

POP

COMPILED BY
NOAH BUCHAN

Netizens and paparazzi were salivating at the prospect that Mando-pop diva **Jolin Tsai** (蔡依林) might have a new man. The rumors began over the weekend when bloggers spotted Tsai holding hands with **Vivian Dawson**, a 26-year old half-Singaporean, half-New Zealand model, while taking time off to roam the streets of Tokyo.

Dawson, who was named "most eligible bachelor" by *CLEO*, a women's magazine based in Singapore, was also said to have attended Tsai's 30th birthday bash.

The two rumored lovebirds originally met up when the "mixed blood" (混血) Dawson appeared in Tsai's music video for *Love Player* (玩愛之徒).

Comically, Dawson's first name led some bloggers to wonder if Jolin was playing for both teams. Others simply lamented that a Jolin-Jay Chou (周杰倫) reunion now seemed out of the question.

Speaking to the media earlier this week, Tsai admitted going to Japan with Dawson. Later, while appearing on a Chinese-television program, Tsai said, somewhat predictably, "We are just friends." Brushing off this response, the host asked point blank if she is dating the model. Tsai's agent stepped in and Tsai clammed up.

Apple, true to form, was having none of this. The gossip rag speculated that the alleged affair must be true because Tsai's denials weren't as vehement as they were when rumors surfaced that her and Chou were back together.

In other Jolin news, singer **Elva Hsiao** (蕭亞軒) came to Tsai's defense over allegations last week that she was rude to an airline stewardess, as reported in the *United Daily News*.

Hsiao, who claimed that Tsai was asleep during the entire episode, said it was the fault of her agent. Hmmm, where would celebrities be without their agents to blame or step in at the right moment? In any event, Hsiao's discussion of the airplane incident seems well timed to attract attention to her recently released album *Miss ELVA* (蕭小姐).

Singer and actor **Wilber Pan** (潘瑋柏), who also just celebrated his 30th birthday, expressed regrets over the weekend about a youthful indiscretion. Pan's shame stems from photo shoot he did completely naked — aside from an object strategically placed to conceal his masculinity.

Pop Stop thinks: What's the big deal? If Pan, who earlier performed in the drama *Spicy*

Teacher (麻辣鮮師) and more recently in Jay Chou's flop *Pandaman* (熊猫人), is worried about his image, he should follow in the footsteps of singer **Van Ness Wu** (吳建豪) and become a born-again Christian. Then all past indiscretions would be forgiven.

Another celebrity with image issues is singer **Jeremy Liu** (劉子千). Following a long and infamous line of celebrities who soured it up and then get behind the wheel, Liu crashed a car on a Hong Kong street in April after one too many.

The accident left his rumored girlfriend, actress **Charlize Lin** (林亞霖), seriously injured. Fortunately, nobody was killed and Lin has already made a full recovery.

The *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*'s sister newspaper) reported that Liu received 150 days of community service for DUI and was ordered to pay a fine of HK\$8,000 (NT\$35,000).

And finally, recriminations over this year's Golden Bell Awards (金鐘獎) have already begun — and the ceremony is still a few weeks away. The nomination list for the television and radio awards ceremony was announced on Monday and by Tuesday the usual blather about backdoor dealings and unfair judging dominated the gossip pages. This is somewhat of a shame because all the bitching distracted from the fact that many of the nominations went to programming that highlights different aspects of Taiwan's culture. The ceremony takes place on Oct. 22 at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall.



Wilber Pan has image issues.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

BY DAVID CHEN

Grooving with new cultures

A Moving Sound (聲動劇場), one of Taiwan's most prominent world music troupes, is back with a set of new material that will be presented in two separate shows at the Red House Theater (紅樓劇場) tomorrow.

The group, led by co-founders Mia Hsieh (謝韻雅) and her husband, Scott Prairie, recently finished a tour of Europe, which has become an annual destination for them.

Their travels have partly inspired tomorrow's program, which is being filmed by Public Television Service (公視) for an upcoming documentary on the band.

"We want to share our world experiences with Taiwanese audiences," said Hsieh. A Moving Sound's lead vocalist and dancer, who has chosen and adapted folk songs from Israel, Greece and Tibet for tomorrow's show.

This is a slightly new angle for a group that has been presenting its original work

abroad as a modern twist on traditional Taiwanese musical theater combined with melodies and grooves from Central Asia and India.

Hsieh says they are making a conscious effort to present world music in Taiwan as a way "to understand different cultures."

She says what links the Israeli, Greek and Tibetan songs is their "spirituality" and a yearning "to connect with the universe."

She hopes Taiwanese audiences will see that "even [with people] from other cultures, we are actually all together."

One thing that will remain the same tomorrow is the lively, celebratory mood of A Moving Sound's concerts. The group often invites a handful of guest performers for its seasonal shows in Taipei. Tomorrow's guests include flamenco guitarist Camaron de la Vegas and an a capella chorus of six women led by Hsieh.

And audiences tomorrow will not only

get a taste of different cultures — they will be learning more about their own.

The group plans a special performance of the song *Toh De Gong* (土地公伯), or "Earth God," from their latest album, *Starshine*. Even though the Earth God is one of the most common folk deities, many Taiwanese have "forgotten" its purpose, Hsieh says.

"This song tells us its function. When we worship the Earth God, what offerings do we have to prepare? It talks about the things managed by the Earth God — when you give birth, take an exam, choose a time to build a house — for such things we usually consult the Earth God."

Hsieh says she wrote the lyrics to this jubilant tune after extensive research, with the aim of "educating" young Taiwanese. "These things are part of tradition, and we've practically forgotten about it all," she said.

But the learning will be fun. Hsieh

says to expect a humorous presentation with a guest male rapper decked out in traditional robes playing the part of the Earth God, as well as a choreographed dance featuring Hsieh and the a capella group.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: A Moving Sound live in concert
WHEN: Tomorrow at 3pm and 8pm
WHERE: Red House Theater (紅樓劇場), 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號)
ADMISSION: NT\$600, available at the door or through www.artsticket.com.tw
ON THE NET: www.amovingsound.com



A Moving Sound performs tomorrow at the Red House Theater to present new material that includes traditional folk music from the Israel, Greece and Tibet.

PHOTO COURTESY OF A MOVING SOUND

FILM

BY HO YI

South Korea exposed

As the featured country in the film festival Shooting Left Asian '10 — Korea Now, which opened at Guling Street Avant-Garde Theatre on Wednesday, South Korea doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to a sparkling nation of pretty-faced pop stars and electronic gadgets that most of us are familiar with.

On the contrary, forced eviction, women's labor protests and a homosexual political movement are among the sociopolitical issues tackled in the seven documentary films screened at this festival. Initiated in 2006 with a series of film screenings, forums and panel discussions, the Shooting Left Asian event is organized by Bodyphase Studio (身體氣象館) on an irregular basis with the aim of exploring Asian countries from a social activist perspective.

The struggles of ghetto tenants in central Seoul come into focus in *People Who Can Not Leave* and *Yongsan, Expression in 337 Way: Rhea*, both of which deal with last year's violent crackdown against participants in a sit-in protest against forced evictions in the Yongsan neighborhood that left six people dead. Many of the clips were shot by activists present at the event, for whom being able to produce and spread their message quickly and widely is much more important than high production values. These clips nevertheless have a strong sense of immediacy.

Extended interviews and a focus

Jung Il-gun, *Memories of Daechuri*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GULING STREET AVANT-GARDE THEATRE

on the everyday lives of locals help build a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the government's redevelopment projects, which many believe sacrifice the landless poor for the profits of the conglomerates.

The Border City 2 is a polished production that explores the deep divisions between the two Koreas, a living heritage of the Cold War, through the personal turmoil of Song Du-yul, a renowned South Korean philosophy professor who lived in Berlin for more than 35 years. Branded a North Korean spy, Song returned to his homeland in

2003 and immediately faced a five-year trial that ignited fierce conflicts within South Korean society.

Another highlight is *Earth's Women*, an affecting documentary by female director Kwon Woo-jung that has gained wide exposure on the film festival circuit. The film follows the lives of three women who moved to farming communities and devoted themselves to the peasants' movement after graduating from college.

"These documentaries are very direct and powerful. You can tell the filmmakers are keen to make observations and are very articulate in formulating issues.

Watching these works makes us realize that we in fact hardly know anything about South Korea," said Yao Li-qun (姚立群), director of Bodyphase Studio.

Additional screenings of films such as *People Who Can Not Leave* and *Yongsan, Expression in 337 Way: Rhea* will take place at the Sanying Aboriginal Community (三鶯部落) and Losheng Sanatorium (樂生療養院), two Taipei-area communities facing relocation. Discussions will also be held by activists and academics from South Korea and Taiwan on related social and political issues. For more information, call (02) 2391-9393.

FESTIVAL NOTES

WHAT: Shooting Left Asian '10 — Korea Now (在左邊的亞洲影展)
WHEN AND WHERE: Today and tomorrow at 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); Oct. 2 at Sanying Aboriginal Community (三鶯部落); and Oct. 3 at Losheng Sanatorium (樂生療養院), 794, Jhongheng Rd, Sinhuang City, Taipei County (台北縣新莊市中正路794號)
ADMISSION: Free

RESTAURANTS

BY NOAH BUCHAN

BY DAVID CHEN

La Gondola Italian Restaurant (宮都拉義式餐廳)

Address: 5, Alley 17, Ln 170, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段170巷17弄5號)
Telephone: (02) 2771-1808 **Open:** 11:30am to 10:30pm **Average meal:** NT\$400
Details: Chinese and English menu, 10 percent service charge, credit cards accepted

Shortly after sitting down at La Gondola, I noticed a crowd of young women huddled together across the street in pouring rain, looks of excitement and expectation on their faces. I should have known they weren't hanging around for the food.

La Gondola's lounge bar vibe is immediately appealing. The front section, level to the street, boasts picture windows offering clear views of passing foot and vehicle traffic. On each table was a bottle of wine and candles in crimson candleholders, casting a romantic glow through the entire dining area. It seemed to be the perfect spot to woo a date. That is, until the food arrived.

The Caesar salad with smoked chicken (NT\$170) didn't even put up a pretense of quality. The strips of

pre-cooked, rubbery smoked chicken tasted as though they had just been removed from a package. Think of the chicken found in a 7-Eleven sandwich, and you get the idea. The dressing tasted like it came from a jar.

More ridiculous was the spaghetti with clams, garlic and chili in white wine sauce (NT\$270). Aside from the clams, which admittedly tasted fresh, there was no hint of garlic or chilies, let alone white wine, in the "sauce." And canned corn as a filler? Please.

As I was finishing off the pasta, singer Elva Hsiao (蕭亞軒) emerged from a ground floor office across the alley. Slightly mobbed by assembled fans, she jumped into a car and drove off.

Moments later, the first of two pizzas — smoked salmon (NT\$250) — arrived just as actor and singer Van



La Gondola offers ambience and stargazing, but not much else.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Ness Wu (吳建豪) sauntered out of the same office. He was followed by actress Rainie Yang (楊丞琳). La Gondola appears better situated for stargazing than eating — further confirmed by the appearance of singer, actor and host Show Luo (羅志祥).

The second pizza, bacon and mushroom (NT\$260), soon arrived.

Both pizzas were billed as having tomato sauce, but I couldn't find any in the mountain of cheese and sparse toppings. Worst of all was the crust: Thick like a sandwich, it was folded into layers and had the taste and consistency of a sickly sweet pastry.

One would think La Gondola would be empty, but it was doing good business on the Monday night I visited. Perhaps it's the ambience. More likely, it's the possibility of catching a glimpse of the celebrities emerging from the office across the street.

There aren't enough places in Taipei like Journey Kaffee (覺旅咖啡). The coffee is decent, the food is made from fresh ingredients, and both are reasonably priced. The cafe's spacious and comfy interior makes it easy to whittle away an afternoon with friends, or alone with a book.

Journey Kaffee's airy space, which occupies two floors, is full of contemporary rustic charm. There are long wooden tables for large gatherings; potted plants adorn the tables; fresh fruits and vegetables sit out in the open in wooden crates; and the menu is scribbled on a chalkboard.

The atmosphere will likely please followers of LOHAS, which stands for "lifestyles of health and sustainability" and is a buzzword among environmentally conscious Taiwanese.

But the cafe also appeals to those who need to be wired: There's free Wi-Fi access and customers with laptop computers are invited to use the electrical outlets installed at nearly every table and booth.

If that's not wired enough, espresso drinks made with Illy beans range from NT\$75 for an Americano to NT\$105 for a caramel cappuccino. Other beverages include fresh orange, grapefruit or kiwi juice (NT\$90) and banana milkshakes with either berries or apple (NT\$110).

Lunches are a hit at Journey Kaffee, and on a recent Monday visit, the place was packed with a line snaking out the door. The menu is simple, consisting of

large salads, tortilla wraps heated in a panini grill and pastas. All meals cost between NT\$150 to NT\$180.

The pesto chicken pasta (青醬雞肉麵) had crushed almonds sprinkled on top and a pesto sauce that was creamy instead of watery thin, as it often is at many similarly priced pasta restaurants in Taipei. The pasta was cooked the right kind of al dente and served in a white bowl with a sprig of fresh basil, most likely plucked from the many potted plants spread around the cafe. Not bad at all for NT\$170.

The tortilla wraps, which the cafe calls "wrapanini" as they're cooked in a panini grill, are slightly less filling but still make for a decent lunch. The selection includes barbecue chicken (BBQ雞肉磚餅) for NT\$150 and mushroom and bean (野菇豆泥磚餅) for NT\$130.

The Spanish red pepper chicken wrapanini (西班牙紅椒雞肉磚餅, NT\$150) has a slightly spicy bite and the filling includes a tasty mayonnaise dressing. All wraps come with a small serving

of beetroot and a slice of tomato with mozzarella and basil.

The salads come in a wooden bowl, with the portions large enough to be a lunch for one or to be shared with two or three people as a side order. The chicken Caesar salad (NT\$170) is better than average. Other choices include smoked salmon or shrimp and bacon for NT\$180 each.

All of the meals come with any drink on the menu and a dessert for an additional NT\$80. Pass on the bread pudding, which is too dry, and go for the recommended banana cake (NT\$60).

The only catch to Journey Kaffee is that the entire neighborhood, a business district in Neihu, seems to know about it. Be prepared to wait for a seat during lunch and dinner times on weekends.

If you're looking for quiet, Journey is good for breakfast, which is served until 11am. The combo platters average NT\$100 and come with panini-grilled toast, boiled eggs and coffee or juice.

Journey Kaffee is a five-minute walk from Xihu MRT Station (西湖捷運站).



Journey Kaffee

Address: 1F, 24, Ln 583, Ruiquang Rd, Taipei City (台北市內湖區瑞光路583巷24號1F)
Telephone: (02) 8751-3227 **Open:** 8am to 10pm **Average Meal:** NT\$150 to NT\$270
Details: Chinese menu, free wireless Internet, credit cards not accepted
On the Net: www.journeykaffee.com



Journey Kaffee's Spanish red pepper chicken "wrapanini."

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES