

POP STOP
COMPILED BY HO YI

Messy celebrity divorce news sells papers, and no one knows that better than actress **Alyssa Chia** (賈靜雯) and ex-husband **Sun Chih-hao** (孫志浩). The former couple-turned-enemies continue to end up on the front pages of gossip rags because of an ongoing child custody battle that is getting uglier and uglier as time goes by.

It all began with a phone call from an anonymous informer to the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister newspaper) on Monday last week. The informant told the paper the newly divorced Sun was going to see a movie with a 28-year-old beauty consultant named Kelly Chen (陳凱莉) and provided detailed tips such as "their seats are on row E. You can get good photos from row F."

Pictures of Sun and Chen—who quickly earned the sobriquet of D-cup nurse, (D奶小護士) (that of course refers to her supposed bra size)—exiting the movie theater were everywhere the next day.

Gossip observers theorize that since Chia and Sun are soon due to appear in court for custody of "Sister Wutong" (梧桐妹), as press refers to their daughter, someone wants to make Sun appear guilty of neglecting the child while having a good time with women.

Chia, meanwhile, has cultivated an angelic public persona by attending four charity events over the past couple of months.

Needless to say, the actress rigorously denied the conspiracy theory when the media asked if she was behind the alleged setup.

Her former husband, however, is not an adversary to be underestimated. Sun wasted no time in retaliating through his lawyer Chang Nai-liang (張迺良), who told the press that Chia had never done charity work during her marriage to his client.

"She seems to really like doing charity work now. It would be great if she can keep it up," Chang was quoted as saying in a sarcastic tone.

In music-related news, Three Little Men (三小男人), a band comprised of veteran musicians **Bobby Chen** (陳昇), **Phil Chang** (張宇) and **Huang Pin-yuan** (黃品源), are scheduled to perform concerts in Kaohsiung and Taichung in October as the coda to the group's year-long world tour.

Sound familiar? Yes, you guessed right. Three Little Men are a slightly newer and smaller version of Super Band (縱貫線), which

had **Lo Ta-yu** (羅大佑), **Emil Chou** (周華健), **Jonathan Lee** (李宗盛) and **Chang Cheng-yue** (張震嶽) in its lineup. The Three Little Men have repeatedly said they aren't in it for the money, even though Super Band is a carefully calculated business venture that grossed NT\$4.3 billion, with each of the performers pulling in NT\$100 million for the 58 shows they did in one year.

The Three Little Men show is slightly less ambitious when it comes to the serious business of making dough. *Apple Daily* estimates the band will merely pull in NT\$200 million for its 10-show tour of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada and the US.

When asked why they don't add more gigs, both Bobby Chen and Huang laughed and said: "We aren't doing this for the money."

Last, but certainly not least, Hong Kong entertainment insider **Tu Hui-tung** (杜惠東) has irked fans of **Anita Mui** (梅艷芳) with a new book that exposes the skeletons hidden in the late pop diva's closet. *Starry Stars* (繁星點點) includes details on Mui's little-known affair with a triad boss, and fans are demanding that the publisher remove the book from the shelves.

Jackie Chan (成龍) also plays a starring role in Tu's book, which says the aging action hero was the male lead in a bushel of pornographic movies under the stage name Chen Yuan-long (陳元龍) in the 1970s. According to Tu's book, Chan made porn films to pay off his gambling debts.

Responding to the criticism, To said he's friends with the stars he's exposing and that everything he wrote was true. If not, "Ask someone to shoot me," he said.

Alyssa Chia is in a charitable mood.



PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

BY CATHERINE SHU

The Anglo-Hoklo connection

Most of Green!Eyes' lyrics are written in English, while Windmill (風籬坊) is known for being one of the few indie bands to sing in Hoklo, commonly known as Taiwanese.

But the two groups have more similarities than differences, which fans can hear for themselves during their joint performance tonight at The Wall (這牆).

"We each have three people," says Windmill bassist Sky Tai (戴杏芳) with a laugh.

"The languages we sing [in] are different, but at the same time I feel that you can hear the similarities in our technique, especially in our guitar playing, because our musical interests are close," she adds.

Both bands, for example, site Wilco as an influence, and Tai says Windmill's songwriting leans toward self-reflective lyrics about "life and the soul."

The association between the two bands began half a decade ago, when the lead singer and guitarist of Windmill, Chris Lin (林育詳), became a fan of Diamond Vehicle, which was then fronted by Levon Hsu (許哲毓), currently the lead singer

of Green!Eyes. Now Windmill is joining Green!Eyes for the final Taipei stop of the latter's Sleeping Bag tour. Last month, the two bands played a small, intimate gig at Kafka on the Shore (海邊的卡夫卡), but this is their first major performance together in Taipei.

Of the friendship and musical connection, Tai explains, "We're close friends with the members of Green!Eyes, so the feeling of our music is the same and we have similar goals, but we use different languages to approach those goals."

Windmill, lower right, is joining Green!Eyes, upper right, for the last Taipei stop of their Sleeping Bag tour.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREENEYES AND WINDMILL



PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Green!Eyes and Windmill (風籬坊)
WHERE: The Wall (這牆), B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號B1). Tel: (02) 2930-0162. On the Net: www.thewall.com.tw
WHEN: Tonight at 8pm
ADMISSION: NT\$400
ON THE NET: www.myspace.com/windmilltw, www.greeneyes.tw

MUSIC

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW ASPECT



A grand tour of writing for the flute

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON

Taipei's National Concert Hall seems a large venue for a flute recital by a local flautist. But Hu Chih-wei (胡志偉), who takes the stage there on Thursday, is a highly acclaimed musician, and New Aspect, which is presenting him in its current "Rising Stars" series, may succeed in selling a significant number of tickets for the event.

Hu, who was born in 1982, studied music mostly in France. His technique has been described as polished, elegant, faultless and beautiful, and if he doesn't take risks it may be because he doesn't need to, simply because his playing is already so talented and so skillful.

The flute hasn't always had a wide repertoire as a solo instrument, and even Bach's works for it were long neglected. But a bizarre variety of composers have penned flute items from time to time, and others have had their works for violin, for instance, adapted for the flute. Hu's

program can be viewed as a grand tour through the checkered history of writing for the instrument.

He begins with a sonata, which should ideally be accompanied on a harpsichord, by the French baroque composer Jean-Marie Leclair (who died, stabbed in the back, in a poor Paris suburb in 1764). He then leaps forward to Charles-Marie Widor, another Frenchman who wrote for many more instruments than the organ for which he's too often chiefly remembered. A piece by yet another Frenchman, Paul Taffanel, follows; Taffanel was very eminent in his day, and conducted the French premiere of Verdi's *Otello* at the Paris Opera.

The second half of the concert is devoted to the 20th century, with even the 21st century represented by a work by the contemporary American flautist Gary Schocker. The main items here are by the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu

(who was also a celebrity TV chef and author of a detective novel) and Sergei Prokofiev, whose Sonata in D, Opus 94, ends the concert. This is unusual in having been written for the flute first and then adapted for the violin later—a reversal of the more usual procedure.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Hu Chih-wei Flute Recital
WHERE: National Concert Hall, Taipei City
WHEN: Thursday at 7:30pm
ADMISSION: NT\$400 to NT\$1,200, available through NCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw. NT\$800 tickets are sold out

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

Persian Heaven

Address: 2F, 6, Nanjing E Rd Sec 5, Taipei City (台北市南京東路五段6號2樓) **Telephone:** (02) 2767-1661
Open: Weekdays 5pm to 2am, weekends 5pm to 4am. Call ahead to confirm belly dance performances
Average meal: NT\$400 to NT\$700 **Details:** Chinese and English menu, credit cards accepted

Persian Heaven, which opened five years ago, stands out on Taipei's dining scene as one of the few places to sample Persian cuisine. Founded by an Iranian businessman, the dining lounge on Nanjing East Road (南京東路) features regular belly dance performances. Subdued lighting, loud music and cabinets filled with knick-knacks like busts of ancient Persian kings add to the fun and slightly kitschy atmosphere.

For an extra NT\$150, most entrees are available as set meals, which are a bargain if you want to get a sampling of Persian Heaven's expansive menu. Each set comes with a full-sized salad, soup, appetizer, side dish, dessert and drink, in addition to the main course.

We paired ghorme sabzi, or stewed beef cooked with split peas and vegetables (NT\$370), with an order of Iranian bread (NT\$60). Made from white flour, the bread was thin and chewy, like a tortilla, and not particularly memorable. The beef in the ghorme sabzi was juicy and the dish would have gone better with Persian Heaven's saffron polo (NT\$80), or white rice flavored with fragrant saffron.

The upbeat-sounding triple happy kebab king (NT\$530) features a skewer each of beef, lamb and chicken and is probably the most attractive dish on the menu, with the gleaming chunks of meat set off by a colorful assortment of vegetables. The meat was succulent but had little seasoning, so we made sure to douse each skewer in limejuice to set off the flavor.



Roasted and stewed lamb, beef and chicken are the highlight of Persian Heaven's large menu.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

On a separate visit, I ordered the meat and seafood combo kebab (NT\$550), which came with two meaty, perfectly grilled tiger prawns, along with lamb (beef is another option).

Most of Persian Heaven's salads use potato as the main ingredient, including the delicious chilled salad Olivier (NT\$100), in which the tuber is diced and mixed with celery and chicken. There are only two appetizers. The seafood plate (NT\$100) is a patty of chilled mashed potatoes served with a steamed prawn and garnished with relish and dill. It was OK, but the heaven chicken roll (NT\$100), a light crepe stuffed with chicken and garnished with a savory cream sauce, is much better.

Persian Heaven's soups are passable, but if you aren't ordering a set meal, I suggest skipping them to save room for

dessert. Made from semolina and butter and flavored with honey and saffron, the hal wa (NT\$80) was surprisingly delicate instead of overpoweringly sweet. The texture was like a thick pudding, making the treat a great comfort food. It tasted especially good with a glass of tart lemonade, which came with the set meal. Another good bet is the thick, creamy rice pudding (NT\$80). It was complemented by a glass of cinnamon-y iced Iranian tea (NT\$120, also available hot).

Our servers were uniformly polite and helpful on both visits, but we waited half an hour for our main entree (the triple happy kebab king) on a busy Sunday night—enough time, in fact, to watch the cheerful belly dancer teach two diners how to roll their hips. Dinner on a weekday moved at a quicker pace—each course was served as soon as I had finished the previous one.

Solo Pasta should appeal to health conscious 20 to 40-somethings who work and shop in Taipei's East District (東區). The Italian eatery, which opened six months ago in an alley behind EsLite Bookstore's Dunnan Branch (台北敦南誠品) limits its entree menu to an array of pastas that are notable for their originality and fresh ingredients.

The menu may be small, but the restaurant's interior is rather large, with two dining sections; the first as you move past the large windows at the entrance, the second facing the open kitchen. Mustard-yellow tongue-and-groove paneling on the walls and wood laminate on the tables and floors lends the space a comfortable atmosphere.

Aside from pasta, the restaurant has a moderately sized appetizer menu that is somewhat hit and miss. The bruschetta (NT\$60) falls into the latter category because its presentation seemed an afterthought. Chunks of fresh tomato infused with olive oil and basil were scattered over the surface of the first slice, while the second supported a swath of delicious chicken liver mousse. Though the mousse had a creamy texture and robust flavor with hints of balsamic vinegar, the portion was too small. There are no other bread items on the menu, which seems a little puzzling for an Italian restaurant that limits its main course menu selection to pasta.

The oven-baked eggplant with mozzarella and Parmesan (NT\$160) was a hit, as were the assorted marinated mushrooms (NT\$80). In the former, three

layers of eggplant alternated with a thick tomato sauce and were topped with a moderate amount of cheese. This light dish was delicious and ideal for those watching their waste size, though it might have benefitted from a pinch of basil or oregano. The mushrooms marinated in spices, white wine vinegar and olive oil perked things up with their tangy flavor and crunchy texture.

Other appetizer items that I was told are worth trying include asparagus with runny egg and extra-old Parmesan (NT\$280) and raw vegetables with garlic and anchovy dip (NT\$230 for two).

My waitress said that the squid ink spaghetti (NT\$280), sweet basil pesto spaghetti (NT\$220) and smoked duck in a cream balsamic sauce with spaghetti (NT\$260) are among patrons' favorites. I went with the duck because friends who

work near Solo Pasta have raved about it before. The slightly sweet balsamic vinegar cream sauce acted as a nice counterpoint to the strong smokiness of the duck. The sauce is delicious and alone makes a trip to Solo Pasta worthwhile. Now all they need to do is add plain bread to the menu so customers can sloop up the yummy sauce when the pasta is gone.

The dessert menu is also worth a try. The generous slab of tiramisu consisted of a mascarpone body infused with marsala (a dessert wine similar to sherry), which rested on an espresso-dipped foundation of ladyfingers (NT\$80). Other desserts include oranges marinated in caramelized syrup and served with frozen chocolate (NT\$150) and cannolo, or pastry tubes filled with ricotta cheese (NT\$160).



Where's the bread?

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Solo Pasta

Address: 29-1 Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段29-1號) **Telephone:** (02) 2775-3645
Open: 11:30am to 10pm **Average meal:** NT\$400 **Details:** Chinese, Italian and English menu, credit cards accepted

BY NOAH BUCHAN

TIDBITS

BY CATHERINE SHU

When Ice Monster, the famous shaved ice purveyor on Yongkang Street (永康街) shut down last winter as a result of the owners' divorce dispute, it seemed like the entire country—if not the world—mourned. Tourists were left holding their guidebooks in confusion, including the two Japanese women I saw staring at the "closed" signs forlornly.

The space reopened last month under the name of Yongkang 15 (永康15). Some customers wondered if the mango portions, which were famed for putting the "monster" in "Ice Monster," had shrunk under the new management, but owner FnB Gourmet Group reported that the store reached its revenue target of NT\$100,000 per day less than a week after its official opening.

So how are the ices? Nearly every dish has mango in it and prices range from NT\$130 to NT\$160. I ordered a fantastic mix freeze (NT\$160) with strawberry, kiwi and mango. The latter two were tart, juicy and sweet, but the out-of-season strawberries were lackluster. The heap of fruit, sorbet and ice was as large as I remember Ice Monster's portions were, but overall it tasted less sweet. If you want to slip into a sugar coma, however, make sure to ask for extra condensed milk and syrup—staffers with squirt bottles are happy to oblige.



Ice Monster is back, sort of.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES