

POP

STOP

COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN

BY MARCUS AURELIUS

MUSIC

One secret marriage led to another for Hong Kong heartthrob **Andy Lau** (劉德華).

After the news broke last Saturday of his under-the-radar Las Vegas wedding to long-rumored sweetheart **Carol Choo** (朱麗倩) in June, Lau admitted to having signed a nuptial agreement/marriage contract (結婚證書) with Taiwanese actress **Yu Ke-hsin** (喻可欣) back in the 1980s.

The agreement, however, is not legally binding as the marriage was neither officially registered nor was it celebrated publicly. But that hasn't stopped Yu's mother, referred to as "Mama Yu" in the Chinese-language press, from reminiscing about those glory days in public this week. She said Lau and her daughter signed the agreement on New Year's Eve in 1985, when the pair were head over heels in love. While her daughter still has the document, Mama Yu says it merely serves as a memento of a past romance.

The revelations are just another headache for Lau, who is currently being branded as a "liar" by the Hong Kong media. He faced reporters at Hong Kong airport earlier this week, asking for "forgiveness" and apologizing for concealing his marriage to Chu. Lau vehemently denied having any children, a rumor that has dogged him for years.

Perhaps the media fuss over Lau has scared artist/singer **Leon Lee** (黎明) and supermodel **Gaile Lai** (樂基兒) into divulging the details of their own marriage. The *Apple Daily* in Hong Kong reported that the couple got married last year, also in Las Vegas. The 28-year-old Lai broke the news at a public appearance in Hong Kong, telling the paper: "Yes, we have already gotten married. I admit it. But the people close to us already know."

Comedian **Chu Ko Liang** (豬哥亮) enjoyed a running start with his comeback show on Formosa TV (FTV, 民視), *Chu Ko Hui She* (豬哥會社), which started at the end of July. But the highly anticipated variety program has already begun to lose some of its luster. The *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*'s sister paper) reports that some fans are less than thrilled with Chu Ko Liang's co-host, **Rene Hou** (侯怡君), who has been criticized on Internet discussion boards as just "another pretty face." Meanwhile, the *Apple Daily* quoted AGB Nielsen figures showing that the show's viewership dropped by nearly 1.4 million over three episodes to an average of 3.08 million viewers.

While Chu Ko Liang is wisely maintaining a poker face about his ratings, Mando-pop star **David**



First Andy Lau, now Leon Lee: Hong Kong's celebrity bachelor scene is thinning out fast.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

Tao (陶喆) has been twittering his thoughts about Taiwan's fickle pop charts, which got him in a little hot water. The 39-year-old singer-songwriter's sixth album, *David Tao 69* (六九樂章), hit No. 1 on Five Music's charts for the final week of last month, but only No. 3 on G-Music's.

This seemed a little fishy to Tao, who offered his Twitter followers some market analysis and "speculation": Five Music's charts are based on sales in nine stores across the island, while G-Music's charts are based on sales in 31 stores, which include major chains Rose Records (玫瑰唱片) and Tachung Records (大眾唱片). With more stores, Tao said, G-Music is more susceptible to chart-rigging or "buying the charts" (買榜), where companies inflate sales by purchasing records by their own artists.

"I'm not saying there are people rigging this chart, or that the chart is unfair, but I just think we need to use a little common sense," he tweeted. "This way we see the whole picture, which is a little suspicious ..."

Fans of **A-mei** (張惠妹), whose latest album *A-mei* (阿密特) was No. 1 on G-Music's charts, were not amused. On an Internet discussion board of A-mei and Tao's record label, Gold Typhoon (金牌大風), posters accused Tao of being a "sore loser," reports the *Liberty Times*.

This prompted a response from Tao, this time through Gold Typhoon: "I didn't direct my comments at an artist or album in particular," he said. "I just wanted to discuss one thing — my concern for the health of the [pop music] environment and to let consumers better understand the truth of all parts of the business. Please don't misunderstand."

And to conclude, some lighter fare. Singer **Jolin Tsai** (蔡依林), who seems to change diets as often as her wardrobe, has finally settled on the "right" nutritionist, according to the *Apple Daily*. After years of cooking without oil, cutting out starch and meat and eating only bland foods, Tsai's latest regimen is, lo and behold, a regular balanced diet. She now eats almost everything except for eggs, and fruit only before 4pm. Common sense prevails.



Getting his start as a self-proclaimed "guitarwhore" for Front Line Assembly and "drugwhore" for Ministry, Jeff Stoddard "came into the game through punk rock, but needed more."

More soon came his way when he began frequenting Skinny Puppy's Vancouver recording studio, Subconscious, in the mid-1990s. "I learned more programming and engineering tricks in the time that I was there than I had in all of my years combined," Stoddard said. "I saw 20 people on one side of the glass playing music and one on the other. It looked like there were more jobs on the other side."

Stoddard rambled through Europe for a few years and finally landed in Taiwan to surf and remix singles for Sony BMG in 2001. Stoddard said: "Taiwan was great

because the equipment here was world-class but very cheap." But by 2003 Stoddard had gone from "golden boy to butt boy" and was disgusted when a higher-up told him it wasn't the music that mattered, it was only the packaging of the product.

By this time, Stoddard had enough experience under his studded belt to believe he could make it on his own as a producer and focus on his one-time side project RoughHausen, which had released *Defenestrated*, a "hardcore dusty rock techno" record.

Since then RoughHausen has come out with three more full albums and a few singles and remixes, making Stoddard an in-demand producer and mixer in heavy industrial grindcore circles in the US and Europe. "MySpace has been a huge source of income for me," Stoddard said.

But it's not just foreign artists that Stoddard works with. At the present he's mixing and co-producing Go Chic's first full-length album, with an eye for a release by the end of the year. "Jeff contacted me one day and asked me to

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: RoughHausen EP release party with Go Chic, BB Bomb (BB彈) and DJ Spykee
WHERE: VU Live House (地下絲絨), B1, 77, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1)
WHEN: Tomorrow from 8pm to 4am
ADMISSION: NT\$500 at the door or NT\$450 advance by sending an e-mail to tix@roughhausen.com, greggoteacher@yahoo.com.au or sukiethedudette@gmail.com. All tickets include a copy of RoughHausen's EP *Someone's Gotta Pay*
ON THE WEB: www.roughhausen.com

Kicking down the door

feature on a song on the RoughHausen EP [*Someone's Gotta Pay*]," said lead singer Ariel Zheng (鄭思齊). "I got to work with him and really appreciate what he does. I showed the demo of our work together to the other girls in Go Chic, as at that time we were desperately looking for someone sharp enough to mix our album. Not many people are doing the kind of music we are doing, and Jeff really gets us. You just don't get that kind of talent around here."

Performing live, which RoughHausen, along with Go Chic, BB Bomb (BB彈) and DJ Spykee Fat will be doing tomorrow night at VU Live House (地下絲絨), has not always translated well for Taiwanese audiences.

"The first show we ever had, it was amazing how quiet 600 people could be," Stoddard said. "And at the end of the show, I threw up the devil's horns and people mistook it for giving them the finger. I got hate e-mails for six months after that. And someone called the Art Police wrote on their Web site that I

should be put in jail for crimes against art. I wear that as a badge of honor now."

RoughHausen shows since then have been known for sonic experimentation and fans going berserk. At this weekend's show, Stoddard predicts, "If you take yourself seriously, I'm going to spank you. If you know how to party, I'm going to spank you even harder."

Some like it rough.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROUGHHAUSEN



MUSIC



PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL MUSIC NETWORK

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"That's part of the guitar tradition that is so great about the blues, and B.B. King is bending the strings," he said. "And Albert King bent the strings so much, like a whole major third up. And so I've always loved those guys. So I thought, 'If I'm going to play some blues I better work on it.'"

Piety Street is one of the rare times Scofield has used vocals on an album (another is his superb tribute to Ray Charles, *That's What I Say*). But he doesn't seem to mind surrendering the role as the central voice of the group to a singer.

"I think it's like sharing the front line with a great horn player. I've played a lot of times with horn players and piano players when they get as many solos as I get. So for me it's just a blast to collaborate with a great singer. And I arranged the

music so my guitar gets featured a lot," he said laughing.

"And I don't feel like I'm not getting to blow. I don't feel like I'm playing a lounge gig behind some dreaded singer where I don't get to play. Cleary inspires me. Great singers inspire me. And it's just like playing with Joe Lavano, the great horn player. Cleary inspires me with his singing and his piano playing," he said.

Bassist Shannon Powell and drummer Roland Guerin will perform with the Piety Street Band on Tuesday, replacing George Porter Jr and Ricky Fataar from the recording.

"[We] have a fantastic New Orleans rhythm section that are maybe some of the greatest players in town," he said. "Roland Guerin is an incredible bassist and Shannon Powell really just represents the tradition of New Orleans drumming better than anybody I know. And he's a giant on his instrument."

RESTAURANTS

BY DAVID CHEN

BY CATHERINE SHU

TIDBITS

Melange Cafe 米朗琪咖啡館

Address: 1F, 23, Ln 16, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市中山北路二段16巷23號1F)

Telephone: (02) 2567-3787, (02) 2563-6768 **Details:** No credit cards; menus in

Average meal: NT\$200 to NT\$400

Open: 7:30am to 10pm on weekdays; 10:30am to 10pm on weekends; open until 11pm on Fridays and the day before holidays



Melange Cafe's waffles with green tea and red bean ice cream.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Despite the 35°C heat, at least 20 people sat perched outside the Melange Cafe one lunchtime last month waiting for a seat. By 2pm, their numbers had doubled. Such crowds are typical for the Zhongshan North Road establishment, which enjoys a favorable reputation because of its urban chic setting and afternoon tea fare: coffee and tea drinks, Belgian-style waffles and sandwiches.

Other reasons for the long lines are that the cafe doesn't accept reservations and also seems to attract large parties of ladies who lunch, female shoppers in their 20s and kids on summer break. But it is definitely possible to get a seat quickly — go alone or with one companion and ask to sit at the bar.

Melange has remained as popular as ever since the *Taipei Times* last visited the cafe at its old location on Nanjing West Road in 2004. Moreover, the new location's decor, which is a departure from the Japanese coffee house ambiance of its Nanjing West Road days and now feels more like a European-style cafe, offers a better first impression.

It's hard not to admire the bar's spacious and smooth white

marble-top counter, which is cool to the touch and easy on the eyes.

Trendy-looking cafes in Taipei tend to overdo their sandwiches, but Melange hits the right notes with its club sandwich (NT\$110), a very reasonable price considering the sandwich's quality. The cafe keeps its ingredients simple: non-sweet white flour bread, smoked chicken that does without the strong taste of artificial flavoring, ham, thinly sliced scrambled egg, and a light spread of mayonnaise.

Melange Cafe seems to take a near fanatical pride in its beverages, which take up a lot of the menu, on which they are adorned with art deco-like motifs. Patrons are asked to purchase a drink of at least NT\$90, whether for dining in or take-out, and food doesn't count towards this minimum charge. The "summer fruit tea," (NT\$150), which a waiter noted as a popular choice, is a mix of brewed black tea (Lipton yellow label), fresh apple slices, kumquat and passion fruit.

The drink didn't elicit any "wows" from this reviewer, but was refreshing enough and well presented, arriving in a mini-glass pitcher along with a small wine glass. Another house recommendation is the green tea

au lait (NT\$120), which uses green tea powder imported from Japan.

One friendly regular sitting at the bar, a woman who appeared to be in her late 60s, said she stops in once a day for coffee because of the "freshness of the beans" and the attentive service she receives from the white uniformed, beret-wearing staff. She might also appreciate the fact that the drip-blend coffees, which include Blue Mountain No. 1 and Kenyan AA and range in price from NT\$100 to NT\$180, come in porcelain cups that are immersed in hot water while the drink is brewing.

A few Taiwanese foodie blogs point out that the strawberries and cream with waffles dish (NT\$140) is reason enough to go, but the waffle with green tea ice cream and sweet red beans (NT\$130) was saccharine to the point that it generated a sugar overload. The waffles, though served fresh and hot, were a tad too sweet and had the consistency of cake dough.

Melange Cafe is close to Zhongshan MRT Station (中山捷運站), Exit 2.

On any given evening, no matter how humid or muggy the weather is, browsers in Shida night market are sure to see a line in front of Hohomei's (好好味) take-out window. Customers gaze intently at a window filled with fresh buluo bao (菠蘿包) and a bright yellow menu with Hohomei's mascot, a smiling bun with a melting pat of butter sticking out of its noggin.

From the outside, the buluo bao, which is basically a butter sandwich that originated in Hong Kong, looks too ordinary to be worthy of such cult-like devotion. But don't let yourself be deceived by its unremarkable appearance. The delicately crunchy top layer resembles a crystalline sugar cookie; it melts as soon as you bite into it. The bottom half is warm, fluffy bread enrobed by a thin, flaky crust. These different textures provide a counterpoint to the decadently thick pat of chilled sweet butter in the middle.

When you bite into your warm buluo bao, your teeth meet at the butter, which feels cool against your tongue but immediately begins to melt, soaking the bread and bathing your taste buds in creamy delight. The name of Hohomei's signature buluo bao is binghuo (冰火), which literally means "ice fire." The name

presumably refers to the warmth of the bun against the cool butter slice, but the "fire" could just as well refer to the burning longing you will have in your heart for buluo bao's after your first one — as well as the heartburn you might also have if you overindulge in the fatty treats.

Speaking of heartburn, Hohomei also serves up very rich Hong Kong dishes in its two-story restaurant. The restaurant's signature noodles come laden with a farm's worth of meat products. Take, for example, the silver medal cart noodles (銀牌車仔麵, NT\$120), so-called because they used to be sold by street vendors. This smorgasbord is topped with pork meatballs, fish balls, sweet red sausage, pork intestines slices, grilled pork, gelatinized duck blood, a chicken wing and a fried egg (some veggies

are also tossed in for a bit of crunch). The gelatinized duck blood (鴨血) might not sound very appetizing, but it is the best part of the dish. The tender pieces have a taste reminiscent of black pudding (minus the filler) and a soft but appealingly firm texture. I chose mild mala (麻辣) broth, but curry and clear broths are also available. A variation on the dish is the premium mixed meat cart noodles (超級雜碎車仔麵, NT\$100), smothered in fish balls, asparagus, pork rinds, squid, gelatinized duck blood, sliced pork intestines, a chicken wing and a fried egg.

For an alternative to the noodles dishes, try the pork-covered white rice (食神港式豬扒飯, NT\$100). The pork is cooked just right and very rich in flavor. The dish is a lot more basic than the cart noodles, but just as filling and a little less overwhelming.



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Hohomei's 好好味

Address: 51, Ln 26, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街26巷51號)

Telephone: (02) 2368-8898

Average meal: NT\$110

Open: Mondays to Fridays noon to 11pm; closes at midnight on Saturdays and Sundays

Details: Chinese menu; credit cards not accepted **On the Net:** www.hohomei.com.tw

Hohomei's dishes are guaranteed to clog your arteries, deliciously.