

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2010

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Fire! Fire!

Loh Tsui Kweh Commune (濁水溪公社), also known as LTK, is celebrating its 20th anniversary with an outdoor concert in Taipei tomorrow evening.

The pioneering underground rock band, which performs at the Sanjiaodu Ferry Port (三腳渡擺渡口) near Jiantan MRT Station (劍潭捷運站) in Taipei County, is carrying out tomorrow's festivities with a literal bang.

Expect plenty of fireworks, as well as other hallmarks that have made LTK's live shows the stuff of notorious legend: zany costumes, twisted versions of traditional temple ceremonies, smashing and burning guitars or whatever spare furniture is around, and a sing-a-long about masturbation with a giant inflatable penis as a stage prop (a first for the band).

"Oh yes, it's a big production," said bandleader and founder Ko Ren-chien (柯仁堅), who says he's been working on the concert's logistics for the past two months. "It will be very lively, like participating in a temple fair or a carnival, that kind of feeling."

LTK has just released a new album, but Ko

says the idea behind the anniversary concert (which was actually planned for last year, LTK's true 20th anniversary — the band formed in 1989) is also to give newer fans a taste of "our classic performances from the past."

The band polled long-time fans on its blog, asking them about to write about their favorite past performances, many of which will be reenacted tomorrow.

Some of LTK's most storied shows took place at the annual indie music festival Spring Scream.

The band often put on elaborate skits that ended in chaos. One year, bandmembers sprayed fire extinguishers at each other and into the audience. Another year, they almost burned down the stage after lighting a pile of smashed guitars on fire.

At another Spring Scream, LTK's show lasted only five minutes. As soon as they stepped on stage, the audience started throwing bottles, empty lunchboxes and other bits of trash at the bandmembers. Things got so out of control, organizers had to cancel their set.

In many ways, LTK is Taiwan's first true punk

band, and their music today — a mixture of punk, British new wave and working-class karaoke pop mixed with lyrics that serve as a biting, absurdist commentary on politics and society — remains unique in Taiwan's indie scene.

The band was among the first to embrace *taike* (台客), which used to be a derogatory term referring to "uncultured" Taiwanese. Its classic album, *Taiki's Eye for an Eye* (台客的復仇, literally "Revenge of the Taiké") melded nakashi melodies and punk with Hoklo (commonly known as Taiwanese) lyrics. The record came out in 1999, well before *taike* became hip.

Ko, now 40, says it's "unbelievable" that LTK has lasted as long as it has. "How could we have done this for so long?" he laughed.

"The last thing I would have thought when we started was that this group would last 20 years. Because at that time, Taiwan had just lifted martial law, in 1989."

Back then, Ko was a student at National Taiwan University, and along with classmate and LTK co-founder Tsai Hai-en (蔡海恩), he took part in student-led democracy protests. The pair often came

up with skits and created props for protests, which paved the way for LTK's theatrical tendencies.

LTK's recent work has a bit more polish — their last album *Sapphire* is more straightforward rock and pop, while their latest, *Loh Tsui Kweh Commune 20 Years Project*, is all electronica music — but their subversive spirit and desire to "shock" remains the same, says Ko.

"The things we want to say, the ideas we want to express, that hasn't changed at all," he said.

Ko says tomorrow's show, which will last almost three hours, is also a chance for fans "to blow off some steam" after frustration with recent events. The band is planning a spoof on the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA).

And for the record, Ko, who happens to spend his days as a mild-mannered employee at the National Tax Administration, offered an updated inventory of items destroyed during LTK concerts over the past 20 years: 30 guitars, 12 chairs, five basses, three televisions, five tables, two bicycles, two hospital beds and two mannequins.

Expect those numbers to go up tomorrow.

Taiwan's top absurdist rockers LTK Commune celebrate their 20th anniversary with a concert that relives some of the notorious skits and stunts that cemented their place as underground rock legends

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER



Bring your helmet and safety glasses.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LTK COMMUNE

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: LTK Commune's 20th Anniversary Concert

WHERE: Sanjiaodu Ferry Port (三腳渡擺渡口), near Jiantan MRT Station (劍潭捷運站) in Taipei County. For a map, visit The Wall's (這牆) Web site www.indievox.com/a/thewall/event-post/5530

WHEN: Tomorrow at 7pm

ON THE NET:

ltkcommune.blogspot.com

ADMISSION: NT\$900 at the door, NT\$700 in advance. Advance tickets available only through 7-Eleven ibon kiosks



PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: The Dreamer, Ricky Hsiao's debut solo concert (愛作夢的人: 蕭煌奇首次個人演唱會)

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

WHEN: Tomorrow at 7:30pm

ADMISSION: NT\$1,000 to NT\$2,800, available at Hi-Life (萊爾富) Life-ET kiosks or through G-Music's ticketing system at www.g-music.ticket.com.tw

ON THE NET:

huangchi0922.pixnet.net/blog

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK GUITAR WORKSHOP

[MUSIC]

He's just a dreamer

Mando-pop singer and 'One Million Star' judge Ricky Hsiao gives his first stadium concert tomorrow in Taipei

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

No one delivers an inspirational anthem more potently than singer/songwriter Ricky Hsiao (蕭煌奇), who has become a household name over the past few years with his infectious hit *You Are My Eyes* (你是我的眼) and his stint as a judge on the TV talent show *One Million Star* (超級星光大道).

Despite losing his eyesight at the age of 15, Hsiao went on to become a star through persistence and sheer talent.

Tomorrow night, he performs his first solo stadium concert, titled *The Dreamer*, at Taipei International Conference Center. Roger Yang (楊培安), Hsiao's best friend, and David Huang (黃大煒), Hsiao's fellow judge on *One Million Star*, will appear as guests.

"I wrote this song as the theme

song for the book *I See the Colors of Musical Notes* (我看見音符的顏色), my first biography," Hsiao said of his hit *You Are My Eyes* in an interview last Friday.

"Originally it was written as a song about greater love," said Hsiao, who spoke with the *Taipei Times* after a press conference held to promote his concert. "But then people asked me if it was a song written for a girl I admire. Well, it could be that, too."

Hsiao has released six albums since 2002, three in Mandarin and three in Hoklo (commonly known as Taiwanese). He has won the Best Taiwanese Male Singer award at Golden Melody Awards twice, for *Real Love Song* (真情歌) in 2008 and this year for *The Dreamer* (愛作夢的人).

"I usually write in the morning after breakfast. I write about the life stories I know," Hsiao said. "I use a guitar to play with the

melody and record it."

When asked about the strength of his passion for music, he replied, "I never really considered other possibility."

"There are all the different ways to make a living from music: I can sing, produce or teach," Hsiao said. "As long as there are people who are moved by my music, I will be able to live by making music."

Besides making music, Hsiao is also a professional judo competitor and has won numerous medals in national judo competitions for people with disabilities.

"My high school teacher would pair us with sighted sparring partners because he thought we should be able to compete at the same level," he said. "I can sense what move my opponent is going to make with my hands."