

# POP STOP

COMPILED BY  
CATHERINE SHU

BY DAVID CHEN

MUSIC

## Jazz encounters of the Jedi kind



### PERFORMANCE NOTES

**WHAT:** Taipei International Jazz Festival  
**WHEN:** Tonight and Tomorrow at 7pm.  
Afternoon jazz parades featuring Taipei International Jazz Academy students run today and tomorrow starting at 5:30pm  
**WHERE:** 228 Peace Park (228和平公園), Main Stage, near NTU Hospital MRT Station (台大醫院捷運站), exit No. 1  
**ADMISSION:** All events are free  
**ON THE NET:** www.taipeijazz.com



French drummer Roger Bivandou, top left, Italian saxophonist Rosario Giuliani, above, and South African singer Tutu Puoane are part of an international cast of jazz musicians that performs tonight and tomorrow at the Taipei International Jazz Festival.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TAIPEI INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

**E**lla Chen (陳嘉樺) of pop group S.H.E is licking her wounds after her boyfriend allegedly strayed.

According to *Next Magazine*, the singer and **Tommy Chao** (趙士鏗), grandson of **Chao Hsiao-feng** (趙孝鳳), former president of the Taiwan Stock Exchange Corporation, were dating quietly for a year.

Unfortunately, Tommy Chao was not so diligent about keeping his side projects under wraps. Chao supposedly indulged his bull market by escorting a "hot chick" (辣妹) in a Porsche to a fancy hotel.

Ella took to her blog to respond to fans — though she didn't actually address the *Next Magazine* article. "I'm doing really well. I'm living a dream. I have no regrets. I'm a lucky person," Ella wrote in response to comments.

Another one of Ella's rumored ex-boyfriends, **Wu Chun** (吳尊), a member of boy band Fahrenheit (飛輪海), spoke up for his former flame.

"She's a morally upstanding person, so if this news is true, it means this man is no good," Wu gallantly told reporters. "She just has to be a little more careful."

S.H.E bandmate **Selina Jen** (任家萱) was asked how Ella is holding up while hosting her first episode of variety show *Guess Guess Guess* (我猜我猜我猜猜).

"I didn't get a chance to talk to her until two or three days afterwards," Selina said. "But when I saw her, I asked her how she was and she said she was okay."

Questions about Ella's relationship woes ate up a chunk of Selina's *Guess Guess Guess* premiere. Selina and co-host **Harlem Yu** (吳浩康) took over helming the CTV show last week after former host **Jacky Wu** (吳宗憲) quit.

*Apple Daily* noted that the two have taken on a heavy responsibility. *Guess Guess Guess* has been on air since 1996, but the show's popularity started to

Bump watch is on for Gaile Lok.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES



sag last year. The popular Wu announced he was leaving two months ago, partly in response to the viewership decline.

But Selina seemed confident. "We can only go up," she said. "There's plenty of room to make improvements."

"Because we've gone as low as we can," Yu piped up, in reference to the show's ratings.

If everything else fails, the two can flame audience interest by talking about Selina's upcoming wedding to fiancé **Richard Chang** (張承中). The lawyer famously proposed to the singer during a S.H.E concert in May as thousands of screaming fans waved neon green glow sticks.

Selina admitted that she's argued with Chang over where the two should spend their honeymoon. Chang wants to take in the scenery of Jiuzhaigou Valley in Sichuan, China, but Selina put her foot down.

"I said 'No!' We can always go there later, but it's not a honeymoon spot." Selina prefers a romantic island getaway to the Maldives or a jaunt in Europe.

Selina still has some time to prepare herself for pregnancy speculation, but Hong Kong supermodel **Gaile Lok** (樂基兒), born Gia Lai (黎嘉儀), is finding out just how desperate the media can be for a baby bump spotting.

Lok, whose secret 2008 marriage to actor and singer **Leon Lai** (黎明) caused a tabloid frenzy, was spotted by the *Oriental Sunday* in Hong Kong wearing an "uncharacteristically simple" dress and flats. As she carefully navigated a set of stairs, the wind blew her clothing against her body, exposing a small but "definite bump" in her tummy.

Reports speculated that Lok secretly went off her contraception to get pregnant. According to the *Oriental Sunday*, Lok has longed to give her husband a son, but Lai, whose parents divorced when he was young, was less enthusiastic about having children. During a press conference earlier this year, Lai, who was dubbed one of the "Four Heavenly Kings" of Canto-pop in the 1990s, laughed off baby rumors, telling reporters "don't believe everything you hear!"

When paparazzi spotted Lok last week, she was braving a heat wave to go shopping with friends. After catching sight of the photographers trailing her, Lok held up her jacket to hide her belly before heading into an eveningwear boutique. Newspapers claimed she paid particular attention to styles with empire waists and loose, flowing skirts.

**M**usic can bring strangers together, so goes the cliché. But things can get interesting when the music is jazz and the people coming together are musicians trained to improvise, at least in the mind of violinist Hsieh Chi-pin (謝啓彬).

This is the idea behind his concert program at the Taipei International Jazz Festival, which began earlier this month and ends this weekend with free concerts tonight and tomorrow at the 228 Peace Park (228和平公園).

Hsieh, a jazz musician and educator who co-founded the festival in 2004 with his wife, pianist Chang Kai-ya (張凱雅), has organized two shows that feature around a dozen accomplished jazz artists from North America, Europe, Africa and Taiwan performing together on stage.

Many of the visiting musicians, who include veteran saxophonist John Ruocco, French drummer Roger Bivandou and South African vocalist Tutu Puoane, only met for the first time at the beginning of this week.

And there hasn't been much rehearsal time as they've been busy teaching at the Taipei International Summer Jazz Academy, the annual weeklong camp associated with the festival.

But the challenge of playing on stage with a bassist and drummer you've just met is the ultimate test of skill for a jazz musician and will make for a "fresh encounter," said Hsieh in an interview earlier this week. "That's what jazz means," he said. "You just improvise, play together and do your best, try your best to create the best music."

The format of tonight and tomorrow's concerts is nothing new to the festival, now in its seventh edition. But the difference from year to year lies in the new faces that bring their unique talents and skills to the mix.

David Smith, a Canadian-born, New York-based trumpeter teaching and performing in Taiwan for the first time, says he appreciates the idea of being put into a situation where "people are

from different parts of the world where they're more likely to have a different take on things than I'm accustomed to."

"That makes it exciting," he said.

Indeed, the diversity of cultures and backgrounds among this weekend's performers gives credence to the notion that jazz is thriving as an international art form.

Bivandou (myspace.com/rogerbiwandou) is a French national whose family emigrated from Zaire. Hsieh says he brings the "energy" of African percussion into his work in modern jazz, fusion and pop.

Puoane (myspace.com/tutupuoaanemusic), a 31-year-old vocalist, is considered a rising star both in her native South Africa and Belgium, her current home.

Italian saxophonist Rosario Giuliani (myspace.com/rosariogiuliani) has won a handful of awards in Europe and, according to Hsieh, possesses an impressive be-bop vocabulary that he handles with equally impressive speed.

Smith (myspace.com/davesmithtrumpet), the trumpeter, says one of his main influences comes from his training as a classical musician. He is drawn to "strong harmonies" that create "drama" and a "sense of motion."

Attendees of past festivals will recognize some returning musicians: John Ruocco (www.jazzmasters.nl/johnruocco), the veteran American saxophonist based in Europe; German hard-bop guitarist Joachim Schoenecker (www.joachimschoenecker.com); Italian drummer Mimi Verderame (myspace.com/mimiverderame); Belgian bassist Bart de Nolf (myspace.com/bartdenolf); and Dutch pianist Peter van Marle, who specializes in Latin jazz and percussion. Hsieh and Chang will also participate in the concert.

Hsieh jokes that this musician's summit is like a meeting of "Jedi knights." But he has taken the reference to *Star Wars*, one of his favorite movies, even further. The theme of this year's concert has been billed as "The Force of Jazz."

## RESTAURANTS

BY HO YI

BY DAVID CHEN

### Tsubaki 椿

**Address:** 46-1 Yongkang St, Taipei City (台北市永康街46-1號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2358-7377  
**Open:** Mondays to Saturdays from 6pm to midnight  
**Details:** Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted

Average meal: NT\$600

**I**magine you and some friends are invited over to a friend's home for dinner. Your host is the laid-back type and not very talkative. You all sit around the kitchen, enjoying a quiet evening with a few drinks while he prepares simple dishes, occasionally interjecting with a word or two of his own.

That is what dining at Tsubaki, a snug establishment offering a small selection of simple Japanese food on the less bustling strip of Yongkang Street (永康街), feels like.

"Relaxed" is an apt description of the service environment, but that is by no means to imply it is inept or sluggish. The restaurant is all about setting the right mood, not maximizing its efficiency. The young female staffer may enjoy the occasional glass of whiskey, casually chatting with patrons as they imbibe sake. The quieter male chef, on the other hand, seems to take great pleasure in selecting the restaurant's music whenever he is afforded a break from the kitchen. Björk is among his favorites.

The interior is designed to set patrons at ease, with wooden dining tables and tiled cupboards. Potted plants and ornaments enliven the space, adding color and lending it a

feminine touch.

This homey atmosphere is made all the more comfy by the open-plan kitchen that allows the restaurant's two young chefs to converse freely with patrons sat at the L-shaped bar. But the piece de resistance is undoubtedly the small sand pit at Tsubaki's center, where the chefs grill fish over a charcoal fire.

The restaurant's menu is scrawled on a couple of blackboards and includes grilled meats and seafood, stews, salads, cold appetizers and sashimi.

Cooking over charcoal takes time, and the grilled sweetfish (鹽烤香魚, NT\$150), seasoned simply with salt, arrived on a wooden plate roughly half an hour after the order was placed. But there is something strangely gratifying about seeing your food cooked over a fire right in front of you, and I didn't find myself complaining.

The assorted stew (筑煎煮, NT\$220), a nourishing combo of pork, bamboo shoot, carrot, daikon and burdock root, came recommended, but was too salty for my taste. The steamed clams bowl (酒蒸蛤蜊, NT\$220), however, won approval with its fresh-tasting broth and ample serving of juicy clams.

Hungry visitors looking to



Tsubaki offers a small menu of simple Japanese fare and a homey, slow-paced dining environment.

PHOTO: HO YI, TAIPEI TIMES

fill up on appetizers can choose salmon ochatsuke (rice with tea) (鮭魚茶泡飯, NT\$150) or a big bowl of oden (Japanese hot pot) tidbits (關東煮, NT\$240).

The drinks menu includes several varieties of sake (NT\$200 per glass) and plum wine (NT\$180 per glass), and there is a range of 300ml bottles of sake priced between NT\$600 to NT\$900.

The restaurant doesn't boast a big menu, and the food isn't particularly impressive, but Tsubaki's intimate environment and leisurely ambiance go some to making up for its shortcomings.

### Waterfront 水灣

**Address:** 10 Shangdian St, Sindian City, Bitan Scenic Area (新店市碧潭風景區東岸商店街10號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2912-5568  
**Open:** 11am to 11pm  
**Average meal:** NT\$500 to NT\$600  
**Details:** No credit cards, 10 percent service charge, reservations recommended on weekends  
**On the Net:** www.waterfront.com.tw

**I**f you're looking for a cool summer breeze in the Taipei area, it's tough to beat Bitan (碧潭), located close to Xindian MRT Station (新店捷運站). A major renovation project completed at the end of 2008 breathed new life into this riverside park area, which has a wood deck arcade lined with outdoor cafes and restaurants.

The dozen or so establishments here serve everything from cold tea drinks and kebab sandwiches to Korean barbecue and Japanese ramen noodles, and offer covered seating areas with nice views of the glistening green waters from which Bitan derives its name.

Waterfront (水灣) presents itself as one of the more upscale dining choices, with wait staff dressed in matching tropical-themed uniforms and a menu comprised of a mish-mash selection of Western-style dishes. The food is decent and nicely presented, but some items are overpriced and cater more to the Taiwanese imagination than Western palates.

The crispy pork knuckle (NT\$700, NT\$720 for beer-flavored) is listed as a house recommendation, as is the grilled duck breast (NT\$680), which was sold out on my visit. I settled for the John Dory (NT\$540), a

white ocean fish that Waterfront serves breaded and pan-fried. The fish fillet was tender and flaky and tasted fresh, but the kebab vegetables on the side were hit and miss. The zucchini was tasty, but the potato was ruined by a sickly-sweet glaze.

Other main courses include short-rib beefsteak (NT\$760) and several seafood pastas for NT\$540. All main course meals come with soup (creamy pumpkin with bacon bits on this visit), a bread roll (which was a little stale), a drink (coffee, tea, soda or juice; the mango-pomelo juice with vinegar is good on a hot day) and dessert.

For something lighter, there's a selection of salads and pizzas, but the pictures in the menu don't hold out much promise. The Caesar salad (NT\$250) looked thoroughly unappetizing, with a photograph showing a clump of lettuce overflowing with a creamy dressing and whole strips of bacon covered in cheese.



Pizza by the waterfront.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

My dining companion liked the "Italian-style tomato and cheese pizza" (NT\$300), which I found too salty. The thin crust was also too oily, but the dish won points for fresh toppings, which included buffalo mozzarella. However, pizza aficionados will likely be disappointed, and the portions — it's an 8-inch pie — are small for what you pay.

The dessert selection consists of Thai-style ice cream (a scoop of vanilla served with tapioca and sweet beans), Black Forest banana cake and apple pie. At NT\$160 for a single order, neither the ice cream nor the apple pie are worth trying, unless you get them with a main course meal.

But there's no need to splurge to enjoy the scenery and the comfy seating at Waterfront. The minimum charge per person is NT\$150 (plus 10 percent service charge), and the restaurant offers a large variety of beverages to fuel an extended chat with friends. Espresso drinks, tea, juices and smoothies run from NT\$160 to NT\$180; Heineken on tap is available at NT\$250 for 500ml and NT\$1,100 for 2,500ml and bottled beers from the microbrewery North Taiwan Brewing Company are NT\$180 each.

When the weather is nice on weekends, expect large crowds and a long wait. The restaurant recommends making a reservation a week in advance for a table with a view. And don't let the sunshine or a light rain scare you away — the entire arcade is covered by a large awning that provides ample protection.

## TIDBITS

BY CATHERINE SHU

**S**ummer is the time for barbecues, but if you don't have a grill or can't stand the heat, consider all-you-can-eat churrasco. Ziga Zaga in the Grand Hyatt will serve the Brazilian specialty until Sept. 14 along with classic Brazilian cocktails. Meats are roasted over an open flame and slid from skewers onto each diner's plate. Cuts include US beef rump cap, or picanha; prime rib steaks on the bone, or costela premium; and lamb shoulder on the bone (paleta de cordeiro) and pork ribs (costela de porco). Ziga Zaga follows the traditional Brazilian churrascaria custom: Each diner has a card, red on one side and green on the other. Green is flipped up for a fresh serving from the barbecue; red means the diner is taking a break (or working through a meat coma).

Everything is washed down with drinks based on Brazil's national cocktail, the caipirinha, a combination of cachaca (liquor made from fermented sugarcane juice), lime and sugar. Ziga Zaga's churrasco is NT\$700 for lunch and NT\$880 for dinner, plus a 10 percent service charge. For reservations, call (02) 2720-1200 X3198 or X3199 or visit www.grandhyatttaipei.com.tw.