

# POP STOP

COMPILED BY NOAH BUCHAN

Awards ceremonies in Taiwan — whether of the beauty pageant, music, television or film variety — are generally occasions for jealousy, name-calling and all around caterwauling. So it was with some surprise that there was little controversy reported at this year's Golden Horse Awards (金馬獎), presented on Saturday night. The awards are considered the Chinese-language equivalent of the Oscars.

Taiwan's **Leon Dai** (戴立忍), who garnered five awards for his *No Puedo Vivir Sin Ti* (不能沒有你), a black-and-white film about a father down on his luck who struggles to retain custody of his daughter, was the biggest news.

More important for gossip observers, however, was the hug Dai gave actress **Guey Lun-mei** (桂綸鎂), when she presented him with the award for Best Screenplay.

Dai, 43, and Guey, 26, have been rumored to be lovers for years, but kept their

**Yuan-hao** (姚元浩), he angrily responded, "Whether or not she has a boyfriend, it's not my business. I'm her elder." To which Sui added, "He is my father and I am his daughter."

Meanwhile, netizens are giving TV host and pop singer **Pauline Lan** (藍心湄) a hard time, according to an *Apple* report. And it's not over the 45-year-old's notorious affairs with younger men. They claim that the outfit Lan wore for a photo shoot shown on TVBS and published in the *Apple Daily* was nearly identical to the mostly see-through costume worn by Britney Spears in her video *Toxic*.

But Lan's "outfit," which consists of a few strategically placed crystals, in the snaps — which look like the product of an epic Photoshop session — makes Britney's *Toxic* duds look practically Amish by comparison.

relationship under wraps. Under the microscopic scrutiny of gossip rags, a hug comes with a lot of significance (or at least a pretext for reporters to write whatever they want).

So tongues started wagging on Saturday night when the two embraced — for the first time in public, reported the *Apple Daily*.

As Dai walked off stage, one wag asked about the hug. "Especially warm (特別溫暖)," he replied. Which logically, for this paparazzo, led to a question about marriage. Dai responded with a shrug and a laugh.

The *Liberty Times* speculated that the age difference between the two celebs prevents them from going public with the relationship.

And speaking of leaps of logic, *Apple* was making a few of its own when it snapped pictures of sometimes-entertainer **Allen Chao** (趙樹海) and model

Do these crystals make my butt look big?

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

**Sonia Sui** (隋棠) having dinner, in a report which suggested that the Chao is keeping love in the family.

Chao is the father of **Mark Chao** (趙又廷), who stars with Sui in the cop drama *Black & White* (痞子英雄). The two young actors have filmed a couple of love scenes together.

When asked if Chao knew that Sui was dating actor **Yao**

the film *Hot Summer Days* (全城熱戀), which is set to hit theaters in February, Hsu found a way to rid herself of the copious amounts of sushi she was forced to eat for her role as a love-struck heiress, reported Sina.com.

"I didn't want to gain weight. So when the director stopped filming, I'd throw up the sushi," she said.

BY DAVID CHEN



Jazz pianist Andrew Page leads a quartet of musicians hailing from the US, France, Italy and Spain tonight at Taipei's newest jazz club, Roxy Jazz.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROXY JAZZ

# Roxy returns to jazz

### EVENT NOTES:

**WHAT:** Grand opening of Roxy Jazz, featuring pianist Andrew Page, bassist Cyrille, drummer Pietro Valente and saxophonist Miguel Fernandez  
**WHEN:** Tonight at 10pm  
**WHERE:** B1, 2, Ln 53, Heping E Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市和平東路2段53巷2號B1)  
**ADMISSION:** Minimum charge of NT\$300 per person  
**ON THE NET:** www.roxy.com.tw

By reputation, Ling Wei (凌威) doesn't come across as a jazz fan. But the 56-year-old self-professed "rock 'n' roller" and owner of the Roxy chain of rock-themed bars and nightclubs says, "I've always loved jazz music."

Roxy Jazz, which opens tonight, is Ling's second attempt at a jazz club. His first venture, Feel More Jazz, located on Roosevelt Road (羅斯福路), quickly folded after opening in 1991 when construction for the MRT's Danshui-Xindian line began.

Ling seemed at ease and in a good mood earlier this week when showing the *Taipei Times* around this latest addition to the Roxy brand, located near the corner of Jianguo South (建國南) and Heping East (和平東) roads.

He says the club is designed so jazz lovers can have a comfortable place "to share the music." The space, which holds around 65 persons, feels intimate and

homey. The room is filled with plush Ikea sofas and lounge chairs. The stage, equipped with a drum kit, upright piano, double bass and a few amplifiers, is low to the ground and close to the audience. A bar at the back will serve food.

Listening to records is pure pleasure for Ling, a former radio DJ, and he brings that sensibility to the venue. Audiophiles will drool over the room's boutique stereo speakers made by the German company Duevel, which cost a cool NT\$1 million. Ling says, half-jokingly, that another reason for starting the club was to find a home for the speakers.

