

BY ALITA RICKARDS

MUSIC

POP STOP

COMPILED BY CATHERINE SHU

Pop Stop readers will know that **Van Ness Wu** (吳建業) has recently gotten very cozy with God. The Taiwanese-American heartthrob called on his new best friend for support last week when his production company became embroiled in a drug scandal. Wu hauled a copy of the Bible to a press conference where he and Smash and Grab Productions (天地仁和電影公司) co-founder **Jimmy Hung** (洪天祥) both denied any wrongdoing.

The trouble started when a police raid of the film company's office uncovered a baggie of marijuana in an employee's belongings. *Apple Daily* described 29-year-old Chou Ichuan (周毅鈺) as Wu's "clingy assistant," but Wu's manager insisted that her client had only known the alleged pothead for one or two weeks. Chou's three roommates were also arrested on charges related to drug trafficking.

Hung and Wu appeared at a joint press conference after the arrests. Despite being clad in black leather and sporting a tough-looking buzz cut, Wu appeared very pious — and, indeed, demure — as he clutched the Good Book. He dismissed rumors that he'd shaved his head to avoid a drugs test, saying that his new coif was for an independent film he shot last month in the US. Both men distanced themselves from Chou and his alleged herbal remedy. "I told him not to bring that kind of stuff to work and he said he wouldn't touch it again," said Hung. "One of our employees made a mistake, it doesn't mean it has anything to do with the rest of the company."

Hung went on to kvetch about the police officers who'd searched Smash and Grab, complaining that he'd been ordered to leave the premises. "They acted like we were all drug traffickers," Hung wailed to reporters, before adding that if urine samples could prove Hung and Wu's innocence, both men would be more than happy to step up to the cup.

According to *Apple Daily*, Chou admitted to possessing marijuana but insisted he didn't sell it (his roommates also say they are innocent of the drug trafficking charges). While being questioned by police, Chou claimed he'd gotten drunk in the East District's (東區) Room 18 and bumped into a

blonde man outside the nightclub, who offered him the baggie of marijuana. Zhou said that the bag cost him NT\$2,000 and that all he wanted to do was go home, have something to eat and drink and then "relax."

TV producer **Chen Yulin** (沈玉琳) appeared to be on something at his wedding last week, but the only thing he was high on was life ... or his 25-year-old wife **Wu Hsiao-chun** (吳曉純), also known as Yaya (芽芽), who is 17 years Chen's junior. According to reports in the *Apple Daily*, 700 guests attended the lavish 81-table banquet. Chen entertained the gathering with a failed attempt at hula-hooping, some very moist tongue wrestling with Wu and touching proclamations of love: "[Wu's] a good daughter, she takes care of me, her bedroom kung-fu skills [床上功夫] are excellent and, most importantly, she'll never bash me on television!"

The last part was a jab at Chen's ex-girlfriend, television host **Peajen** (佩甄), who he dated for eight years. The two climbed to the top ranks of show business (or at least the top ranks of the B-list) together before splitting up. Peajen has referred to Chen on her talk show as a heartless two-timer. Nonetheless, she put in an appearance at the banquet with a NT\$8,000 *hongbao* in hand, telling reporters that she and Chen remained good friends.

Before the wedding, Wu's friends ribbed Chen by forcing him to enter the hotel in a pair of high heels and sing while hula hooping



Van Ness Wu packs the Good Book. PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

(the toy fell almost instantly, crashing into a coffee table). At the banquet, Chen praised Wu for her skill at preparing instant noodles. The 700 guests, who caused a traffic jam in front of the reception venue, included semi-celebs, such as actors **Ma Kuo-hsien** (馬國賢), **Jonathan Chang** (張克帆), **Ding Guolin** (丁國琳) and **Riva Zhang** (張芳奕). TV host **Jacky Wu** (吳宗憲) was Chen's best man and joked during his speech that the groom's father was only interested in Ding's cleavage.

The boys are back in town



The crowd watching Japanese math-funk band **Zazen Boys** perform at last year's Music Terminals outdoor concert in Taoyuan gave the band and lead vocalist and guitarist **Mukai Shutoki** such a warm response that it more than made up for the scorcher of a day: "It was very hot," said Shutoki. "The heavy sunshine made us feel sunburned. The people surprised us, their passion is as hot as the weather."

The eclectic, eccentric front man said that he felt a "special passion" from the Taiwanese that has been missing in Tokyo for some time. The band, which tours extensively, played to a packed crowd of local youths who crowded to the stage and filled the field with dancing bodies.

"We're very happy that the audience feels free dancing to our beats," said Shutoki, who returns tomorrow for a show at Legacy.

He envisions his avant-garde band, successor to his previous group **Number Girl**, as "Led Zeppelin in kimonos" and labels their albums in a similar fashion — numerically. The first two albums were well-received but the third, which was more ambient, improvisational and experimental earned mixed reviews. In addition to a slew of live albums, the band released a fourth studio album in 2008 that features more synthesizers and a funk edge.

"A few years ago we started to make songs using a laptop," said Shutoki, who likes to compose while touring. "The atmosphere in the hotel room outside Tokyo is very lonely, so I could make some lonely sounds."

He is evasive when asked to analyze or explain what inspires him, referring instead to a response that Japanese artist **Ohtake Shinro** made when asked about his point of view on his art works:

"When people asked him ... he answered 'No special idea in it, because it's boring to care about this' — I deeply relate to him in this."

He gives the example of a painter using a certain color on a canvas because it feels right and touches you, and said that the reason never comes to one's mind but allows others to "decide freely."

Zazen Boys' music is more aggressive and physical when they perform live, with heavy beats and what Shutoki calls "illusory lyrics." In their first attempt to "challenge minimal house music" the band adds to it the "original style of Zazen Boys" he said, which is based on math rock, complex rhythms and extended improvisational songs, with a newer synth-funk sound.

Self-described as a "weird Japanese rock band," Shutoki's Zazen Boys rely on the fact that while you may not know what their music is, you'll know if you like it.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Zazen Boys
WHEN: Tomorrow at 8pm, doors at open at 7pm
WHERE: Legacy Taipei, located at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), Center Five Hall (中五館), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)
ADMISSION: NT\$900 in advance (today) through Family Mart FamiPort kiosks, NT\$1,200 at the door
DETAILS: For more information, e-mail info@comma9comma.com
ON THE NET: www.legacy.com.tw

Zazen Boys are all shades of funk. PHOTO COURTESY OF ZAZEN BOYS

CLUBBING

BY ELVIS ANBER

One jump ahead

Tomorrow night's edition of Club Jump's monthly **Follow Me** bash will revive some of the best tech house of the past decade.

Fresh from parties in Kaohsiung and Taichung over the Lunar New Year, DJ **Jimmy Chen** (陳怡成) says he'll play underground tunes, despite the mostly gay crowd's penchant for the vocal prowess of mainstream artists.

"Gay people are not into underground," Chen said. "They prefer vocal divas. I don't mind playing pop, but I'm careful in what I choose. It has to be a good remix."

Chen says he longs for the days when members of the gay community exhibited a more nuanced and discriminating taste in music.

"Follow Me in the beginning played underground, progressive house. But the gay scene has changed over the past two years," Chen said.

In the early noughties, **TeXound**, one of Taipei's more notorious underground clubs, drew a mixed crowd to the tune of progressive and tech house.

Cowed by routine police raids (Hong Kong actor and singer **William So** (蘇永康) was busted at the club in 2002 for taking Ecstasy, unleashing a torrent of moral outrage in the vernacular press), the venue closed in 2004, and then reopened at a different location in the form of **AXD**. When **AXD** shut up shop in 2007, a new management team renamed the venue **Club Jump** and promoted it exclusively as a gay club.

Follow Me is six years old and attracts an international crowd. Promoted on **Fridae.com**, Asia's leading gay social networking Web site, partygoers from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore regularly attend the night.

"I like that people come from all over to Jump, making it a more international crowd," says Chen. "No one wants to be just local."

Joining Chen tomorrow night are DJs **Tiger**, **Eric Chang** and **Stone**.

Follow Me takes place the last Saturday of each month. Tomorrow from 11pm to 6am at **Club Jump**, B1, 8, Keelung Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北



Jimmy Chen plays at **Follow Me**, one of Taiwan's longest running club nights. PHOTO COURTESY OF JIMMY CHEN

市基隆路一段8號B1). Advance tickets are available online at ticket.topfong.com for NT\$500, or NT\$350 for students.

Entry at the door is NT\$700. Tel: (02) 2756-0055, 0939-458-333. On the Net: www.club-jump.com

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

BY DAVID CHEN

TIDBITS

Sweet Dynasty 糖朝

Address: 160, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段160號)
Telephone: (02) 2772-2889 **Open:** 11:30am to 2am **Average meal:** Most desserts are less than NT\$100 per serving; most savory dishes range from NT\$200 to NT\$300
Details: Chinese, English and Japanese menu; credit cards accepted

Sweet Dynasty (糖朝) has earned a reputation in Hong Kong and Taiwan for excellent desserts. Its Chinese language name is a pun on Tang Dynasty, and the restaurant takes its treats seriously, with a fifth of the menu dedicated to douhua (豆花), or tofu pudding, sweet soups, bubble tea and other confections. But the restaurant's savory dishes, which include a wide variety of dim sum staples, are hit-and-miss.

Some were very good, including the fried turnip cake (煎北菇蘿蔔糕, NT\$70), which has a crispy exterior that gives way to a tender middle punctuated with crisp turnip pieces and soft mushroom slices. The steamed rice roll with shrimp (鮮蝦瑤明蝦腸粉, NT\$160) and steamed dumpling with shrimp, pork and bamboo shoot (筍尖鮮蝦餃, NT\$100) were also pleasing. The tiny bits of bamboo in the latter's filling added a welcome contrast to the chewy rice wrapper.

The seafood and pork shumai (海皇燒賣, NT\$100), or steamed dumplings stuffed with shrimp and pork and topped with a sprinkling of shrimp roe, were a disappointment, partly because they were overcooked, leaving the wrapper slightly too chewy. The shumai was also not served with the customary mustard dipping

sauce. In fact, supplying guests with condiments seems to be a weak point in Sweet Dynasty's service. On both our visits, we had to grab a condiment tray from a neighboring table, only to have it whisked away by staff almost immediately. They were refilling the bottles, a process that seemed to take forever.

This was unfortunate, because many of our other savory courses could have used some help. From the photo in Sweet Dynasty's picture menu, we expected our plate of water spinach (空心菜, NT\$160 or NT\$220 depending on portion size) to come topped with slices of ginger, garlic, chili peppers and other exciting flavor enhancers. Instead, we got a heap of unadorned veggies so soggy it left puddles on the table whenever we lifted a portion to our plates. The fried scallops with egg white (蛋白炒帶子, NT\$340 or NT\$510), or a pile of sauteed scallops sandwiched in between a layer of egg white and youtiao slices, was also bland.

A meal at Sweet Dynasty should be planned so that most of what you eat comes off the restaurant's dessert menu. Standouts include the steamed egg custard buns (蛋王蒸, NT\$80), which are also available fried, and the hot tofu



Sweet Dynasty's desserts excel, but its savory dishes and dim sum are hit-or-miss. PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

pudding with almond soup (豆麻花杏仁露, NT\$80), a comforting pick for a cold afternoon. On warmer days, the sago soup with fresh fruit (鮮雜果西米露, NT\$90), which features watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew balls and tiny pearls made from sago palm starch floating in coconut milk, is a refreshing choice. One of the restaurant's specialties is tofu pudding in a cask (原本桶豆腐花, NT\$220) for splitting among multiple diners. On a recent weekend visit, almost every table had a wooden bucket sitting on it.

Despite rumors of its pending demise because of the economic downturn early last year, **Dean & DeLuca's** Taipei branch at Breeze Center (微風廣場) is still around and continues to offer gourmet and specialty foods.

The imported grocery selection is hodge-podge at best — the neighboring supermarket has a wider variety — not to mention overpriced. Unless you really want to fork out NT\$780 on a jar of jam from France, spend your money at the excellent deli, which offers hot foods and Mediterranean-style hors d'oeuvres.

The NT\$300 set menu includes four items from the cold deli, soup and bread. I liked everything I had on a recent visit: The grilled vegetables (available a la carte for NT\$85 per 100g), which consisted of generous portions of sliced zucchini, red bell peppers and pumpkin, had a nice smoky flavor. The Caesar salad (NT\$80 per 100g), something that few places in Taipei seem to get right, hit a perfect mix with a light creamy dressing and fresh bacon bits and croutons. The smoked duck slices stuffed with liver pate (NT\$150 per 100g) were heavenly.

The deli takes advantage of some local ingredients. The creamy sweet potato and shrimp salad (NT\$100 per 100g) could

easily pass as nouveau Taiwanese cuisine and I made note of the Aurora sauce (a tomato cream sauce) marinated shrimp and cuttlefish salad (NT\$110 per 100g) to try on a future visit.

There's a hot foods set menu (NT\$300), includes a meat or seafood main course, three side items, soup and bread), but the selections sit under a heat lamp and don't look as appetizing. For something hot and fresh, the deli serves made-to-order hot items, including a truffle mushroom pasta (NT\$360), mentaiko pasta with nori seaweed (NT\$320) and a club sandwich (NT\$280).

Dean & DeLuca's bacon cheeseburger (NT\$250) should have been a runaway winner. They get points for a fresh, homemade beef patty and a proper sesame bun, but they use processed cheese and don't even bother to melt it onto the burger. And



The bacon cheeseburger at Dean and DeLuca was good, but should have been better. PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

another sin: the bacon was not in the least bit crispy. You'd expect an American gourmet chain to get that right.

The shop, with clean white walls and furnished with marble tables, blurs the line between upscale cafe and grocery store. The spacious design allows you to browse while waiting for your food and offers some relief from the claustrophobic layout of the Breeze Center's basement floors.

The Taipei store pales in comparison to what one would find at a D&D branch in New York City or Napa Valley. One glaring omission is the lack of a cheese selection, but there are foodie delights such as aged balsamic vinegars and fancy European chocolates. The company also brands a few local delicacies, although it's hard to imagine Taiwanese shoppers purchasing pineapple jam made in Nantou County at NT\$680 a jar and high mountain oolong tea for NT\$1,200 for 110g.

Dean & DeLuca also has an espresso bar that serves drinks ranging from NT\$70 to NT\$130 and stocks a small selection of desserts. A marketing tie-in with clothing label **Ed Hardy** (the bar is currently dubbed the **Ed Hardy Cafe**) makes sitting in the dining area annoying as they play a 15-minute promotional video in a continual loop. If hearing the same five songs (1980s music) over and over again sounds unappealing, think twice before dining in.

Catering is available. Visit **Dean & DeLuca's** Taiwan Web site for details, or call (02) 6600-8888 X7321.

Dean & DeLuca

Address: B2, 39, Fuxing S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (微風廣場台北市復興南路一段39號B2樓)
Telephone: (02) 6600-8888 X7301, X7321 for catering services **Open:** 10am to 10pm
Average meal: NT\$300 to NT\$500 **On the Net:** www.deananddeluca.com.tw