14 發光的城市 AROUND TOWN



COMPILED BY NOAH BUCHAN

aipei rang in the New Year with a NT\$30 million fireworks display, a goofy catchphrase (Taiwan up!) and a gaggle of celebs and hangers-on singing and dancing their way through the night. But the gossip media couldn't refrain from pointing out certain fake aspects of the celebration: most glaringly, its lip-synching "talent." ETTV, Apple Daily, China Times and the Taipei Times' sister newspaper, The Liberty Times, all had the lowdown.

First up, Wu Chun (吳尊) of popular boy band Fahrenheit (飛 輪海). During a performance of the band's hit song Superb (出神入化), the starched collar of Wu's glitterygold jacket malfunctioned and knocked his headset away from his mouth. Oddly enough, his "singing" voice could still be heard.

"I wasn't the only one singing," Wu said later when asked for an explanation — as if to suggest that the media mistook his voice for that of one of his bandmates.

A quick look on YouTube, however, reveals no difference between Wu's voice with or without the headset.

Further south in Taichung, Netizens said that they heard Cyndi Wang's (王心凌) voice, even though the microphone was nowhere near her mouth. Wang's agent was quick to come to her rescue.

"During several lines of the chorus she was only supposed to dance," he said. "Not sing."

Another search on YouTube shows that, unlike Wu, Wang seems to be singing live. However, message from a love interest. It her vocals are sung over a backing soundtrack.

Incidentally, readers who check out YouTube may want to compare New Order's Blue Monday with Wang's Happy Loving, the song she performed in Taichung. The beginning of her tune is such an obvious a rip-off of New Order's 1983 classic that one has to wonder what all the lip-synching hullaballoo is about.

Perhaps Wang is just following in the footsteps of her father, Wang Chi-hui (王吉輝), who is currently under investigation for fraud.

According to a report in the United Daily News, the elder Wang invited a jeweler by the name of Lin Chi-hui (林奇慧) to join an organization called the Research Institute for Cross-Straight Peace and Law (海峽兩岸和平法學術研究 院). However, it appears that this "institute" is a front for selling Buddhist trinkets.



to hide the fact that he was lipsynching during his performance in front of hundreds of thousands of fans in Taoyuan. Or, rather, his agent didn't.

"The dance routine is difficult to perform live," he said. "We felt lipsynching to be acceptable because [To] is the original singer."

Pop Stop wonders if To can chew bubble gum and walk at the same time.

There were other, lesser known, "bands" that engaged is this foul practice, but Pop Stop asks, what's the big deal? Lip-synching is as common in Taiwan's celebrity firmament as fake body parts. And nobody gets uptight about a nip here and a tuck there anymore - not unless, that is, some surgeon provides illegal implants.

Meanwhile Rainie Yang (楊丞 琳) didn't find love on New Year's Eve, as she had hoped. The singer said she was anticipating a text never came. She did, however, receive a marriage proposal from a female fan, according to a report in the Liberty Times.

But she's keeping a stiff upper lip. In a headline that partially read, "Lovelorn Rainie gets wet with her fans," (楊丞琳濕身催情), the rag said that an autograph session earlier this week saw Yang happily squirting the crowd with a water gun and getting drenched by a water truck.

Perhaps all that wetness will spur on the person of interest to give her a call. Yang has apparently extended the deadline to Valentine's Day.

Finally, Pop Stop ends this reek with some sad news. Th

Hell froze over, but this band stayed hot

he sun is gonna shine in my backdoor someday" is one optimistic line that pops up repeatedly in blues songs. For Taipei blues band Bopomofo (クタロビ), "someday" has finally arrived.

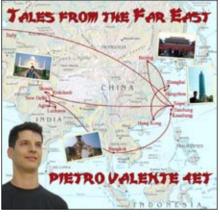
BY DAVID CHEN

After three years in the making, the five-piece expat group has released their first CD, Hell Froze Over, a showcase of their Chicago-style electric blues repertoire. The band celebrates this weekend with shows at Capone's Restaurant tonight and Alleycat's Huashan tomorrow.

Bandleader and singer DC Rapier says the wait has been worth it, especially considering where the project started. The CD's basic tracks were recorded at Sun Studio in Memphis, Tennessee, the fabled locale that produced countless records from a who's who of American rock pioneers that includes B.B. King, Roy Orbison and Elvis Presley.

Going to Sun Studio was like a "pilgrimage," he said. "Being in the holy of the holies."

I was there for part of Bopomofo's two-day recording session in 2007, as we were all in Memphis representing Taiwan at the annual International Blues Challenge. It was indeed a thrill to be in the same room where Howlin' Wolf and Johnny Cash cut their earliest records.



ext week jazz buffs in Taipei have a rare chance to catch Pietro Valente, a talented young drummer who recently finished his first album, Tales From the Far East. He will perform a set of original compositions at Sappho

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Bopomofo CD release party WHEN AND WHERE: 9pm tonight at Capone's Restaurant, 312, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路 四段312號) and 9:30pm tomorrow at Alleycat's Pizza Huashan, 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號) **ON THE NET:** Search for "Bopomofo Blues Band" on Facebook

Even though Sun Studio is better known today as a tourist attraction — a fair number of Elvis fans pass through during the day — this modest two-story brick building continues to serve as a studio-for-hire in the evenings.

Rapier says recording there felt like being part of "living history." His microphone was placed in front of the spot where Elvis supposedly stood during his sessions, which was marked with tape in an 'X' on the studio's old linoleum-tiled floor.

Bassist Mike Tennant likened the experience to "being able to touch everything in the museum." Looking for a place to hang his jacket at the studio, Tennant was told to rest it on top of one of the pianos. The piano he chose turned

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PIETRO VALENTE



Blues group Bopomofo celebrates the release of Hell Froze Over this weekend. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOPOMORO

out to be one often played by rock 'n' roll legend Jerry Lee Lewis.

But the initial excitement of that trip faded back in Taipei as the CD fell victim to the typical roadblocks any unsigned, independent band might run into.

Over the next few years, Bopomofo had trouble finding an affordable postproduction engineer who met their needs; the band's pianist and singer Klaus Tseng wound up doing the work in the end. A string of bad luck with manufacturers and printers led to further delays.

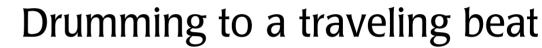
Hell Froze Over was named as such because "it took so long to get from recording to finished product," said Rapier.

Bopomofo, which also includes Japanese guitarist Aki Ikeda and drummer Daisuke "Dafu" Neishi, plans to play the entire album at their shows tonight and tomorrow. The songs have upbeat and danceable grooves and most were penned by Rapier, who covers the standard topics of heartbreak and good times but also lets his folksy, slightly off-the-wall humor shine on numbers like Making My Ulcer Bleed.

Though *Hell* is good representation of the group's original work, says Rapier, the band sounds better than ever and is ready for the next one. I asked him when to expect the next CD. "God, I hope it's not three years f rom now," he said laughing.

Hell is also a personal watershed for the 59-year-old Illinois native, who held rock star aspirations in his youth. The year was 1969, and Rapier's first band, a rock group called Hope, had recorded an album in Nashville. Just as they were putting on the final touches, their producer ran out of money. The album never got issued and Hope disbanded soon after.

BY DAVID CHEN



PERFORMANCE **NOTES:**

WHAT: Pietro Valente WHEN: Tuesday at 9:30pm WHERE: Sappho de Base, B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1) ON THE NET: WWW. pietrovalente.com

the American Club in Taipei and has collaborated with Valente during his recent stay in Taiwan. "He plays the drums as if he's playing the horn." Valente, who is married to a Taiwanese national, lived in Taichung in 2007 and 2008 and was active in the jazz scene in Taiwan and China. He has been in Taiwan on a family visit for the past several months and currently lives with his wife in his hometown of Padua in northern Italy. He studied jazz percussion at the Universita della Musica in Rome and says he was attracted to jazz more for the

visceral aspects of improvisation than the genre itself.

"It's important [for me] to create music together with other people, to look for something unique for that moment, for that atmosphere," he said.

Taipei-based bassist Martijn Vanbuel is also appreciative of Valente's skills, describing him as "very playful" but "a good listener." The two have been performing together live on their respective solo projects, and both served as backing musicians on a Golden Melody Award-winning album by pianist Wu Su-chi (吳書齊), who died in 2008.

As the title suggests, Tales From the Far East was inspired by Valente's travels

Prosecutors have since charged the "chairman," Hung Kun-yang (洪昆陽), with fraud and are now wondering why Wang the elder introduced Lin in the first place.

Returning to fraudulent singing, Alex To (杜德偉) didn't even try

year-old mother of pop singer Elva Hsiao (蕭亞軒) passed away on New Year's Day after a long battle with cervical cancer. May she rest in peace. For once it was nice to see the celebrity firmament supporting one of their peers, rather than the usual backstabbing.

Of course it didn't take long for the media to cynically point out that the 30-year stands to inherit part of her mother's estimated NT\$1 billion estate.

Base on Tuesday before returning to his home country of Italy the following week.

Valente is not a jazz drummer who sits back quietly, taps on a ride cymbal and occasionally slaps the snare. Behind the kit, his entire body is always moving. It looks as if he's trying to hit every part of every drum and cymbal from as many different angles as he can.

