



COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN

A kiss wasn't just a kiss for Chinese fans of **Alan Luo** (羅志祥), aka **Little Pig** (小豬), who has been in Hangzhou filming the CTS drama series *Hi My Sweetheart* (海派甜心).

Admirers watching the shoot got into a tizzy during one scene in which co-star **Rainie Yang** (楊丞琳) forces Luo into a passionate kiss. Some of the 40 fans "wailed" and started to cry as they watched Yang plant her lips upon Luo's. The reaction startled Yang, who tried to assure the distressed fans by telling them, "We're just like siblings, please don't misunderstand."

But it took Little Pig to bring about quiet on the set. "Be good," he said. "Your husband [honey] (老公) is filming right now. You can't get upset with Rainie over this."

That soothed his admirers, who obediently fell silent, but not Yang. She was visibly "frightened" and made sure to apologize to the fans before later kissing scenes, according to the *Taipei Times'* sister paper, the *Liberty Times*.

Rumors have resurfaced of a romance between actress and high society belle **Terri Kwan** (關穎) and pop star heartthrob **Jerry Yan** (言承旭), as the two were reported to have spent a romantic getaway in Koh Samui last week.

Mobbed by reporters at Taoyuan International Airport last weekend, Yan only smiled when asked if he and Kwan had "secretly met" in Thailand. Yan and Kwan's managers also dodged similar questions.

Speculation has see-sawed about a Yan-Kwan relationship ever since the two met at the beginning of the year as co-stars of the TV drama series *Starlit* (心星的淚光). A *Liberty Times* report speculated that Koh Samui was a "reconciliation" trip after a supposed break-up in June that culminated in a heated quarrel in Yan's car.

This wouldn't be Kwan's first hot-and-cold relationship. She dated male model **Jerry Huang** (黃志瑋) for more than four years before their romance fizzled in the midst of ongoing reports that her wealthy parents were urging her to find a partner with a more respectable pedigree.

As for Yan, who knows? The *Liberty Times* noted that he made a recent television appearance where he spoke at length about "a love letter never sent" to another rumored flame, supermodel **Lin Chih-ling** (林志玲).

It looks like hot-headed crooner **Gary Tsao** (曹格) has

Little Pig's fans don't like to see their idol smooching.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

been at it again. Last Friday, the Malaysian Mando-pop star was reportedly banned from the posh Traders Hotel in Kuala Lumpur for smashing a television in a fit of rage during his stay there.

But at least Kuala Lumpur didn't get it as bad as Hong Kong, where Tsao got blind drunk and beat the daylight out of his friend, Canto-pop singer **Justin Lo** (側田), during a night out on the town. The bad publicity forced Tsao to cancel a string of upcoming concerts and Hong Kong police are investigating the incident.

As for the smashed TV, Tsao's manager has denied the story, while an exasperated Tsao remarked that even in Malaysia, "people were out to get me."

In other news, the Chairman has died — once again, in a rumor.

A tipster pointed the *Liberty Times* to a Facebook group page with a discussion thread title that read: "Indonesian media reports that **Jay Chou** (周杰倫) has died in a foreign country from a drug overdose."

While it is true that Chou is in a foreign country, says his record label JVR, he's alive and well in the US filming *The Green Hornet*, in which he plays the role of Kato.

The hoaxers were only slightly more imaginative this time. The first time Chou supposedly died was in 2004, when a Chinese Web site claimed that the pop star had been run over by a truck.

And it's official — **A-mei** (阿妹) is dating. At least according to the *Apple Daily*, which finally caught the pop diva and her boyfriend of three years, basketball star **Sam Ho** (何守正) on their first "public" date. One of the paper's crack photographers managed to sneak his lens into the couple's private dining room at a Japanese bar and grill in Taipei's East District.

Ho spotted the camera, and perhaps his basketball skills came in handy, as he promptly used his body to completely block A-mei from the view of the lens. The *Apple Daily* report noted how sweet and considerate Ho was for "protecting his flower."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JS

JS is the rare Taiwanese music act that can succeed in both the worlds of commercial pop and edgy indie rock without compromising its integrity.

The group is comprised of Justin — real name Chen Chung-yi (陳忠義) — who writes the songs and plays the instruments,

and younger sister Sophia — real

name Chen Chi-hsuan (陳綺萱) — whose crystalline vocals waft across her brother's folksy sonic landscape. On Thursday night they will be performing a themed concert titled Songs for Good Friends (好朋友的歌), a retrospective of their signature songs from the past decade.

