



POP STOP

COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN

Jay Chou (周杰倫) has had a rough start in 2010. His latest project, *Pandamen* (熊貓人), a television series about two heroic pandas that protect a city, has flopped both in Taiwan and China.

It's complicated.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

Damage control was the name of the game this past week for several Taiwanese celebrities.

Ethan Ruan (阮經天), star of the hit gangster flick *Monga* (艋舺), found himself in a tough spot with his girlfriend, model **Tiffany Hsu** (許瑋甯), after being spotted at a hotel in Taichung with an unidentified woman last weekend.

According to a play-by-play of events in *Apple Daily*, Ruan was spotted checking into the Windsor Hotel (裕元花園酒店) at 6am on Sunday, accompanied by a "long-haired young lady around 160cm tall." He checked out at 1pm, paying for the room under his own name and credit card.

As soon as the news broke, Ruan explained that the companion was his "friend's girlfriend," and insisted the two had slept in separate rooms — they stayed in a two-room suite — and that the boyfriend arrived later on. Ruan said he was out at a lounge bar with a group of friends and some of them decided to stay at the hotel because it was too late to return home.

Besides, he said, "if I really wanted to do something [unfaithful], would I be so stupid to use my own name and credit card?"

That stumbling response probably didn't help. Hsu didn't speak to the media at first, only hinting at her mood on Facebook by changing her relationship status from "In a relationship" to "It's complicated."

A day later, however, she put on a brave face and told reporters she believed her beau had been faithful and that all of the people involved were friends. For his part, Ruan said that it was a mistake not to return home and that Hsu was his "everything."

But that wasn't good enough for *Apple Daily*, which seems to be trying to hint at a replacement for Ruan: Taiwanese American heartthrob **Van Ness Wu** (吳建豪). The paper made light of the fact that the two are friends and have been frequent collaborators as of late: They co-starred in a popular TV soap opera, and Hsu featured in one of Wu's music videos.

Wu probably won't be biting that apple, though. As a recent convert to Christianity, he swore off his wild days and signed a "celibacy card" in 2008. He did make an offer to Hsu, though, offering to "help her pray."

Mando-pop big daddy and actor

BY ALITA RICKARDS

In the past there seemed to be a firm divide between electronica and rock, with fans of either genre often opposed to the other. Since the late 1980s there have been crossoverers — think Pet Shop Boys and Willie Nelson's versions of *Always on My Mind*. But never before have the distinctions blurred so much between different genres of music than in our modern age of mashups and fusion bands.

This weekend's lineup at VU Live House is no exception. None of the bands playing at tomorrow's Hungry Ear party stick to one recognizable genre. The closest to doing so is Collider, with a brooding post-rock sensibility that has lost none of its dark beauty with the addition of bassist Thomas Squires. Vocalist Leon LaPointe is no longer with the band, which is now entirely instrumental. That's not a big change as LaPointe was inclined to use his voice like an instrument anyway.

Space Funk fuses electro, disco and funk, and as if that weren't enough variety, composer Viba Paul Gouriet has also been delving into swing music, albeit electro-swing.

Plover's sound is ambient, with pretty guitar riffs and spacey effects in some songs, while others are more like metal ballads with gothic wailing and tonnes of feedback.

Roughhausen's Jeff Stoddard adds to his industrial past working with Skinny Puppy and Front Line Assembly and gets with the times by merging a live breakcore set suffused with hard chemical beats, break beats and techno. Molly Lin (林孟珊) from Nekojoam joins in on bass.

Stoddard is brave to be playing at VU again after his last two shows there suffered crippling crowd problems. The issues seem to stem more from a lack of trained staff than from equipment, and detract from Roughhausen's signature hard-core sound. Hopefully that will be sorted out for the show this time so the audience can get the full effect of the music.

Relatively new on the scene is 80s revival, synth pop/punk, hip-hop band Sunset Rollercoaster, which plays a



Sunset Rollercoaster rides a multi-genre wave of sound. PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNSET ROLLERCOASTER

Lee and bandmate Kuo Kuo (曾國宏), who plays guitar and bass and "likes to fool around on his laptop," says Kuo, are both still in college, while drummer Sonoko (羅尊龍) teaches drumming at various schools in Taipei.

"At times it's impossible to stick a label on the music we make," said Lee. "People who have come and seen our shows know that it's almost completely different every time around. In a way, it's because our musicality is constantly evolving, and we're still looking for that single spot on which to settle down."

Bands used to get together to rehearse in garages, basements and studios, but modern collaboration has evolved into a more solitary pursuit. "Our songs start out as ideas that we usually create individually at home which later find completion when the three of us get a chance to put it together," said Lee. "It's a really collective setup we have going, and working together to complete songs that we start at home leads to some exciting new ideas."

He adds that regularly writing new music keeps the process fresh for the band and phases out old songs for new ideas. "The best aspect about this method is that it keeps us interested in our own music," he said.

One of the benefits of artist's freedom in dabbling in any genre they choose is that the style — while perhaps lacking polish — is always new, which appeals to a generation used to the Internet, YouTube and Facebook.

"It's impossible to predict which set we'll be using — electronica or rock," said Lee. "It depends entirely upon our mood the day of the show."

Heaven knows anything goes

monthly gig at The Wall. The musicians have now also begun including blues and rock in their sets. "It definitely surprised some people," said Kevin Lee (李柏麟) who plays bass and keyboard. We later found out that some fans expecting our electronica set that night had posted on The Wall's Web site forum," he said. "Something along the lines of 'What happened to Sunset Rollercoaster?' — though failing to mention whether or not they had liked the show."

DANCE

BY CATHERINE SHU

Glitter on the dance floor

If watching the Winter Olympics ice skating competition whetted your appetite for sequins and pirouettes, you're in luck. More than 90 ballroom and Latin-style dancers from over 25 countries will compete in the 2010 Open Professional Ballroom Dance Championship — Asian Tour Taipei Open (2010職業國際舞世界大賽巡迴賽台北站) tomorrow at the Taipei Arena (台北小巨蛋), the last stop in the competition. At stake is a top prize of NT\$3.3 million.

The competition, which is recognized and overseen by the World Dance Council, was launched in 2008 by the Taiwan International Sport Dance Development Association (TISDDA, 中華民國國際運動舞蹈發展協會). TISDDA's goal is to establish a dance contest on par with similar events held in Europe and the US. Before the event was launched, Japan was the only Asian country to host world-class ballroom dance competitions. This year marks the second time the Open Professional Ballroom Dance Championship — Asian Tour Taipei Open has been held. According to TISDDA, the first attracted more than 10,000 spectators in Taipei. This year's contest traveled to South Korea and Macau and made two stops in Japan.

CHAMPIONSHIP NOTES:

WHAT: 2010 Open Professional Dance Championships — Asian Tour Taipei Open

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: Tomorrow from 10am to 9:30pm

ADMISSION: NT\$500 and NT\$3,600, available at the door or through 7-Eleven ibon kiosks

ON THE NET: www.tisdda.org

Competitors hail mainly from Japan and the US, with some couples coming from as far away as Finland, Ukraine — and Azerbaijan. Dancers range in age from under 16 to senior citizens. Couples to keep an eye on include Americans Arunas Bizokas and Katusha Demidova, ballroom dancers who have already triumphed in the Japan, South Korea and Macau stops of the tour, and Victor Fung and Anastasia Murayama, also representing the US, who are currently among the top three Latin dance couples in the competition.



More than 90 dancers will compete tomorrow at the 2010 Open Professional Ballroom Dance Championship — Asian Tour Taipei Open. PHOTO: EPA

RESTAURANTS

BY NOAH BUCHAN

Yue Yuan 越苑

Address: 8, Ln 103, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段103巷8號)
Open: Mondays to Fridays 11:30am to 3pm and 5:30pm to 9pm, Saturdays and Sundays 11:30am to 9pm
Telephone: (02) 2701-2523
Details: English and Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted, reservations strongly recommended
Average meal: NT\$200



Yue Yuan keeps it simple. PHOTO NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Yue Yuan (越苑) has gained a kind of cult following for its beef pho, or Vietnamese beef noodle soup, and bahn mi, or baguette sandwiches, since opening its first location last year off Dunhua North Road (敦化北路). Now it has a new branch, which opened in November between The Diner and Carnegie's in an alley off Dunhua South Road (敦化南路).

According to Vietnamese Pho Noodles (www.lovingpho.com), one of many Web sites about "pho noodles for lovers of pho," the soup should come garnished with fresh basil, bean sprouts, lime and sliced chili peppers, as well as the important cilantro.

All except the cilantro arrived at my table on a small plate immediately after ordering the rare steak pho (NT\$140/NT\$170). As I was searching around for the cilantro, my server came over to tell me that there was a shortage of it, apologizing profusely for its absence (though they still add it to the broth).

reveling in the fragrant smell.

The broth's notable beef flavor was so distractingly good that I downed half the order before calling the server over to inquire about the bottles of hoisin and Sriracha Chili Sauce sitting on each of the restaurant's white tables.

Pho purists say that hoisin and chili sauces should be added to the broth upon serving — that is unless the broth can stand on its own. My server, perplexed perhaps that I was asking after finishing much of the order, proceeded to add a half teaspoon of each to a small dish and told me to mix it up and either use it as a dipping sauce for the meat or add it to the broth. I did the latter because I'd already consumed most of the beef.

The mixture added a hot zing to the hints of sour lime and somewhat sweet basil. Next time, however, I won't bother adding the condiments because the broth requires none.

Another reason to frequent Yue Yuan is its French baguette sandwiches. Generous portions of grilled chicken (NT\$120), beef and pork versions are also available) came nestled inside the warm crusty baguette that I ordered. Sprigs of cilantro enlivened an already delicious

combination of julienned pickled carrots and radishes and just the right amount of mayo and cracked pepper. Netizens are nuts about this hoagie and after one bite I could understand why. If you go, this is a sandwich you don't want to miss out on.

Yue Yuan keeps its decor and menu simple. The clean and open interior features buttery yellow walls on one side and brick motif wallpaper on the other. The Chinese and English menu contains no pictures, though the numerous servers running around will patiently explain its contents.

Yue Yuan's other location is at 12, Ln 155, Dunhua N Rd, Taipei City (台北市敦化北路155巷12號). Tel: (02) 2718-0660.

Arvorg

Address: 325, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段325號)
Telephone: (02) 2363-5600
Average meal: NT\$130 to NT\$200
Open: 11:30am to 9pm, closed on Mondays
Details: Credit cards not accepted

You can't see a second-run movie for NT\$100 anymore in Gongguan (公館) because the Great Century Theater (大世紀戲院) is gone — it closed a year and a half ago — but you can go to the same locale and enjoy authentic French crepes for around the same price.

Arvorg, which was opened by French expatriate Christophe Chevance and his wife Sunny Fan (范麗瓊) in December last year, is a modest but charming creperie located in what used to be Great Century's ticket booth.

The proprietors have brightened up their rented corner of a dark and dingy first-floor lobby with a thorough cleaning, fresh paint job and a friendly vibe. Patrons can sit in front of the kitchen at the bar, which seats 12 people, listen to French ska playing on the stereo and watch Chevance whip up the culinary specialty of his native Brittany: sweet crepes and savory galettes.

With around 40 choices, there's a crepe for every sweet tooth. For something simple, go for a plain crepe (NT\$30) or sugar and lemon (NT\$50). Canadians will appreciate the maple syrup crepe (NT\$80), and the "handmade caramel" (NT\$50) is worth a try as Chevance makes his own sauce. The shop also recommends the

chocolate and freshly shredded and baked coconut (NT\$90) for something different.

Arvorg also offers crepes with fresh banana, apple and imported pear, which range from NT\$70 to NT\$100. But note that some ingredients, such as the peach and pineapple options, are canned. As the menu is quite big, it would be nice if the shop listed which ingredients were fresh.

But it's hard to go wrong with any of the flavors as Chevance's crepes are delicious. They are soft, thin and almost fleshy with a slight buttery crisp. This homemade goodness comes from a batter recipe that uses only eggs, white flour and milk — and not a drop of water, says Fan.

This is a first restaurant venture for Chevance and Fan, who met while working for a French pop musical production of *Romeo and Juliet*. He was on the stage crew and she was a translator.



Arvorg's galette with ham, tomato sauce, mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses and cherry tomatoes is a tasty, lighter alternative to pizza. PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

BY DAVID CHEN

TIDBITS

BY JENS KASTNER



PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

In the spirit of Maoist self-criticism, Tidbits has a confession to make. For too long we've focused on Western food and neglected the bountiful Taiwanese chow that is found on our very doorstep. But instead of going into exile or purging our ranks, rehabilitation comes, this week, in the form of deep-fried duck head.

Not just any old duck head, though. Dongshan duck head, a recipe said to originate in Dongshan Village, Tainan County (台南縣東山鄉).

Fafa Dongshan Duck Head (發發東山鴨頭) stall's slogan says it all: "The marinade is the soul of Dongshan duck head."

For this version of the delicacy, malt sugar replaces the soy sauce usually used to make the brine in which the heads are soaked for hours before hitting the fat. The marinade, which includes Chinese medicinal herbs, ensures the heads don't become dry or hard after being deep-fried. Even the skull and beak can be eaten.

Also in Taipei, Jinshang Dongshan Duck Head (金賞東山鴨頭) adds star anise and eight Chinese medicinal herbs and malt to its marinade.

Fafa Dongshan Duck Head

發發東山鴨頭
Address: Intersection of Ningxia Road and Pingyang Street (台北市寧夏路、平陽街交叉口)
Telephone: 0981-029-858
Open: 4:30pm to 12:30am
Price: NT\$20 per head

Jinshang Dongshan Duck Head

金賞東山鴨頭
Address: In front of 138 Raohe Street, Taipei City (台北市鵝河街138號對面)
Telephone: 0922-174-731
Open: 6pm to 1am **Price:** NT\$40 per head