) that specializes in hot dogs, and Barefoot Beach Bar in Baishawan (白沙灣).