

AROUND TOWN

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Spring is in the air

Santee Chan performs a concert tomorrow of classic hits and numbers from her upcoming album

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Santee Chan's (陳珊妮) image as an ice queen is set to melt tomorrow when she ditches her goth-punk guise to unveil a new persona, that of spring goddess.

As a prelude to the summer release of an as yet untitled spring-themed album, the singer, songwriter and producer is holding a concert, dubbed Spring Goddess Cometh (春神來了), at Legacy Taipei tomorrow for which she will perform classic hits and new songs from the upcoming CD.

"This new album is modern, retro, simple, youthful and laid-back," Chan said in a phone interview with the *Taipei Times* last week. "It's not as heavy as my previous works."

Chan won plaudits as the songstress of hits for heavyweight stars including Sammi Cheng (鄭秀文), Tony Leung (梁朝偉) and Faith Yang (楊乃文).

Her career reached a new apogee in 2005 when she beat Jay Chou (周杰倫) to pick up the coveted Best Album Producer and the Best Mandarin-Language Album awards at the Golden Melody Awards for the extravagant love opus *When We All Wept in Silence* (後來我們都哭了).

In 2006 the eponymous debut album from the group Miss Gold Digger (拜金小姐) (a band Chan formed with Hong Kong musician Veronica Lee (李端嫻) and Taiwanese illustrator Cola King (可樂王)) took the Best Group Award at the Golden Melody Awards.

"These days, computers allow everyone to produce professional music," said Chan. "I'm always listening to new music on the Internet and looking for chances to explore new ideas or collaborate with new musicians."

Two years later Chan won the Best Female Singer Award at the Golden Melody Awards with the pop-meets-orchestra *If There Is Something Important* (如果有一件事是重要的).

Her fans and friends call her "princess" (公主), a nickname that befits Chan's commanding and majestic stage presence, and she has a reputation as a tough operator.

Asked what defines good music, Chan said: "I don't think there is such a thing as good music."

"Music is such a strange thing because it's all tied to your emotional experiences," she said. "We all have music from our high school or college years that we are emotionally attached to. Whatever music you respond to is good music."

Over the past few years, Chan's media profile has skyrocketed with her turn as an acid-tongued judge on the TV talent show *Super Idol* (超級偶像).

"There are already so many singers out there launched by TV talent shows. I wonder how many more we can accommodate," Chan said. "The talent show can give you instant recognition. After that, you still need to face whatever challenges come up."

In addition to music, Chan published the award-winning illustrated book *Gloomy Sunday Rosy* (short-listed in the Most Beautiful Books in the World category at the Leipzig Book Fair) in 2005 and displayed her photographs in an exhibition titled *Little by Little* in 2007.

In 2000 she penned the theme song performed by superstar Tony Leung for Wong Kar Wai's (王家衛) *In the Mood for Love* (花樣年華), and she wrote and produced the whole sound track for the blockbuster Taiwanese movie *Monga* (艋舺), which was released in February.

Asked if she would like to push the envelope further by tackling acting, Chan laughed: "We actually talked about having me play a gangster boss' mistress during the filming of *Monga*. But that didn't pan out."



PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Santee Chan — Spring Goddess Cometh (陳珊妮 — 春神來了)

WHEN: Tomorrow at 8pm

WHERE: Legacy Taipei, located at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), Center Five Hall (中五館), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)

ADMISSION: NT\$600 in advance or NT\$800 at the door. Tickets are available through ERA ticketing and online at www.ticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: www.santeechan.com



The many faces of Santee Chan. PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

[FILM REVIEW]

If looks could thrill

Cho Li's mystery thriller has blockbuster potential but loses its suspense early on

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

illed as the first Taiwanese movie to venture into thriller territory in years, *Zoom Hunting* (獵豔), producer Cho Li's (卓立) directing debut, looks like a promising commercial flick with its theme of voyeurism, explicit sex scenes and a star-studded cast that includes pop idols Ning Chang (張鈞甯) and Wen Sheng-hao (溫昇豪) and famous actors Chin Shih-chieh (金士傑) and Jack Kao (高捷). But an unimaginative story line and drab performances by the lead roles ruin the surprise.

The film begins with fashion magazine photographer Ruyi (Chang) taking snapshots from her balcony and inadvertently capturing a couple (Wen and Chou Heng-yin, 周姮吟) having sex. When she realizes

the couple are adulterers, Ruyi can't resist the urge to stalk them with her camera and share the discoveries with her novelist sister Ruxing (Chu Chih-ying, 朱芷瑩).

One night, the voyeur hears a loud argument from the couple's room across the street and sees a man being knocked down by a woman. She calls the police, but nothing unusual is found.

Convinced that something did happen, Ruyi enlarges her photographs and discovers that her sister had been in the room earlier. Meanwhile, Ruxing overcomes her writer's block and finishes an erotic thriller that involves the murder of a married man by his paramour.

Puzzled, Ruyi starts investigating and eventually confronts her sister about what really happened that night.

Zoom Hunting opens with an auspicious premise effectively delivered through fluid cinematography by Hong Kong's Kwan Pun-leung (關本良), whose credits include Wong Kar-wai's (王家衛) *In the Mood for Love* (花樣年華) and Ann Hui's (許鞍華) *July Rhapsody* (男人四十). In the beginning of the film, Kwan's aerial cinematography hovers over Ruyi's apartment building and swoops down to close in on other characters whose identities will soon be revealed.

Thus director Cho takes merely a few minutes to pin down the setting and main characters — a group of ordinary people living in an ordinary neighborhood. That the mystery thriller unfolds through breakfast eateries, a neighborhood park, narrow alleys and other sights familiar to Taipei residents only adds to the allure.

But as the film proceeds, tension and suspense are gradually worn out by the director's plain narrative skills and dull verbal explanations by the characters. This dramatic device works well on stage but seems abruptly out of place for the intended mood and pace of this film.

The wooden acting of Chang and Chu as the two sisters doesn't help either. It is theater actress Chou's natural performance and the explosive cameo of Michelle Krusiec as the cheating man's wife that deliver much-needed flare.

Zoom Hunting makes a decent stab at exploring a rarely touched upon genre, but the suspense dwindles early and drains emotion from what should be the pivotal, intensely charged scenes toward the end.



ZOOM HUNTING 獵豔

DIRECTED BY: CHO LI (卓立)

STARRING: NING CHANG (張鈞甯) AS RUYI, CHU CHIH-YING (朱芷瑩) AS RUXING, WEN SHENG-HAO (溫昇豪) AS THE MARRIED MAN, CHOU HENG-YIN (周姮吟) AS THE MARRIED WOMAN

RUNNING TIME: 95 MINUTES

TAIWAN RELEASE: TODAY