

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2010

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FESTIVAL NOTES

WHAT: Urban Nomad Film Festival
WHEN AND WHERE: Starts at 7:30pm tonight with a double feature of *Taiwan's Critically Endangered Dolphins* and the Taiwanese premiere of *The Cove* at the Armed Forces Cultural Center (國華文藝活動中心), 69, Zhonghua Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市中華路一段69號). The festival runs through May 8
ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$220 or NT\$170 for students for each evening of films

ON THE NET: Go to urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com for a complete schedule and to preorder tickets
ADDITIONAL SCREENINGS: Urban Nomad Film Festival will travel to the Hsinchu Image Museum (新竹市影像博物館), 65 Jhongheng Rd, Hsinchu City (新竹市中正路65號) from May 16 to May 30, and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art (國立台灣美術館), 2 Wucyuan W Rd Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市五權路一段2號), www.tmoa.gov.tw, in June (dates to be announced)



Left: *Copyright Criminals* examines the conflict between music sampling, artistry and intellectual property rights issues. Right: *Sharkwater* is about the hunting of sharks for their fins.



PHOTO COURTESY OF URBAN NOMAD FILM FESTIVAL
 PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARKWATER

Urban Nomad settles in

The annual film festival has an Academy Award-winning documentary on its schedule this year, but remains true to its underground roots and activist mindset

BY CATHERINE SHU
 STAFF REPORTER

When Urban Nomad Film Festival first launched in 2002, fledging filmmakers submitted their work on VHS tapes and audience members sat on scavenged carpet and chairs in a warehouse at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914) (then known as Huashan Arts District, 華山藝文特區).

Now Urban Nomad is host to the Taiwanese premiere of Academy Award-winning documentary *The Cove*, which will screen this evening at the Armed Forces Cultural Center (國華文藝活動中心). The festival closes on May 8 with *The Shock Doctrine*, based on the book of the same name by Naomi Klein and directed by Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom.

But the festival remains true to its roots. In addition to an international lineup of documentaries, several nights of short film, most by young Taiwanese filmmakers, will be screened.

"We wanted to show films other festivals wouldn't show. That hasn't changed, we still do that now. For local filmmakers, we want to give them a chance to see their films on screen," says Sean Scanlan, who, along with David Frazier, founded Urban Nomad in 2002.

In 2007, Urban Nomad shifted from a weekend film festival to a weeklong event and launched its current format, which mixes feature films and documentaries from around the world with short films by local filmmakers each night in a double feature.

The awards program for short films is run with the Taiwan Original Filmmakers Union (TOFU, 電影創作聯盟); from more than 200 submissions, the festival picked eight nominees. These include a documentary, short fictional films and what Frazier describes as a "52-minute mash-up of horror films and techno music" called *Abaddon*.

"We tell the jurors when they're choosing the prize winner that what we're looking for is creativity and new energy. Technical achievement is not the number one criteria," says Frazier.

Since its launch, the Urban Nomad Film Festival has run the topical gamut. Films shown in previous years ranged from the hardcore "sci-fi porn" *I.K.U.* by Taiwanese American filmmaker Shu-lea Cheang (鄭淑麗) to documentaries about backyard wrestling and the band Sonic Youth. Most of the festival's documentaries have focused on social issues, however, and this year is no exception. Several documentaries, including *The Cove*,

Sharkwater and *The Shock Doctrine*, will be shown with Chinese subtitles for the first time.

"In the last 10 years since we started this festival, the documentary genre has just exploded. There are more people making documentaries, there are documentaries made on more topics and because they are cheaper to produce, they are coming from more different points of view," says Frazier.

This year's schedule includes documentaries on music sampling and copyright issues (*Copyright Criminals*), the Gaza Strip (*To Shoot an Elephant*) and Indian environmental activist Vandana Shiva (*Bullshit*).

Three documentaries focus on ocean conservation. Urban Nomad teamed up with Flash Forward, a film distribution company that bought the Taiwanese rights to *The Cove* and *Sharkwater*, a documentary about shark hunting. *The Cove*,

about dolphin hunting in Japan, will be shown with *Taiwan's Critically Endangered Dolphins*, a nine-minute short by the Wild at Heart Legal Defense Association (蠻野心足生態協會) that will be subtitled in Chinese for the first time.

A panel discussion tomorrow will feature guest speakers from Wild at Heart, the Environment and Animal Society of Taiwan (EAST, 動物社會研究會) and Matsu's Fish Conservation Union (媽祖魚保育聯盟), as well as nature photographer and filmmaker

Ke Jin-yuan (柯金源). Frazier and Scanlan say one of the reasons they chose conservation as a theme for this year's festival is because the Asia-Pacific Green Network (APGN, a federation of environmental groups) will hold its annual conference in Taipei starting today.

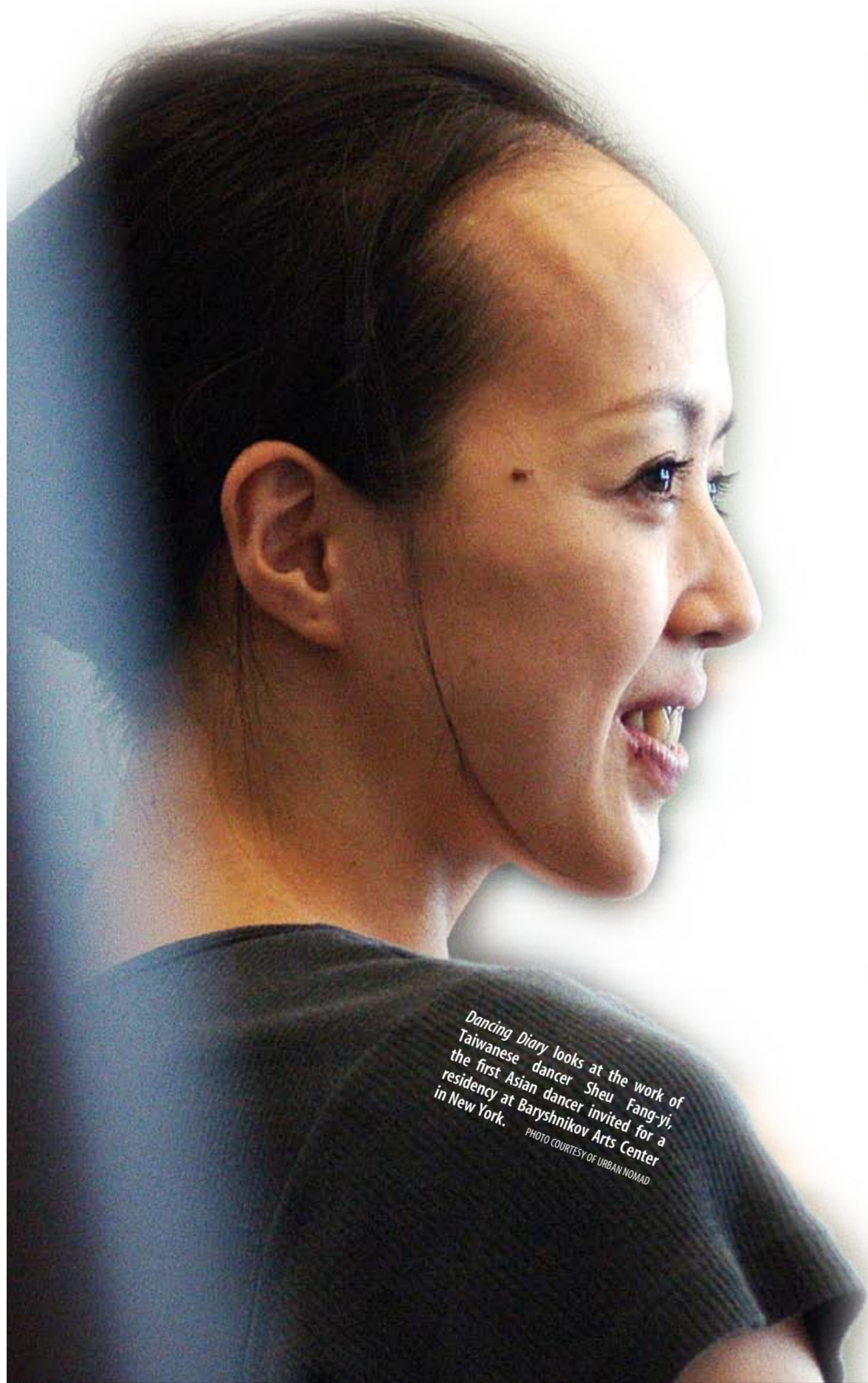
"This year the environmental issue is very, very big after the [UN Climate Change Conference last December], the hopes leading up to it and the letdown after it," says Frazier. "Suddenly we had these films available to us and we knew activist groups that were really involved in these issues in Taiwan, so we thought this makes a good theme."

"We want movie-watching to be more of a social experience," he adds. "We're happy to bring audiences in contact with these kinds of groups, so it's not just watching a movie but seeing what you can do to make your little corner of the world better."



Academy Award-winning documentary *The Cove* premieres in Taiwan tonight at Urban Nomad Film Festival.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COVE



Dancing Diary looks at the work of Taiwanese dancer Sheu Fang-yi, the first Asian dancer invited for a residency at Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF URBAN NOMAD

Mimie Chan doesn't mean a thing

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Urban Nomad presents The Return of (the Legendary) Mimie Chan!
WHEN: Tomorrow from 8pm. Documentary *Favela on Blast* starts at 8pm, bands start at 10pm
WHERE: Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), Warehouse E3 (烏梅酒廠) at 1, Bade Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)
ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$500 at the door and NT\$400 in advance, available at KGB, 5, Ln 114, Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路114巷5號) and at both Toasterias, 2, Ln 248, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段248巷2號) and 1, Ln 72, Yunhe St, Taipei City (台北市雲和街72巷1號)
ON THE NET: urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com

BY ALITA RICKARDS
 CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

What appears to be a sumo wrestler runs around the stage in a latex pink mask and a huge pink diaper. Three girls of varying sizes in elaborate costumes wail away on horns. The guitarist's cape billows in the smoke, the bass player's glitter reflects the stage lights, and the fishnet body stocking- and thong-clad drummer pounds out an irresistible beat. It's like a little piece of Japanese weirdness has just dropped fully formed out of the sky and onto the stage. Meet Mimie Chan.

Members of the seven-piece ska band were a Spring Scream staple from 2000 to 2008 but their loyal following of Screammers have had to make do without them for the last couple of years as the whole band was on hiatus. Now they've reunited, and though they were unable to make it in time for Spring Scream this year, they arrive this weekend to take part in Urban Nomad's festivities.

Their "mind-blowing" shows were an inspiration to other musicians, said Spring Scream founder Wade Davis, who will come up to Taipei from Taichung to catch them. "They take full advantage of the stage," he said. Their costumes — from bumblebees to geishas to wrestler masks and superhero outfits — and range of instruments lead to a high-energy performance and "fun, danceable

music," said Davis.

Their music is a cross between noise-punk, classic punk, ska and pure Mimie Chanism. "Our songs have no meaning I think," said guitarist Yutaka Ozawa. "We have two albums and we just made lyrics that same day at the studio," he continued. "We just put some words together. One song goes 'What is this crunchy thing?' and the answer will be 'Just wait one more day.'"

Is there any meaning behind their outfits? "We just want to wear some costumes [because] it makes the show funny," said Ozawa. His getup tomorrow will be "some kind of dress and a fan so the wind makes it look like flying," he said. What about the band name? "Means nothing," he said. "Could be a cat or dog's name ... 'Chan' is for 'little girl.'"

Does any of it mean anything? "We once tried to make a song about an alien creature named Mimie Chan. Our first concept was 'Mimie Chan went shopping,'" he said, laughing.

Also playing at Urban Nomad's annual party (in conjunction with the film festival) is eight-piece band Skaraoke, which includes a full horn section, and *Touming Magazine* (透明雜誌). The latter was started by lead singer/guitarist Chimpanzee (洪申豪) and guitarist Tang Shi-jie (唐世杰) after their emo band Fall of this Corner (一隅之秋) broke up in 2005. With influences like The Pixies, Sonic Youth and Fugazi, they use jazzy drums and heavy guitar

effects to create a high-energy sound.

Finishing up the night will be DJ Floaty with his eclectic, eccentric, diverse range of music that rocks Underworld (地下社會) and Fucking Place (操場) crowds on a regular basis.

It's a night for musicians and music lovers, and the film being screened at the party — *Favela on Blast* — fits the bill. The documentary, set in the favelas, or slums, of Rio de Janeiro, follows Wesley Pentz aka DJ Diplo as he explores the music and dance phenomena Baile Funk (built around remixes of 1980s American dance beats and Brazilian samba music) as it sweeps through violent gang turf.

Documentaries take center stage at the festival this year with the film everyone has been waiting to see — *The Cove* — premiering tonight at 7:30pm at the Armed Forces Cultural Center at 69 Zhonghua Rd, Sec 1, Xindian, Taipei County (台北縣新店市中華路一段69號). There's an after-party later with Mimie Chan's "sumo wrestler" Yusuke Shimizu as DJ Pencil on the decks. See Urban Nomad's Web site (in the box) for details.

Tomorrow's party at Huashan 1914 Creative Park's (華山1914) Warehouse E3 (烏梅酒廠) starts at 8pm with the documentary, followed by bands from 10pm. Expect to see many of the main players in Taiwan's expat music scene turn up to catch old friends Mimie Chan even if they, like Davis, will have



They're baa-aa-ack.

PHOTO: ALITA RICKARDS

had to travel from out of town for the event. "We now feel happy with the fact we didn't sell our musical instruments for money," said diaper-wearing Mimie Chan member Shimizu, who contributes "excitement and keyboards" to the band, when asked about the reunion.