The brother-sister duo got its start by winning top prize in

MTV's New Voice Competition in 1999. They signed with Sony Music and released their first album *Say Forever* under the name GoGo&MeMe (哥哥妹妹).

It wasn't all smooth sailing after that promising start. A wave of industry restructuring following the advent of the MP3 and Internet-based music distribution put their recording careers on hold.

"We were shooting the music video for our second album in Japan and we got a phone call halfway through [telling us] that everyone on the team had been fired," says Justin in a phone interview on Thursday last week.

In the restructured Sony, GoGo&MeMe became an orphaned act with no album release date.

During that period, Justin turned his attention to writing songs for other music acts.

"I completely loathed the so-called *balage* (芭樂歌) [catchy ballad] back in college," explains Justin. "It wasn't until I started working in the industry that I learned to understand it. It's the art of discovering freshness within familiar terrain."

Justin has since developed into a highly sought-after songwriter

with a knack for penning hits. His oeuvre includes *The Moment* (sung by Sun Yunzi, 孫燕姿), *I Am Fine* (我很好) (sung by Rene Liu, 劉若英) and *Staying Put With Love* (鎮守愛情) (sung by Power Station, 動力火車).

Justin and Sophia eventually signed with Avex and changed their band's name to JS, under which they have released three albums over the past decade: *Meeting the Future* (遇見未來) in 2004, *The Most Beautiful Landscape in This Life* (此生最美的風景) in 2008, and Justin's songwriting retrospective *The JS Moment* (THE JS MOMENT JS 的創作故事集) in early 2009.

Recently they've broadened their musical palate, releasing three daring concept EPs: the folk-rock *ROSSO* — *Sophia's*

Banquet (ROSSO-蘇菲亞的盛宴), the punk-driven *Nero-SCREAM*, and the folksy *Bianco* — *I Know You Love Me* (Bianco — 我知道你愛我).

In May they made the foray into electronica with the EP *Somewhere*.

"With electronica, you treat the vocals as one music instrument," says Justin. "You break down the music and reconstruct it."

To support the EP, the group performed as the opening act at this year's White Party in Taichung and Taipei.

"We were afraid of losing old fans who like our folk-rock sound, but we have to move on," says Justin. "We see ourselves as a group that's exploring different styles in its second decade."

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: JS Songs for Good Friends (好朋友的歌)

WHEN: Thursday at 8:30 pm

WHERE: Riverside Live House (河岸留言西門紅樓展演館), 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號)

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$400, which includes one drink, available at the door or by calling (02) 2370-8805

ON THE NET: www.wretch.cc/blog/justin0206; www.riverside.com.tw/livehouse

BY NOAH BUCHAN

DRAMA

Prisoners of their own devices



They didn't do enough time.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Taiwanese actors Fa (his stage name) and Shih Ming-shuai (施名帥) were recently jailed for 42 days for wanting to perform in a play. Well, kind of.

Their prison was in fact EX-Theater Asia's (EX-亞洲劇場) rehearsal space and they voluntarily confined themselves there to prepare for the psychologically demanding roles of their characters in *The Island* (島), which opens tonight as part of The 14th Crown Arts Festival (第14屆皇冠藝術節) at Crown Theater (皇冠藝術中心小劇場).

"They were just released last Friday," joked EX-Theater Asia's administrative director Lin Pei Ann (林涓安) after a rehearsal on Sunday night.

Adapted from South African writer Athol Fugard's 1972 play of the same name, *The Island* follows the lives of two men serving life sentences on South Africa's notorious Robben Island — a symbol of apartheid South Africa (Nelson Mandela spent much of his 27 years behind bars on the island) — for political crimes.

Obvious parallels could be drawn between Robben Island and Taiwan's Green Island, where thousands of political prisoners were isolated, tortured and in some cases killed during the White Terror. Director Chongtham Jayanta Meetei, however, said he does not want viewers to draw historical parallels between the work and Taiwan.

Instead, he wants them to focus on the play's physicality.

"The text contains hidden emotion that cannot be revealed by the text itself ... which is only brought out when communicated with the body," he said.

Although it is natural to focus on the play's somatic aspects — the original contains many miming scenes that

illustrate the harsh labor conditions prisoners were forced to endure — avoiding the political overtones does a disservice to the work.

It also didn't seem to help the actors understand the complex emotions facing prisoners serving a life sentence. Consequently, two important areas of the play suffer. The first — and Meetei

admitted as much after the rehearsal — is pacing. In a work that relies on delicate pauses and emotional tension, the actors rushed through it as if it were a prison sentence that they couldn't wait to finish.

Linked to this is the problem of controlling their passion. All too often, the emotional register of the actors resembled the exaggerated melodrama of a B-grade Taiwanese television soap opera. It's as if they hadn't internalized the predicament of their characters.

Of course, I only saw one rehearsal. But it seems that the 42 days the actors spent behind bars wasn't enough to liberate the feelings of confinement that the play requires.

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: 14th Crown Arts Festival (第14屆皇冠藝術節) — The Island (島)

WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

WHERE: Crown Theater (皇冠藝文中心小劇場), 50, Ln 120, Dunhua N Rd, Taipei City (台北市敦化北路120巷50號)

ADMISSION: NT\$450 tickets, available through NTCH ticketing

RESTAURANTS

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Best 01 Tea Garden (壹等賞景觀茶園)

Address: 58, Alley 93, Ln 170, Zhongyuan Rd Sec 2, Longtan Township, Taoyuan County (桃園縣龍潭鄉中原路二段170巷93弄58號)
Telephone: (03) 411-6788 **Open:** 10am to 10pm (closed Tuesdays) **Average meal:** NT\$500 per person
Details: Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted

Best 01 Tea Garden (壹等賞景觀茶園) is a little oasis of well-ordered rural elegance amid the hodgepodge of industrial and agricultural land off the Longtan Interchange (龍潭交流道) of the Formosa Freeway (蔴沙高速公路) in Taoyuan County. It is easy to miss, but once there, it is also easy to forget all about the surrounding landscape.

A sprawling wood, glass and red-brick bungalow, the main restaurant building is low key, and the attention of arriving guests is quickly focused on the well-kept lawn, the sparklingly clean carp pond, the lush stands of tropical plants and the neat rows of tea trees just beyond.

On foodie blogs, Best 01 Tea Garden has a reputation of being an attractive scenic destination, and its gardens provide ample opportunities for shutterbugs. It also has a reputation for serving top-notch Taiwanese food. It did not disappoint, though with two sittings for lunch, the first starting at 11:30am with seats cleared at 1pm for the second, it is not a place that encourages diners to dawdle over their food. There is outdoor seating though, which is used as a waiting area for diners, and also as a place to relax after a meal. Visiting on a Saturday that threatened rain, Best 01 Tea Garden was moving customers

through in a thoroughly efficient manner and there were no tables going spare in the house.

The reason for the crowds was made obvious when the food was brought to the table, minutes after we had ordered. It was simply presented, but with an eye for its aesthetic appeal, and most importantly, very tasty.

As the staple, its healthy tea oil rice (養生茶油拌飯, NT\$20 a bowl), served in a tub made of cypress wood, was delightfully subtle and cooked to perfection (well prepared rice is much more of a rarity than one might think), and could easily have been enjoyed all on its lonesome, if it weren't for all the other enticing dishes on the menu.

Particularly exciting was the tea smoked goose (茶鵝, NT\$300), which had just the right amount of fat under the skin to make it succulent without being greasy. The fried golden tofu (陶板黃金豆腐), as homely a dish as one could imagine, also had a splendid balance of crisp vegetables and tender tofu held together by a golden skin. Short ribs in osmanthus honey (桂花蜜排骨, NT\$280) was another beautifully judged offering of an old and much-abused regular, lightly battered and with a good balance between the honey and vinegar. The flesh of the eastern



Tasty in Taoyuan.

PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES

beauty fish (東方美人魚, NT\$500), a steamed cod, was a little coarse, but the flavors were nevertheless quite good.

The food arrived quickly and with little fuss, and the table was cleared regularly. Service was a tad impersonal but ran like a well-oiled machine, with nothing to distract you from the enjoyment of the food and the surroundings. The spacious garden area makes it ideal for big family gatherings with children, who can be kept amused feeding the carp (fish feed is available from a dispensing machine) and running about on the grass.

The inspiration behind Rainbow Roll (紅彩壽司) follows a boomerang trajectory. The chain was founded eight years ago in Tokyo, but its menu features "American-style" sushi-like avocado-and-crab meat stuffed California rolls and, of course, rainbow rolls (the restaurant's version is made with a colorful assortment of vegetables). Taipei's branch of Rainbow Roll is located in the three-month-old Sogo Tianmu; the sleek and elegantly decorated space is on the department store's eighth-floor food court.