Live music from local musicians, however, will be the main attraction. Roxy Jazz currently has performers scheduled on average for three nights a week.

Tonight's grand opening party features a special performance by a one-off modern jazz quartet organized by pianist Andrew Page, the music director of the

American Club in Taipei. The lineup includes Taichung-based French bassist Cyrille Briegel, Italian drummer Pietro Valente, and saxophonist and composer Miguel Fernandez of Barcelona.

Tomorrow the venue hosts Taiwanese pianist Amanda Wu (吳苡珊), who plays modern jazz standards as well as originals sung in Mandarin. She shares the stage with saxophonist Alejandro Chiabrandino of Argentina.

When the musicians break, house DJs will spin "classic jazz vinyl," reflecting Ling's tastes, which he describes as anything from Blue Note Records.

Ling says he's optimistic that Roxy Jazz will stand the test of time, unlike The Other Side, a dance club he opened in the East District (東區) in July that folded because of high rent and a lack of a "clear goal."

Roxy Jazz is open every day from 9pm to 4am and charges a NT\$300 food or drink minimum on nights with musical performances.

# DRAMA

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG

## Till death do they part

"This is a simple and pure love story, and I'm not seeking any creative breakthrough with this work," says director/playwright/actor Han Jiang (韓江) of his latest play *Getting Late* (天光) presented by Firefly Theater (螢火蟲劇團).

*Getting Late* recounts the last hours of reminiscing between two gay men before their joint suicide attempt, timed before the break of dawn. In a bawdy-raising choice, the play casts TV soap opera actor Ma Yow-shing (馬幼興) as the blue-collar lover against the real estate agent played by Han. The play, which premiered in Kaohsiung two weeks ago, has its Taipei run tonight and tomorrow at Red Playhouse (紅樓劇場).

As the only theater troupe specializing in gay-themed plays in Taiwan, Firefly Theater has tackled the subject of homosexuality through suspense thriller, black comedy, costume drama and existentialism under the guidance of its founder and director Han Jiang. Past productions include *Snowing* (下雪了) in 1996, *Cool Night* (涼夜) in 2007, and *Last Juice — the Reincarnation of Li Taipai* (慾液—李太白之前世今生), a play that explores the sexuality of the famed

### PERFORMANCE NOTES:

**WHAT:** Getting Late (天光)  
**WHEN:** Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30 pm  
**WHERE:** Red Playhouse (紅樓劇場), 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號). Tel: (02) 2311-9380  
**ADMISSION:** NT\$600, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw  
**ON THE NET:** www.firefly.org.tw; tw.myblog.yahoo.com/hanjiang1970

ancient Chinese poet. The story of *Getting Late* is based on a real-life incident that happened to Han's friends when he worked as a police officer years ago.

One of the two men involved passed away. Han has kept all the elements faithful to reality aside from changing the characters' names and occupations. "I'm intrigued by this concept of dying on the same day," explains Han. "I want to explore what commitment is in love, especially in the face of death."

Structurally, the play utilizes the



Let us not talk falsely now.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FIREFLY THEATER

household-famous Mando-pop oldie *Lover's Tear* (情人的眼淚) as the central motif and connects the different episodes with 10 original music pieces written by composer Kong Yin (孔殷). The dialogue, in an effort to underline the working-class background of the main characters, contains some coarse language. The play will be performed in Mandarin with occasional bits of Taiwanese.

"I was excited when I read the script. It's a chance for me to broaden my horizons and take my acting to another level," says Ma.

"There have been plenty of gay dramas with nudity," explains director

Han. "I decided to take out the nudity in this play because I think clothed provocation is sexier."

Regarding his choice to stage mostly serious plays or tragedies with Firefly Theater, Han says "it's mostly due to my own temperament and the fact that I excel in this form."

"I don't want to create any stereotypes, but the tragic nature of this play probably echoes the sentiment of some gay men who feel oppressed in this society despite the strides that have been made," adds Han. "I choose these stories because I have empathy for people who are marginalized, sad and full of emotion."

# RESTAURANTS

BY NOAH BUCHAN

## Forkers

**Address:** 15, Ln 16, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市中山北路二段16巷15號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2567-7696  
**Average meal:** NT\$200  
**Open:** Mondays to Fridays from 11am to 10pm; closes at 11pm on Saturdays and Sundays  
**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted



Just eat it.

Large portions at restaurants are often a cause for distress. Calories? Maybe. High cholesterol? Probably. Excessive fat? Definitely. When the waitress at Forkers' spacious second location, which opened in May in an alley located less than five minutes by foot from Zhongshan MRT Station (中山捷運站), brought my burger I began to wonder if North American-style excess had arrived in Taiwan. Breaking the old adage that we get what we pay for, the meal consisted of a humongous amount of delicious food. I didn't eat for the rest of the day.

Forkers has earned a reputation for its creative play on the burger theme. With almost 50 varieties to choose from in four sections — "Forkers favorites," "Western classics," "Asian flavors," and "the Forkers" (so-named because you need a knife and fork to eat them) — one could spend every day over the course of several weeks going through this part of the menu.

Some of the more eye-catching offerings include the eggs Benny burger (NT\$290), the poutine burger (NT\$250), artichoke gratin burger (NT\$260) and a wasabi burger (NT\$220).

Ordering is as simple as following the menu's "five-step program." After selecting a burger

flavor, patrons choose from one of five patties: beef, chicken breast, fish, pork sausage or veggie. Step three, the "sides," consists of choosing one of four types of fresh-cut fries (regular, Cajun, curry or garlic) and a salad (wild green, Dijon and dill potato, Hawaiian pasta or salad of the day). The process ends with ordering a drink and attempting to eat the mountainous meal.

The English burger (NT\$230) came open-faced and served on grain bread smeared with a moderate amount of garlic butter. Generously topped with sauteed onion and mushroom, the thick spice-infused beef patty underneath only became visible after using the serrated steak knife to cut it up. Each bite delivered a delicious medley of distinct flavors. The fries, hand cut from fresh potatoes, were crispy brown and lightly salted.

The salad of wild greens is no garden-variety iceberg lettuce afterthought. A variety of lettuce leaves were mixed together and artfully topped with cherry tomato, cucumber and baby corn. It came served with ranch dressing.

Forkers isn't just about burgers. An extensive appetizer menu and large space make

it ideal for a gathering with friends or office parties. Along with the usual offerings of nachos, tortilla wraps and chicken wings, it also has some harder-to-find fare such as pierogi rolls and warm artichoke and spinach dip.

Before heading to Forkers, I checked out several reviews of the original location on Chinese and English-language blogs. Two opinions stood out: the food was good but the service was mixed. I agree with the former, but found the service at the new location excellent — which is perhaps why the tip jar below the cash register was mostly full.

The original Forkers is at 8, Alley 10, Ln 223, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段223巷10弄8號).

## Insomnia 睡不著

**Address:** 13, Ln 93, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路93巷13號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2364-0002  
**Open:** Noon to 12am, closes at 2am on Fridays and Saturdays  
**Average meal:** Most meals are NT\$150 to NT\$280, non-alcoholic drinks are about NT\$100 to NT\$180  
**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted  
**On the Net:** insomnia-tw.blogspot.com



Insomnia's comfort food is pricey for the neighborhood around Shida Road but presented with the utmost care.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Open until 2am at weekends and filled with moodily lit nooks, Insomnia's (睡不著) name is fitting in more ways than one. Digital 3D art hung in the front gives the eerie feeling that the glassy-eyed mannequins within are going to jump out at you; a gigantic wooden rocking horse, soft jazz music and a sleek black dog who slinks quietly among the tables add to the cafe's sleepy and dream-like ambience.

Insomnia's meals are distinctly more down to earth, however. The homey selection of international comfort foods includes kong-pao chicken (宮保雞丁, NT\$250), Silician meatballs (西西里丸子, NT\$230), Chinese beef stew (紅燒牛腩, NT\$250) and Java curry chicken (爪哇咖哩雞, NT\$230). The portions are slender for the relatively steep price tags, but Insomnia takes

great care with the presentation of each meal. Carrot, cucumber and celery crudites are arranged like flowers among cubes of ice in a small glass tumbler and served alongside a dish filled with smooth, sweet honey mustard dipping sauce. Rice is molded into a round pat and topped with black sesame seeds, while the main course is contained in a separate bowl.

The piquant, tender kong-pao chicken is the best of the bunch and stir-fried with plenty of chili peppers and crunchy peanuts. Other dishes are less memorable. The tomato sauce coating the Sicilian meatballs was satisfyingly savory and chunky, but the meatballs were filled with chewy bits of gristle, which added some unexpected texture. The quality of the meat in the Chinese beef stew was much better and comple-

BY CATHERINE SHU

# TIDBITS

BY NOAH BUCHAN

The Grand Hyatt Taipei celebrates the holiday season this year with Christkindmarkt, a festive offering of stories, handicrafts, workshops and victuals that begins today at 2pm. Named after European holiday markets, it features booths hawking festive wares.

For those after a traditional German feast, chef Ralf Dohmeier will whip up a variety of sausages, grilled chicken, eggnog and other goodies to ring in the Xmas atmosphere. Pastry chef Reinhard Lackner will introduce the fun of Christmas baking with classes on making gingerbread houses and Christmas cookies for parents (NT\$650) and children (NT\$325).

For more information in English and Chinese and to make reservations, call (02) 2720-1200 X3198 or X3199. On the Net: www.grandhyatttaipei.com.tw/clubhyatt/Club\_news0912\_01e.htm  
 ■ Grand Hyatt Taipei, 2 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路2號)  
 ■ Today from 2pm to 9pm and tomorrow from noon to 9pm



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAND HYATT TAIPEI