

POP  
STOP

COMPILED BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

The most exciting news on the music scene this week is that the bands Sodagreen (蘇打綠) and Tizzybac will be performing at the Liverpool Sound City Music Festival in the UK today and tomorrow. Sodagreen keyboard player Zephyr Kung (蘇鈺祺) was given a special leave of absence from military service to travel to Liverpool for the event. For Sodagreen, this caps yet another highly successful year that sees them entering the Golden Melody Award season with two nominations in the Best Band category (最佳樂團獎) for albums *Fever* (夏/狂熱) and *Spring — Sunshine* (春/日光). Band manager Yan Rou-yi (顏柔怡) is quoted in the *United Daily News* as saying that this unusual double nomination is an indication of the hard work of band members and producer Lin Wei-tse (林唯哲).

The announcement of the nominations for the 21st Golden Melody Awards (第21屆金曲獎) last Friday has sparked fevered speculation. In the *China Times*, Sodagreen said that they tipped Eason Chan (陳奕迅) as the winner in the Best Male Mandarin Singer category, but declined to be drawn for a tip on Best Mandarin Female Singer, saying the race in that category was too close to call.

Sina.com laments the uninspiring lineup among the male singers, with the all-too-familiar faces of Eason Chan, David Tao (陶吉吉) and JJ Lam (林俊傑). Khalil Fong (方大同) is tipped as a possible winner, and Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰) is in with a chance, though the Web site suggests he is more popular with audiences than with critics. A surprise omission is Crowd Lu (盧廣仲), who picked up Best Newcomer last year. His latest album *Seven Days* (七天) only got the nod for Best Music Video (最佳音樂錄影帶獎).

The weakness of the male lineup is highlighted by the fact that all but one nomination in the Best Song and Best Album categories are by female artists. The single exception is *Northbound Train* (北上列車) by Super Band (縱貫線), a super group alliance of veteran rockers Lo Ta-yu (羅大佑), Emil Chou (周華健), Jonathan Lee (李宗盛) and Chang Chen-yue (張震嶽).

There is a good deal more interest in the Best Female Mandarin Singer category (最佳國語女歌手獎), with indie talent Cheer Chen (陳綺貞) and Deserts Chang (張懸) going up against multiple Golden Melody winners Tanya Tsai (蔡雅雅) and Karen Mok (莫文蔚). Pub singer Tiger Huang (黃小琥), whose career has seen a



Lala Shu rides a white horse.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

huge revival in the last year, and Chang Hui-mei (張惠妹), in her new A-Mit (阿密特) persona, provide a further level of interest to the competition.

Much excitement surrounds the chances of Hsu Chia-ying (徐佳瑩) aka Lala Shu, whose career was launched when she won the third season of CTV's *One Million Star* (超級星光大道) talent show. Her song *I Ride a White Horse* (身騎白馬) has been a runaway hit, and although her professional career is little more than a year old (her debut album was released in May last year), she has joined the competition with five nominations. Apart from an expected nomination in the Best Newcomer category (最佳新人獎), she is also nominated in the prestigious categories of Best Song (最佳年度歌曲獎), Best Album (最佳國語專輯獎) and Best Songwriter (最佳作曲人獎).

The award ceremony will take place on June 26 with Little S, otherwise known as Dee Hsu (徐熙娣), and Harlem Yu (庾澄慶) as MCs.

The domestic life of Little S continues to be in the news, but the veteran TV personality is not an easy nut for the media to crack. With the dust finally settling on speculation of domestic violence, new reports emerged last week of husband Mike Hsu (許雅鈞) dancing in an intimate fashion with a young woman while out clubbing. At a press conference to promote the Golden Melody Awards, Little S said that there's nothing wrong with going out on the town. As for the photos, she dismissed them as far too dark to see anything much. Her main interest was in the fashion theme for the award ceremony, which she described as "sexy and revealing." She will get through four costumes during the course of the evening. As to whether Hsu would attend the ceremony, Little S simply said: "That depends on whether he has any clubbing engagements."

BY NOAH BUCHAN

## American dream gone awry

It would make the perfect headline: Lady Gaga in an S&M tussle with Andy Warhol. The story would go on to describe, in intimate detail, the dripping of candle wax on Warhol's naked torso, a whip to keep him in line and plenty of rope to ensure no escape.

Though implausible (Warhol's been dead for 23 years), the above scene kicks off *American Dream Factory* (美國夢工廠), the latest play of social criticism by Against Again Troupe (再拒劇團), which begins tonight at Guling Street Avant-Garde Theatre (牯嶺街小劇場).

"It's the play's only S&M scene," said Sammie Liu (劉珊珊), the production's producer, an hour into a technical rehearsal on Wednesday night.

Pity, that, because Against Again Troupe does such a bang-up job of it — a cross between the gothic atmosphere of Warhol's *Flesh for Frankenstein* and the false sexuality of a Gaga video (didn't she used to be a blow-up doll?).

Directed by Huang Si-nung (黃思農), who co-wrote and workshopped the script with his four actors, *American Dream Factory* is a mise-en-scene that examines the export of the American dream. Here, however, democratic principles don't lead to prosperity — the ad nauseum mantra mouthed by a string of recent US presidents.

Today's American dream export, *American Dream Factory* suggests, is unfettered capitalism, consumerism and materialism, a dehumanizing product that perpetuates vast inequalities and turns people into automatons. Along with Gaga and Warhol — the latter played by Jack Yao (姚淳耀) of *Au Revoir Taipei* (一頁台北) fame — the play uses Ronald McDonald, Michael Jackson and Madonna as symbols of the American dream gone wrong.

*American Dream Factory* began as an

Against Again Troupe returns to the stage this weekend with *American Dream Factory*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AGAINST AGAIN TROUPE

art installation for the 2008 Singapore Fringe Festival. The installation comprises the set for the play and requires considerable visual multi-tasking to keep up with. Three television showing, for example, footage of Kurt Cobain smashing his guitar and Warhol eating a hamburger, add to the overall theme but also serve as a distraction to the human action. But that's probably the point.

Though not a particularly original concept (it seems that every month sees a new play in Taiwan attempting to tackle consumerism and materialism as a subject), the fantastical staging of the production makes it an enjoyable ride.

## THEATER NOTES:

**WHAT:** Against Again Troupe (再拒劇團), *American Dream Factory* (美國夢工廠)

**WHEN:** Tonight, tomorrow, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, May 28 and May 29 at 7:30pm and tomorrow, Sunday, May 29 and May 30 at 2:30pm

**WHERE:** Guling Street Avant-Garde Theatre (牯嶺街小劇場), 2, Ln 5, Guling St, Taipei City (台北市牯嶺街5巷2號)

**TICKETS:** NT\$450, available through NTCH ticketing, online at [www.artsticket.com.tw](http://www.artsticket.com.tw) or at the door

## OUTDOORS

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

## Hot on the trail

Having organized five international adventure races in Taiwan that were filmed by National Geographic and ESPN Star Sports for regional TV coverage, Action Asia Events' next venture is the 2010 Salomon Suunto X Trail race on June 5 in Maokong (貓空) in Taipei's Wenshan District (文山區). Prize money of more than US\$15,000 is up for grabs.

The Action Asia Events team has set up two trail courses, one designed for novice runners and hikers, the other for experienced trail runners. Both start and finish at Zhinan Temple (指南宮) in Maokong. The easier of the two is an 8km course, comprising a single-track trail and a short 500m hiking section, which runners can finish in one to two hours, depending on their fitness level.

For more experienced runners, the 16km course features single-track trails with some mountain sections — including 678m Ergeshan (二格山) and 530m Houshan (猴山) — that offer stunning views. The winner is expected to finish in less than 90 minutes, and the course's average finishing time is two to three hours.

In a telephone interview, Michael Maddess, race director and course designer for Action Asia Events, said that few people were aware of Taiwan's excellent environment for trail running.

"People think that Hong Kong has a great environment just because there are plenty of races held there," Maddess said. "In fact, it's quite

the opposite ... Taiwan has massive potential to develop trail running."

Road running is already popular in Taiwan, Maddess said, but unfamiliarity with the country's mountain trails keeps runners from taking greater advantage of them.

Taiwan has outstanding distance runners competing regionally, Maddess said. "Some are now visiting Hong Kong to race, and placing very highly," he added.

"Many serious road racers will train on mountain trails for a whole variety of reasons," Maddess said, citing avoidance of urban air pollution as a major factor.

As of this week, Action Asia Events has already received 35 applications from Hong Kong competitors, including Jeremy Ritcey, one of the special administrative region's top distance runners.

Maddess said he hopes the June 5 race will introduce more Taiwanese to the joys of mountain trails, show runners in the region what the country has to offer and promote the growth of annual races in Taiwan that appeal to runners across Asia, and perhaps even draw competitors from the European circuit.

More details about the race can be found at [www.actionasiaevents.com](http://www.actionasiaevents.com) in both English and Chinese. The registration fee is NT\$800, and there are 600 places.



Jeremy Ritcey, left, won last year's Action Asia Off-Road Triathlon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ACTION ASIA EVENTS

## RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

## Bistro Le Pont 樂朋小館

**Address:** 176 Chaozhou St, Taipei City (台北市潮州街176號)

**Open:** 11:30am to 10:00pm

**Telephone:** (02) 2396-5677

**Average meal:** NT\$250 to NT\$500

**Details:** Chinese, French and English menus, credit cards accepted starting next week

Your goose is cooked at Bistro Le Pont (樂朋小館). The restaurant, which opened last month, is an extension of Le Pont (橋邊), a Kaohsiung-based restaurant that specializes in dishes and condiments made from goose meat and goose fat. The new space off Yongkang Street (永康街) captures the spirit of a French bistro, with large picture windows and low lighting. The menu even lists prices in New Taiwan dollars and euros. Bistro Le Pont's food, however, is made with mostly locally produced ingredients and features a fusion of French, Taiwanese and Chinese flavors.

The French inflection of each dish varies from course to course and comes mainly from the liberal use of sauces made from *graisse d'oie* (or goose fat) and shallots. The latter was chosen because it frequently appears in Taiwanese dishes and together the two ingredients create a marriage of flavors from both cuisines (Bistro Le Pont sells a full range of Le Pont condiments).

A good example of Bistro Le Pont's take on French cuisine is the *riz au sang d'oie avec echalottes confites* (NT\$60). The dish consists of goose blood rice cakes, a humble Taiwanese street food staple given a French accent with a large heap of shallots marinated in goose fat. A topping of freshly julienned ginger strips tempers the richness of the fat and adds some welcome heat and crunch.

Many of Bistro Le Pont's dishes are simple, designed to serve as blank

canvases for their signature range of sauces, oils and shallot confits. The *riz avec echalottes confites* with *sauce de Saint Jacques* (NT\$50), for example, is a bowl of white rice topped with tiny dried shrimp and sauce made from goose and chili oils flavored with chopped dried Hokkaido scallops, dry-cured ham, fried scallions and Chaotian peppers. The cornucopia of ingredients sits on top of the rice, waiting for you to mix it in with your chopsticks, while the oils seep in, coating each grain.

The *pousses de soja* (NT\$60), on the other hand, is a simply a mound of bean sprouts, grown in large, water-filled jars for extra succulence in Qishan (旗山) near Kaohsiung. The dish is less exciting than the items made with *Saint Jacques* sauce, but serves as a welcome complement to the other dishes with their spices, fried shallots and goose fat.

Bistro Le Pont's signature dishes are its plates of goose meat, *viande d'oie au sel maison* (NT\$250) and *viande d'oie fume maison* (NT\$280). The latter is smoked and has a heavier taste. Both dishes feature juicy, slightly oily, slices of poultry.

An alternative is the *confit d'oie maison* (NT\$450), made from leg of goose and very robust and complex in flavor. My dining companion and I preferred it to the two previously mentioned goose dishes. The *confit* is listed under Bistro Le Pont's specialties and is pricier than most of their other dishes, as is their *ratatouille mason* (NT\$250). But the



Bistro Le Pont serves a combination of French, Taiwanese and Chinese flavors.

PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

somewhat watery mix of stewed bell peppers, tomatoes and potatoes was disappointingly limp compared to the restaurant's other offerings.

The service at Bistro Le Pont is exemplary. On separate visits, the waiters carefully explained the composition of different dishes to us and made suggestions. The restaurant is crowded on weekends thanks to Le Pont's following among foodies, so be sure to make a reservation if you want to go during peak hours.

Kitchen 66 is a recently opened fish and chip, burger and pizza joint located in Gongguan (公館) that takes its name from the famous highway that stretches across the US.

The interior is a mish-mash of Americana that is presumably culled from and thematically associated with states along the highway. A vintage gas pump greets patrons as they walk through the door; a leather saddle with stirrups slumps on a stump; framed pictures of cowboys, motorcycles and cars hang crookedly off the walls beside signs for Route 66. Thankfully, there is no road kill.

I was somewhat excited that the popularity of the restaurant, which seems as busy as a California freeway, was due in part to the fact that it serves fish and chips (NT\$180). But then a contradictory series of events occurred. First, the fish and chips were located in the appetizer section. The dish then arrived 15 minutes after the pizza (and half an hour after it was ordered). When it did arrive, the portions were hardly the amount you would associate with a starter.

But first the pizza. The menu features six varieties — bacon, vegetarian and Mexican (NT\$120), spicy chicken (NT\$150) and seafood (NT\$180) — all 10-inch (25cm). I ordered the Italian (NT\$180), which consisted of salami, onions and mushroom. Or at least that's what the menu claimed. What arrived was a pizza with the first two toppings,

plus pineapple. No mushrooms. That's odd, I thought, because I didn't order pineapple and there isn't even a pizza listed on the menu with that topping.

Still, it was delicious from start to finish. The slim crust, cooked crispy on the outside and chewy — but not greasy — towards the center, was covered with an oregano-infused sauce and evenly topped with generous portions of the toppings and mozzarella. It didn't set any records for originality, but it was good value for its price and size.

As Nat King Cole's *Route 66* played in my mind, the fish and chips arrived. This dish is usually served with one piece of fish and an artery-clogging amount of chips. Kitchen 66 reverses the tradition with an astounding four

pieces of medium-sized fish and a moderate amount of chips.

Fish and chip aficionados will probably balk at the choice of fish used: black bream, a slightly sweet whitefish. Smaller and thinner than halibut or cod, the pieces of fish were pancake-thin rather than the usual steak-thick. Additionally, the thick batter that typically coats the fish was absent here. Without a strong-tasting fish and little crust (it seemed to have been dipped in only flour), the flavor was rather bland. The tartar sauce served with the fish, though tangy with hints of dill, did little to enliven this dish.

On the whole, Kitchen 66 serves decent fare at competitive prices. Now all they have to do is batter their fish.



Get your fish and chips at Kitchen 66.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

## Kitchen 66

**Address:** 11, Alley 3, Ln 74, Wenzhou St, Taipei City (台北市溫州街74巷3弄11號)

**Telephone:** (02) 2362-9668

**Open:** 11:30am to 10pm, closed on Mondays

**Average meal:** NT\$200

**Details:** Chinese and English menu, credit cards not accepted