"My movement is according to the emotion I'm trying to express," said the soft-spoken 27-year-old in an interview earlier this week. "I try to dig out new

sounds or some particular sounds."

His presence is strong in an ensemble setting and his playing often has a driving, funky feel, even on some of his slower numbers.

For some, he might sound too busy, or come across as another loud, overzealous drummer. For others, his hunger for color and tone is an asset.

"He's a drummer that thinks more in terms of melody," said pianist Andrew Page, who is the music director of

over the past several years to India Thailand, China and Taiwan. The album includes an interpretation of the Chinese folk song Jasmine Flower (茉莉花), which is titled Wide Breath in Beijing and a funky tribute to Indian architecture, Muswing. Though the CD's Asian exotica theme might seem a bit cliche, the music is worth a listen for Valente's earnest approach to composition.

"I want to try to be like a photographer of the places I visit, and at the same time the photographer of my emotions," he said.

TIDBITS

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

BY CATHERINE SHU

N°168 Prime Steakhouse

RESTAURANTS

Address: 4F, Grand Victoria Hotel, 168 Jingye 4th Rd, Taipei City (台北市敬業四路168號4樓) **Telephone:** (02) 6602-567 **Open:** Weekdays 11:30am to 2:30pm and 6pm to 10pm; weekends noon to 3pm and 5:30pm to 10pm

On the Net: www.grandvictoria.com.tw Average meal: NT\$1,000 and up Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted

👕 he N°168 Prime Steakhouse located in the Grand Victoria Hotel in Neihu might easily be mistaken for just another general-purpose hotel restaurant, except for two factors. The first is the two wood-fired ovens that stand prominently in the restaurant's open-plan kitchen. The Australian-made Beech Oven and the US-made Woodstone Oven both have high reputations as items of outstanding culinary technology, and are brand names that are familiar with most serious foodies as able, in the right hands, to provide outstanding results. The second factor is the controlling hand behind the counter, chef Danny Deng (鄧有癸), who is widely regarded as Taiwan's "godfather" of the steakhouse, who helped shape both Sonoma and A-Cut.

With N°168 Prime, Deng says he is trying to create a familyfriendly dining experience that nevertheless offers the absolute top of the range in steaks, as represented by offerings in its set menu such as the USDA Black Angus Top Cap Steak (6oz), which comes with a starter, a soup, a salad, roasted seasonal vegetables and a desert for NT\$1,500. Cheaper options, such as the Black Angus New York Strip start at NT\$800 for the set.

Of the seven starters offered, I picked the sizzling Hokkaido Scallop, a minimally simple dish garnished with a dab of parsley puree and beurre blanc. It was all that was needed, for the fat, succulent scallops, seared with just a hint of gold around the edges and barely cooked on the inside, were one of those taste adventures that it would be possible to write a whole essay about. The warm spinach salad was no more than a small pile of beautiful baby spinach leaves and a few crispy pieces of bacon. The dressing, enlivened by mustard and sesame oil, had just a hint of the Orient. The main course of Black Angus Top Cap Steak, a cut pioneered by Chef Deng, was melt-in-the-mouth succulent. Three sauces (red wine, horseradish and Bearnaise). three kinds of gourmet salt (Himalayan rose, Hawaiian black and French fleur de sel) and three kinds of mustard (English, Dijon and grain), are provided, and while all are of excellent quality, it is all too easy to ignore their presence and focus on the steak in its totally unadorned state. The results of careful selection, aging (the restaurant has its own aging room), and preparation can be tasted in every bite. There was also a side dish of

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Prime, but not too pricey.

JRTESY OF GRAND VICTORIA HOTEI roasted seasonal vegetables, also unadorned, their natural flavors brought out through roasting in

If steak is not your thing, there are options such as oak-roasted pork chop (NT\$980), roast chicken (NT\$750) and Moroccanstyle rack of lamb (NT\$2,000). The restaurant offers 12

wines by the glass, and a three or four wine pairing menu for an additional NT\$880 or NT\$1,100, respectively, that can be part of the set. This provides an opportunity for diners to sample a variety of wines at a relatively inexpensive price. Even the steaks are presented on a separate dish to facilitate sharing, and several steak dishes, such as the a Chateaubriand (8oz, NT\$1,200) or a prime rib eye (16oz, (NT\$2,000), are designed for two.