Diners who were first introduced to American-style sushi in the US might find Rainbow Roll's versions surprisingly light (and perhaps a bit bland). The spicy tuna filling in some rolls doesn't sear the nostrils and the California roll is crafted with only a smidgen of mayonnaise, as opposed to a giant dollop. But even though Rainbow Roll's American-style sushi isn't particularly American, the carefully balanced ingredients in each meticulously crafted roll are as pleasing to the palate as they are to the eye.

The freshness of the ingredients recommends itself. Even on a slow Monday evening, there were no browning chunks

of avocado, wilting lettuce leaves, mushy sashimi or congealed sushi rice. We began with the deep-fried Hiroshima oysters (NT\$290), which came as part of a set meal with rice, salad and pickles. Each of the plump oysters was lightly breaded and fried, and served on top of a pile of shredded yam crisps. The shellfish was mild and sweet and the crunchy coating was rich without being oily.

After we finished the oysters, Rainbow Roll's efficient wait staff brought our sushi rolls in quick succession. The California roll (NT\$220) came first, stuffed with imitation crabmeat, julienned cucumber, avocado, lettuce and sprinkled with crunchy red tobiko roe. The imitation crabmeat managed not to be cloyingly sweet and the cucumber added some welcome texture against the soft, rich avocado.

Our next two rolls, the spicy tuna (NT\$180) and tuna tempura roll with spicy miso sauce (NT\$220), paled in comparison to the rest of our meal. The minced tuna was not particularly spicy and seemed lost amidst sushi rice, sesame, cucumber and carrot. The tuna tempura roll was very pretty (sliced okra in the middle of each piece looked like little blossoms), but was just as lackluster. The tuna tempura

roll was supposed to be served hot, but came lukewarm. A layer of fried tempura batter, which in turn was wrapped in seaweed, surrounded the tuna; both layers were moist and chewy instead of crisp. Fortunately, the intense flavor of our last roll, made with scallop, avocado and spicy-mayonnaise sauce (NT\$280), made up for its blander cousins. Each piece was carefully topped with a slice of sauteed garlic and a dot of very spicy mayonnaise, which brought out the sweetness of the scallops and avocado.

In addition to its signature rolls, Rainbow Roll also serves sashimi and appetizers, including amberjack carpaccio with tomato salsa (NT\$280) and citrus marinated salmon with yuzu pepper dressing (NT\$260). The restaurant has an abbreviated drinks menu — just a few domestic and Japanese beers are available, along with a short list of sake brands.



Rainbow Roll's menu comes from Japan via way of the US via way of Japan.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Rainbow Roll (紅彩壽司)

Address: Sogo Tianmu, 8F, 77, Zhongxiao N Rd Sec 6, Taipei City (台北市中山北路六段77號8樓) **Telephone:** (02) 2833-2555
Open: 11am to 9:30pm **Average meal:** Most rolls range from NT\$180 to NT\$280; a 10 percent service charge is added
Details: Chinese, English and Japanese menu; credit cards accepted

TIDBITS

BY STAFF WRITER WITH CNA

A branch of L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon, a three-star Michelin restaurant chain, opened on Nov. 5 at the Bellavita shopping center in Taipei City's Xinyi District.

Lunch and dinner courses range between NT\$480 and NT\$2,000. A set meal comprising eight courses carries a price tag of nearly NT\$6,000.

Head chef Joel Robuchon operates restaurants in Hong Kong, Las Vegas, London, Macau, Monaco, New York City, Paris and Tokyo, and has collected a world record-breaking 24 Michelin stars.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon is located at 5F, 90 Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路90號5樓). Tel: (02) 8729-2628.

Giovanni Grasso, an Italian chef who currently holds one Michelin star, is creating a seven-course white truffle feast priced at NT\$8,000 per person at Marco Polo Restaurant at the Far Eastern Plaza Hotel Taipei today and tomorrow.

The menu features white truffle from Alba and four Gianni Gagliardo premium vintage pairings.

Courses include soft-cooked egg with cheese, almonds and white truffle and potato soup with pan-fried sweetbreads, veal juice jelly, hazelnut oil and white truffle.

To make a reservation, call (02) 2376-3156.