

TRAVEL

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[MUSIC]



PHOTOS: BLOOMBERG



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCK RECORDS

Endless love

After an eight-year hiatus,
Wan Fang is back on track

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Generations of KTV crooners and TV talent show aspirants have tried their hands at renditions of *New Endless Love* (新不了情). But no one sings it better than the song's original interpreter, Wan Fang (萬芳), who tonight embarks on a tour of Taiwan.

"Composer Chris Bao (鮑比達) wrote the song as a tribute to his recently deceased father. The lyricist went through a low phase before he wrote the lyrics. I went through a low phase too before I was chosen to sing this song," Wan Fang said in an interview earlier this week. "This song is the accumulation of a lot of tears. That might explain why it has such power to move people."

After building a successful singing career, Wan Fang turned her back on music eight years ago and took up acting, earning two Golden Bell Awards, and much acclaim for her 2007 one-woman musical drama *Wan Fang's Solo in My Room* (萬芳的房間劇場), in the process.

Wan Fang, who has 15 albums under her belt and turns 43 on Tuesday, returned to music last week with the release of *Let's Not Grieve Anymore* (我們不要傷心了), her first full-length studio album since 2002.

"It wasn't intentional that I took such a long hiatus. I simply fell into acting and ended up spending a lot of time there," Wan Fang said.

The album, a folksy opus for which Wan Fang co-wrote five tracks, explores emotions. The singer learns to accept death as a necessary fact of life (in the title track *Let's Not Grieve Anymore*), comes to terms with depression (in *Seeing Happiness Smiling at Me* (看見快樂對我笑)), and makes peace with her own vulnerability (in *Not Always That Brave* (我們不是永遠都那麼勇敢)).

In *Solitude* (孤單), the album's only love song, she puts a 10-year-long relationship behind her and embraces the sobriety of solitude.

"Some of these songs are simply the accumulation of life," she said. "I wrote the sentences 'I see happiness smiling at me' and 'we are not always that brave' a few years back. Then I expanded the sentences into full lyrics and made this album."

Tonight, Wan Fang kicks off her *Let's Not Grieve Anymore Wandering Concert* (我們不要傷心了散漫音樂會) tour at Riverside Live House in Taipei, and over the next two weeks has dates in Kaohsiung, Taitung, Hualien and Taichung. Backed by Smile Bus Band (微笑巴士樂團), she will perform songs from her new album, classic hits and covers.

Stadium concerts are scheduled for Oct. 30 and Oct. 31 at the Taipei International Convention Center.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Wan Fang, *Let's Not Grieve Anymore Wandering Concert* (萬芳「我們不要傷心了散漫音樂會」)

WHEN: Tonight at 9pm

WHERE: Riverside Live House (西門紅樓展演館), 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號)

ADMISSION: NT\$500 in advance or NT\$600 at the door, call (02) 2368-7310 or visit www.riverside.com.tw

DETAILS: For information on Wan Fang's Kaohsiung, Taitung, Hualien and Taichung concerts, visit one-fang.com/livehouse.htm

WHAT: Wan Fang, *The Nights You Didn't Know* (萬芳「你所不知道的那些夜晚」)

WHEN: Oct. 30 and Oct. 31

WHERE: Taipei International Convention Center (台北國際會議中心大會堂), 1, Xinyi Rd Sec 5, Taipei City (台北市信義路五段1號)

ADMISSION: To be announced. Tickets go on sale on Thursday through ERA ticketing at www.ticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: wanfang2008.pixnet.net/blog, www.one-fang.com

A journey of a 1,000 miles beings with a single tap

Check in for fun with the Gowalla social networking app or take it on a trip

BY TAMARA LUSH
AP

Combine Facebook, Twitter, geocaching and a Lonely Planet guidebook, and what do you get? Gowalla.

This location-based, social networking tool is part game, part travel companion. Download the free app to your phone or iPad, register for an account and then "check in" at various spots around the globe.

But that is the basic, 10-second description of the app — in reality, there is a lot more to this well-designed site.

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TRAVELERS CAN USE GOWALLA:

- Go on a trip. Gowalla staff and users have created different, themed trips to follow. For instance, there is an Art Deco tour of Miami, a pub crawl trip in London, and one trip called the "Austin Stairs of Doom," which takes urban hikers up and down the city's interesting staircases. As you take the loosely guided tours, be sure to "check in" to the location and add your impressions, reviews or photos.

- Check out the spots. Gowalla works with your mobile device's GPS coordinates, so when you log in, the app will list what is nearby.

This is especially handy if you are just arriving at your destination and need food, fast. You can also see when previous Gowalla travelers visited a location, and what they had to say about it. One of the most popular locations in my city of St Petersburg, Florida, Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team, had an update from a user as I wrote this story: "Upgraded from upper deck to just behind Padres bullpen." Good to know.

- Check in for real rewards. When you check in to a spot, you might win a prize or receive a discount on a service. For instance, 500 folks who check into any Best Buy or Apple store starting June 17 have a chance to win a 4GB wireless memory card. To find out about offers like this, read Gowalla's blog at gowalla.com/blog.

- Check in for virtual rewards. People who check in and

complete a trip receive "pins" or small icons to be displayed on their Gowalla passport page. People who use the phrase "World Cup" in their Twitter or Facebook comments will receive a football pin, and those who are in South Africa will receive special stamps in their Gowalla "passports."

- Become "friends" with some of Gowalla's partners.

USA Today, the *Washington Post*, National Geographic and the Sierra Club have teamed up with Gowalla and all feature various trips around the US to follow. Follow *USA Today* for instance, and for the rest of the summer, those who check in on Gowalla at major airports across the country will receive the newspaper's travel advice, such as the quickest way to get through security, dining and shopping options, real-time flight information and more.

- Be part of the news. Gowalla's creators in Austin, Texas, often share news-related information. Gowalla travelers who checked in from any "Park or Nature" category recently received a "Help the Gulf" pin to raise awareness of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Sierra Club also catalogued a "BP Oil Disaster" list of sites, which included places affected by the gushing oil. Photos taken by Sierra Club members and other Gowalla travelers are included in the listings, creating sort of a citizen journalist feel.

There are also other fun touches to the app, which can be set in six different languages on the iPhone (English, German, French, Japanese, Spanish, and Arabic).

After I joined and played with the site on my iPad, I noticed that I had a virtual teddy bear in my virtual backpack. It turns out that by checking in at my local Starbucks, I received a teddy bear icon that had been "dropped" in that location.

You can also invite friends to join you on Gowalla from Facebook and Twitter, which improves your chances of people commenting on your posts. In my area of Florida, there is not much interaction between Gowalla users, but I can see how in larger cities this could be an interesting way to meet, or compete, with others, similar to Foursquare, another location-based social networking app.

On the Net: www.gowalla.com