The food at N°Prime is a match for any steakhouse in Taiwan, and the laid-back atmosphere and simple setting may even be a bonus if you are not in the mood for the plush and leather luxury that are so often inseparable from top-tier steakhouses.



the Woodstone oven.

aleakala is named after a volcano on the island of Maui, but if you go there expecting succulent roast pig, bowls of poi or spam musubi, then you'll be disappointed. If all you want are fruity cocktails in a modernized tiki bar, however, then the restaurant in Xinyi District's newly opened Bellavita shopping

center just might hit the spot. Sleek white lamps topped with giant mounds of fake fruit mangos, bananas, apples, oranges greet visitors as soon as they ride up the escalator. Haleakala takes up much of the fourth floor, with sofas, low tables and a bar on the landing. A dimly lit interior section has banquette seating and yet another bar. Spacious patios with outdoor seating look like they will be pleasant places to hold a party when the weather gets warmer. Aside from the fruit towers, Haleakala's decor also includes huge fiberglass hibiscus blossoms and a straw roof above



Haleakala

Address: 4F, Bellavita, 28 Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路28號4樓) Telephone: (02) 8729-2868 Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted Open: 10am to 10pm; closes at 10:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays Average meal: Individual dishes average NT\$200 to NT\$280; cocktails are NT\$220 to NT\$250

each bar. Tiki god masks, torches and nets with little plastic fish trapped in them are mercifully or tragically — absent, depending on your tolerance for kitsch.

mainly of tapas that are plated for easy sharing, including miniburgers (vegetarian patties are available), quesadillas and rice wraps with dipping sauce. On our first visit, my companion and I split the Maryland crab cake appetizer with wasabi mayonnaise (NT\$280). We were surprised to get bitesized lumps of breaded and fried crabmeat delicately arranged on a rectangular white platter next to little dollops of sauce. Fortunately, the crispy breading did not distract too much from the fresh crabmeat and the wasabi mayonnaise packed just enough punch (though it could have been spicier). I ordered the avocado and tuna tartar lettuce wrap (NT\$240) as my entree, but portions were small and the dish would have worked better as another appetizer. The lightly chopped tuna was mixed with guacamole, red onions and topped with toasted almond slivers

and slices of taro root crisps. The red onions were distracting. but the almonds and taro added an unexpected and pleasurable bit of crunch and flavor. My companion ordered the smoked chicken quesadilla with sauteed bell pepper, onion, kidney beans and cheese (NT\$220). It came with miniscule dollops of salsa, sour cream and guacamole; overall, the

flavor was unmemorable. Heartier items on the menu include the mini burgers, which are stuffed with fat and tasty beef patties cooked medium rare. The Maui mini-burgers are topped with guacamole, lettuce, tomato, pickle and sauteed onions (NT\$240). The onions should have been listed first, however, because of the sizeable portion. Long strands were wrapped in a nest around the guacamole. The onions were sweet and I didn't mind them on their own, but they obscured the flavor of the avocado (and had a tendency to slip out of the burger every time I took a bite). Diners who like their burgers relatively unencumbered might want to try the Malibu (NT\$240), topped with lettuce, tomato, bacon and cheese.

Like any good tiki bar, Haleakala has an extensive menu of fruity cocktails. Our friendly waiter suggested the Hawaiian Cosmopolitan (NT\$220), a scoop of mango sorbet in Citroen vodka with apple and lime juice. A few non-alcoholic cocktails are available, including the very sweet Summer Sounds (NT\$200), made with passion fruit, orange and lemon juice, honey and yogurt.

inter is the best season to savor oysters, a staple in refined Western cuisine, and Grand Formosa's renowned steakhouse — Robin's Grill, is presenting an oyster feast featuring Belon, Cabanon Special, and Gillardeau oysters from France, which are complemented with two wines from Australia's Penfolds winery to provide the perfect balance of flavor and taste. Grand Formosa has also crafted a special lunch and dinner oyster feast that includes Canadian oysters (baked with cheese or baked with spinach and cheese). The oyster promotion lasts until Jan. 31. Tel: (02) 2523-8000 X3930

For those thinking ahead to next month and the upcoming Lunar New Year, major hotels around the country have begun to release the details of their special food hampers for the festive season. Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei is offering a variety of take-out Lunar New Year gifts. An assortment of Lunar New Year cakes costs NT\$650. Hampers priced from NT\$1,780 contain XO sauce, Chinese sausages, preserved Chinese meat, Chinese tea and chocolate raisins. Tel: (02) 2378-8888 X5867

The Caesar Park Hotel, Taipei is offering take-out meals, including its Dragon Flies and Tiger Leaps menu, a six-course set menu that serves six to eight people (NT\$3,980) and includes a mixed platter, smoked pork ribs, deepfried pomfret with garlic, steamed fresh shrimp with boxthorn, glutinous rice in lily leaf and taro cake. Tel: (02) 2311-5150.

Haleakala's menu consists

Haleakala's food isn't really Hawaiian, but the modernized tiki bar ambiance is fun for a round of fancy cocktails. PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES