

Shida shopping binge

The streets around Shida night market are home to indie boutiques that cater to a young and hip clientele — but prices are still wallet-friendly

BY CATHERINE SHU
STAFF REPORTER

National Taiwan Normal University boosts one of the country's top art departments, so it's no surprise that the neighborhood surrounding the school has an energetic, offbeat vibe. The bustling Shida night market is decidedly youth-oriented, with many vendors selling trendy jewelry and fashions imported from South Korea for rock-bottom prices. One-of-a-kind boutiques in the lanes surrounding the night market and Shida Road (師大路) offer handmade sterling silver jewelry, avant-garde fashion, secondhand books, gourmet chocolate and indie music — but price tags are still budget-friendly. Here are just a few of the area's best places to shop.

SPECIALTY STORES

White Wabbit Records (小白兔唱片)

Address: 1-1, Ln 21, Pucheng St, Taipei City (台北市浦城街21巷1-1號)

Telephone: (02) 2369-7915

On the Net: www.wwr.com.tw

Run by one of Taiwan's most respected indie labels, White Wabbit's flagship store carries almost 10,000 albums. The store and label were founded in 2002 by Aphasia (阿飛西雅) member Yeh Wan-ching (葉宛青), better known as KK. Current best-sellers include Broken Social Scene's new release *Forgiveness Rock Record* and *Trapped in Taipei* (困在台北) by Mando-pop newcomer Yen-j (嚴爵).

Is Taiwan, Is Chocolate

Address: 9-3, Ln 13, Pucheng St, Taipei City (台北市浦城街13巷9-3號)

Telephone: (02) 2366-1364

On the Net: www.istaiwan.com.tw

Pucheng Street (浦城街), on the other side of Shida Road from the night market, is lined with restaurants featuring an atlas of world cuisines, including Indian curries, Korean bibimbap, Indonesian halal dishes, Belgian waffles and tacos. Is Taiwan, Is Chocolate represents this country with gourmet chocolates handmade right here in Taipei. The store's specialty is chocolate truffles, and all flavors, including matcha, oolong tea, lavender, rose and jasmine, are made using natural ingredients.

JXJ Books (舊香居)

Address: 81 Longquan St, Taipei City (台北市龍泉街81號)

Telephone: (02) 2368-0576

On the Net: blog.yam.com/jxjbooks

Founded more than 30 years ago, JXJ Books specializes in rare and collectible tomes, as well as secondhand books on art, culture and history. The well-lit space looks like a homey but well-appointed library, with cushioned seats, vintage furniture and baskets of English-language novels and nonfiction books to dig through.



Is Taiwan, Is Chocolate specializes in treats by Taipei-based confectioner Henry & Cary.



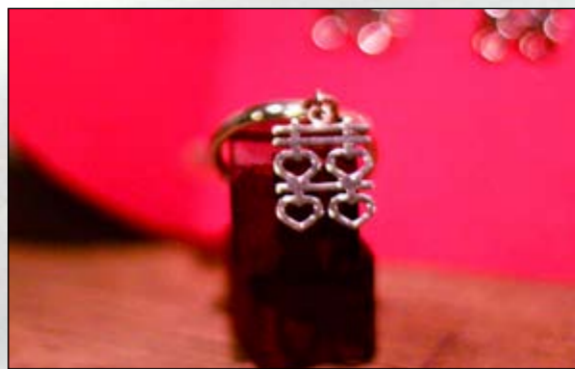
Enjoy an iced tea and puzzle at Cafe Puzzle Caffeine.



Secondhand, antique and collectible volumes line the shelves at JXJ Books.



Want to wear Marvel comic book characters on your fingers? Check out Meal 8.



Primary Silver's handcrafted jewelry is inspired by motifs found in Taiwanese and Chinese culture.

Renoir Puzzle (雷諾瓦拼圖)

Address: 27, Ln 44, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街44巷27號)

Telephone: (02) 2362-0859

On the Net: www.renoirpuzzle.com.tw

Part of a chain with more than 20 locations in Taiwan, Renoir is a mecca for jigsaw-puzzle lovers. For a quick fix, try a puzzle globe embellished with one of comic artist Wan Wan's (彎彎) whimsical characters. Finished pieces double as key fobs. Experts will relish a 1,000-piece set that turns into a 68cm-by-48cm copy of Egon Schiele's *Seated Woman With a Bent Knee* or a 3,000 piece mural-sized map of the world. Special glues and frames are available to preserve your finished masterpiece.

Cafe Puzzle Caffeine (拼圖咖啡因) across the street from Renoir at 28, Ln 44, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街44巷28號), tel: (02) 2362-2585, serves premium coffee blends, herbal teas and desserts in a Victorian-style setting. Puzzles ranging in size from 54 to 300 pieces are free to borrow.

ACCESSORIES

Meal 8

Address: 26-2, Ln 40, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街40巷26號之2)

Telephone: 0982-319-552 or 0922-313-474

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/blog/gfbtw

With a rainbow of bright, funky 1980s-style jewelry, Meal 8 was a popular vendor in Shida night market until its landlord took back the corner to open a duck blood tofu stand. "We were so upset," says Rossi Chien (簡辰絃), who owns Meal 8 along with partner Pier Tsao (曹朋芸). Chien and Tsao, who previously operated stands in Shilin night market and the East District (東區), wondered where they would go next. A storefront opened up across from the popular Cafe Bastille, however, and Meal 8 now sells Darth Vader rings, dreamcatcher earrings, multilayered necklaces made of neon fringe and graphic T-shirts in air-conditioned comfort.

39 Lifestyle Lab

Address: 29, Longquan St, Taipei City (台北市龍泉街29號)

Telephone: 0913-500-319

On the Net: tw.myblog.yahoo.com/kopobu

This small boutique carries hip tunics, dresses and leggings, as well as handcrafted, delicately detailed metal jewelry by artist Kopo (柯柏). Standouts include chunky rings in the shape of rabbits and elephant heads and an intricate collar made out of interwoven petals and leaves cut from silver and leather. Dog lovers will adore the tiny white bichon frise that stands guard at the store's entrance.

Primary Silver (元銀手作)

Address: 11, Longquan St, Taipei City (台北市龍泉街11號)

Telephone: (02) 3365-2579

On the Net: tw.myblog.yahoo.com/allure-silver

Primary Silver was founded as a creative outlet by silversmiths who produce jewelry for some of Taiwan's top designers. Handmade sterling silver jewelry ranges in style from the abstract to intricately detailed. Best-sellers include chubby little pendants that represent the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. Custom designs are also available.

Si'enna

Address: 27, Ln 68, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路68巷27號)

Telephone: (02) 2369-8113

On the Net: blog.yam.com/sienna

Next door to White Wabbit, this pint-sized store stocks handmade leather bags, accessories and custom shoes with a rough-hewn, organic style, as well as jewelry by indie designers.

CLOTHING

Georgia Tsao

Address: 26-2, Ln 50, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街50巷26-2號)

Telephone: (02) 2365-6760

On the Net: www.georgiatsao.com

Designer Georgia Tsao's (曹惠淇) new boutique carries her trademark whimsical sterling silver jewelry; each item has its own meaning. Pendants shaped like stars doodled next to important items on memos are a reminder to be kind to oneself. Tsao's trademark Viking helmet with a tiny heart in the middle symbolizes love, bravery and strength. The store also sells Tsao's new line of summery frocks, made from cotton prints that, like her jewelry, are sweet and chic at the same time.

Post

Address: 24, Ln 50, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街50巷24號)

Telephone: (02) 2364-3348

Romis

Address: 21, Ln 50, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街50巷21號)

Telephone: (02) 2364-6738

On the Net: www.romis.com.tw

A few doors away from Georgia Tsao, Post sells a carefully edited selection of handmade dresses and skirts, T-shirts and tote bags by Booday (蔣廷), handmade fabric bags and dolls by Muleism and illustrated children's books by indie publisher Abula Press (阿布拉). Sister store Romis, just around the corner, carries relaxed, feminine styles from South Korea and Japan.

Cassie's Studio (凱織工作室)

Address: B1, 34, Ln 40, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街40巷34號B1)

Telephone: (02) 2369-6900

On the Net: tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw/189.l6OyREQT8lqGjgBwFrjTErlp

Cassie's Studio started seven years ago as a clothing swap party that just grew and grew. The secondhand clothing chain's Shida location features racks of garments in every conceivable style, organized by color. Designer items make an occasional appearance. Thrifty shoppers can bring in their own gently worn items to exchange for store credit.

eureka! eureka! eureka!

Address: 2, Ln 117, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路117巷2號)

Telephone: (02) 2368-9967

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/blog/eureka117

Located a few blocks away from Taipower Building MRT Station (台電大樓捷運站) exit No. 3, this colorful boutique stocks bright, 1980s-inspired T-shirts, dresses and leggings from Thailand, avant-garde clothing by Taiwanese designers Pet Shop Girls, Back to British, Play Rough and Deeplay (which also has a nearby boutique at 17, Ln 13, Pucheng St, Taipei City, (台北市浦城街13巷17號), tel: (02) 2369-2310), and funky vintage jewelry. Get ready for autumn with Les Queues de Sardines' opaque, printed tights and dainty crocheted anklets in ecru or snow white.

REFRESHMENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Renowned as Shida's hipster hangout par excellence, **Moi! Relax** at 20, Ln 60, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街60巷20號), tel: (02) 2367-7714, is popular among indie-music lovers. The cafe features a large library of books, magazines and CDs. Located across the street, **Salt Peanuts** at 23, Ln 60, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街60巷23號), tel: (02) 2368-1019, is named after the Dizzy Gillespie bebop tune and has a laidback vibe; the menu features comfort food like brownies a la mode. For live performances by local indie bands, check out the roster at **Underworld (地下社會)**, B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1), tel: (02) 2369-0103.

With its broad tables and artfully decorated interior, **Insomnia (睡不著)** at 13, Ln 93, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路93巷13號), tel: (02) 2364-0002, is an ideal spot to get in some late night (or daytime) studying. **Cafe Bastille** at 23, Ln 40, Taishun St, Taipei City, (台北市泰順街40巷23號), tel: (02) 2369-9728, is renowned for its selection of Belgian beers. Run by the same people as popular restaurant **Grandma Nitti's, My Sweetie Pie** across the street at 3, Ln 93, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路93巷3號), tel: (02) 3365-3448, specializes in luscious pies, cakes and other baked goodies like bread pudding.



A slice of apple pie a la mode at My Sweetie Pie.



Sweet but chic jewelry is a Georgia Tsao signature.



Eureka! eureka! eureka! sells avant-garde designs by Taiwanese designers and retro-inspired imports from Thailand.