

FASHION LIFESTYLE ART ENTERTAINMENT

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MARCH 2008

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**Yellow
Magazine
Celebrates
3 Years!**

**Aileen Fitzgerald:
A Model Winner**

**YouTube Phenom
Marié Digby**

**Chinese Food
Conundrum**

**The Mystical That
Is Kathmandu**

FotoFest2008!

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Photo by Collin Kelly

This is *Yellow Magazine's* third anniversary issue. I started to think about the number three and did a little research. It has a strong symbolic history. In classical mythology Kerberos is three-headed, there are three Fates, three Furies, three Graces, three Harpies and three Gorgons. The physical world is comprised of the three states of gas, liquid and solid; the planet has three layers – land, sea and sky; Christianity has the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As people, we are influenced by the physical and metaphysical or spiritual, the known and the unknown; mind, body and soul; past, present and future; birth, life and death; beginning, middle and end; and past, present and future. It would almost appear that you can go on ad infinitum and get yourself absolutely crazy!

As the publisher of *Yellow Magazine*, I am relieved to be able to see the number three in the simplest of terms – as a reason to celebrate for a third year in a row. Publishing is an enterprise that operates very much in “the present” without worrying about what has passed or about what will happen down the road. You cannot change the past and you cannot predict the future. Life is always lived in the present and luckily for me, *Yellow Magazine* is all about what is happening currently – the new fashions, ascending celebrities and artists, and exploring and reporting about new charitable activities, restaurants and trends. Whether it is our third year or our thirtieth, it is our goal to keep you informed and interested as we evolve.

In this issue we introduce you to Marié Digby, who has very successfully launched a musical career via YouTube – her homemade videos have been seen millions of times and her debut album will be available next month. Zushi Japanese Cuisine’s attention to presentation and original sauces create entrees that are works of art – the plates are the canvases and pallets of colorful sushi and other ingredients complete the flavorful masterpieces. And Trish and Vuthy address the importance of Chinese cooking in a bi-cultural marriage. Those are some of this month’s features. I thought I would just focus on THREE!

Here’s to another great year,

Viet Hoang
Publisher

LENDY e CIA



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The color yellow has played a recurrent symbolic role throughout the history of Asian culture. It symbolizes the earth that sustains all life, yet has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow: always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

The mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. As the publisher of the *Yellow Magazine*, my last name is Hoang, which also means yellow. Just as I am proud of my name, I am proud of my heritage, and proud of *Yellow Magazine*.

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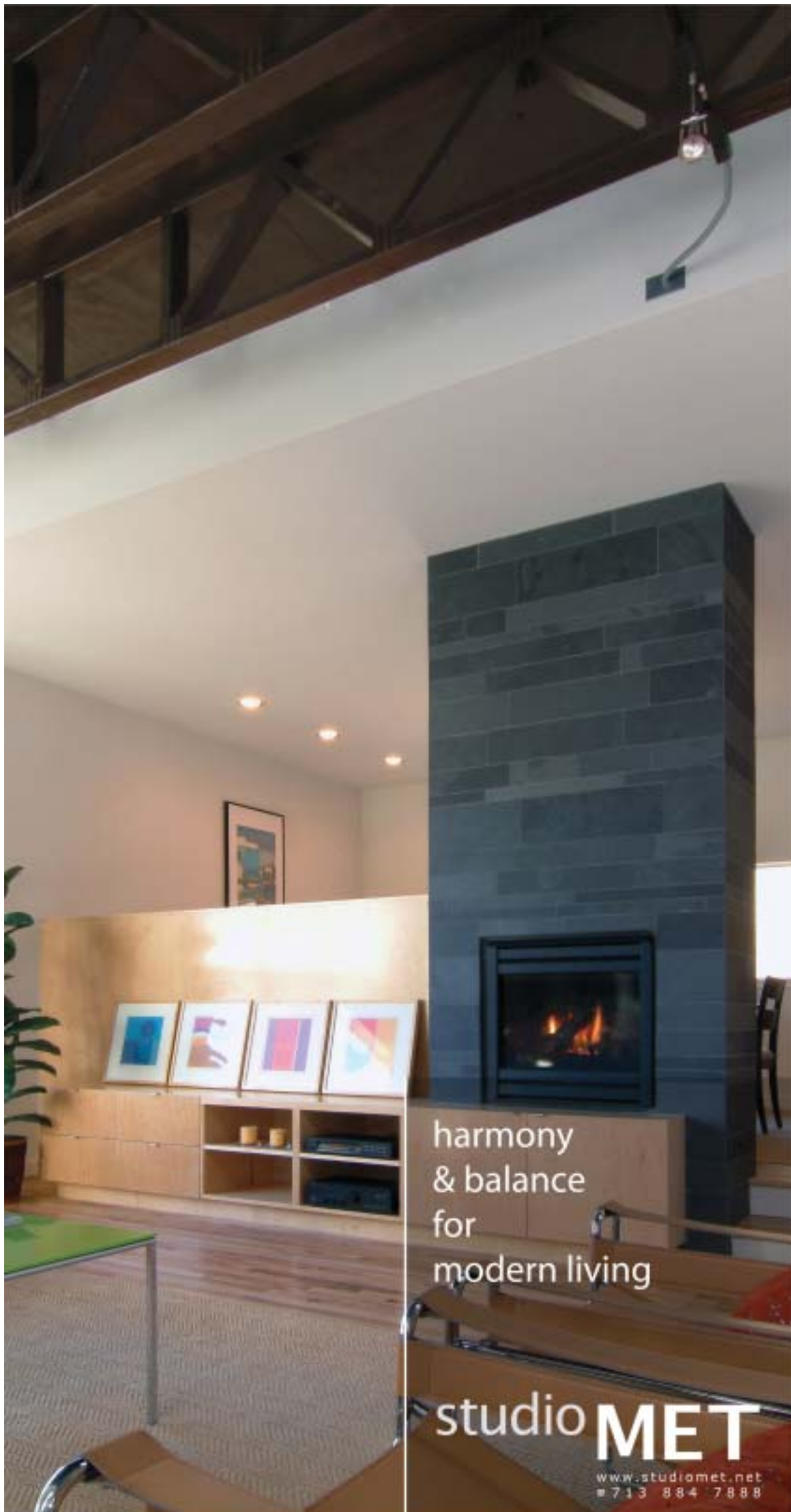
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On the cover:
Yellow dress by Escada
Available at Neiman Marcus
Vintage veil available at
Vintage Oasis



1. Jackwood House, 4326st, 4bed/4bath, 1study, family, 500sf studio, \$1.1m
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4. Vassar Lofts, 2300/2600st, 3bed/2.5bath, \$565k & \$617k
5. Eunice Patio Homes, 2050st, 3bed/3bath, \$340k

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Yellow Magazine Lunar New Year Party

Held at Momentum BMW

Photos by Tim Fredrick and Sam Yuan

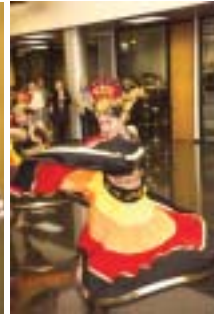
Yellow Magazine celebrated the Lunar New Year at the beautiful Momentum BMW showroom off of Hwy 59. The party was hosted by AABA (Asian American Bar Association), Houston Asian Jaycees, NAAAP (National Asian American Association Professionals) and the Japan American Society of Houston. The night was full of entertainment to bring in luck for the new year. Over 400 guests enjoyed performances by Lee's Golden Dragon's Lion Dance, traditional Chinese dance by J&L Dance School and music by John Chen. Food was provided by Tony Thai Restaurant, Hong Kong Street Café and Mo Mong Restaurant, with spirits provided by Martell Cognac Noblige and Cordon Bleu.



Tom Thompson, Henri Merceron, Bobbi Nguyen, Avinash Gavai and friend, Anna Kong, Allen Lee, Doan Nguyen, Jonathan Fong



Cindy Lin, Tony Dinh Stevie Vu, Bao Han Jacob Le, Joanne Nguyen Kerri Namoc, Anh Regent Performer



George Ault, Felix Rhymes Sunny Sharma, Rashmi Sharma, Shantha Raghuthaman, Rina Gavai Daniel Watanabe Traditional dancers



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2008 Lunar New Year Party

Held at Wiess President's House

Many guests joined Rice University President David Leebron and Y. Ping Sun in celebrating their annual Lunar New Year party in honor of the Year of the Rat.

Photos by Jeff Fitlow



Mayor Bill White, Ping Sun



David Leebron and Guests



Consul General of Japan Tsutoma Osawa, Grace Li, Leroy Chiao



Andrea White, Lois Stark, Phillip Cannon



Yali Zuo, Lily Foster, Merissa Leebron, Sophie Henry



David Berg, David Warden, Dora Hu

miwa yanagi


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Now on view



Miwa Yanagi, *Elevator Girl House B4* (detail), from the series *Elevator Girls*, 1998, chromogenic photograph mounted on Plexiglas, Deutsche Bank Collection. © Miwa Yanagi

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Where Clouds Disperse: Ink Paintings by Suh Se-ok

Now on view



Korean artist Suh Se-ok paints *Peopki*, 2007, ink on mulberry paper, collection of the artist. Photo: Imagabakery

The education programs for this exhibition are presented by the Chase Art of Learning.

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Marié Digby

by TYLER MERCERON

Marié Digby embodies how technology and the Internet are transforming the music industry.

Following years of relative obscurity, this acoustical artist's homemade videos have been viewed more than 2.3 million times on YouTube. Her new single, *Say It Again*, recently hit the airwaves and her debut album, *Unfold*, is set for release in April of this year.

Readers like to know a little about an artist's formative years and family life. Please tell us a little about yours.

I am the oldest of three girls. My parents were living in New York City when I was born but we moved to Los Angeles a year or two later. My mother is from Japan and my father is Irish-American. In general, I had as nice of a childhood as any person could wish for. My memories are full of happy moments with my sisters and friends... like playing in the backyard of our house until it was too dark to see. I feel like the house in which my sisters and I grew up was so special in that it really inspired me to fantasize and dream. We had a huge oak tree that we later turned into a tree house. I spent hours there everyday playing, imagining, and writing melodies in my head.

The controversy around your rise on YouTube is very interesting. It's clear that the Internet can create "instant successes", as in your case. So, even though you've been associated with Disney's Hollywood Records since 2005, do you think the Internet has been the true driving power behind your success?

I know very much about the power of the Internet until I began experimenting with it myself. I also happen to believe (now that I've been through it) that the Internet can in fact create an "instant success". Obviously, it takes a lot of work leading up to it but I can truly say that it was only a matter of a few months during which I went from a virtual unknown to being on the radio and in the media. In

many ways, it looks almost too good to be true – that a girl singing songs in her living room/bathroom could gain attention so quickly. Maybe that's what got people trying to figure out what the gimmick was, when in truth, there wasn't anything going on other than exactly what you saw on your computer screen. Yes, I happened to be signed to a record label in 2005, but what does that really mean? I can surely say that it doesn't mean they tell you that their plan for you is to pretend to be an amateur, post videos on YouTube and, before you know it, you will be dubbed a "YouTube Phenom"! I always say, I feel very lucky to be signed because I know it's very difficult these days. However, I believe it is always the responsibility of the artist to get their music out to the world. I felt I was quickly running out of options and decided to give YouTube a try. Every part of it – from picking the songs, to filming my videos, maintaining the page – I can proudly say is my doing. Hollywood Records is my record label. They will release an album and help me promote it, but everything that I've done on YouTube is what I've done on my own.

Do you know of other artists who have achieved success via YouTube?

I don't know any personally but I am aware of several musicians on YouTube. The people who inspired me were Esmee Denters and David Choi.

So tell us a little about the development of your career.

I've been pursuing music very seriously for close to 10 years. My mother enrolled me in piano lessons when I was 3. I was a terrible student and was the one kid who you could count on to screw up at recitals. But, the reality was, if I wasn't interested in a musical piece, I just didn't feel inspired to practice. But I'm lucky in that I had piano basics in hand when I was ready to start writing my own songs as a high school freshman. I had just transferred to a new school after having a pretty awful experience in junior high and I was desperate to find an outlet for my feelings. People had recommended writing in journals but I never found that very fulfilling. For some reason, when I paired my words with music is when I felt something special and moving. Writing songs was a very secretive and quiet affair for me and I only did it when everyone else in my family had gone to sleep. It wasn't until I turned eighteen that I found the nerve to play in front of people. To keep the story on the short side, I went to college for one year, and then left at nineteen to pursue music full time. I moved back home, started going to every open mic in Los Angeles, got an internship at a record label, and wrote as many songs as possible. Looking back, that whole process took a long time but it's all the training I needed to be where I am now. There were so many nights that I would be driving back home after another crappy open mic thinking to myself, "Am I really doing this the right way?". But, now I know that those experiences were invaluable. So, am I an overnight success? The experience of going from

an unknown to a success (whatever that means!) felt like it happened overnight. But you could also say, it was 10 years in the making!

Are your parents or siblings musical?

My mother definitely had the biggest influence on me, musically. She insisted on taking me to Broadway musicals as a small child. When she took me to see *Cats* for the first time, I was only 3 and the people working there said that I wasn't allowed to come in. But she begged them and convinced them that I would sit still. So, I got to see the show and I was completely captivated. I went home, sat at the piano and immediately started trying to figure out the music that I had heard. If my love for music was inherited, it was definitely from my mother. Both of my sisters are also very passionate about music.

Who are the most important personal or professional influences on you?

Personally, my mother was the most important influence. Professionally, all of the bands that I grew up listening to were the most important. The first CD that I ever bought was by Madonna and the next was Nirvana. I've always loved everything whether it was pop, rock, classical, hip-hop, or show tunes, as long as they were good songs.

How would you describe your music? What inspires you?

I write pop music with thoughtful lyrics and melodies. I think pop music can often get tossed aside as being manufactured and heartless, but I'd like to think that mine has a little more depth to it! I get inspiration for songs from everything around me – sometimes from personal experiences and other times from putting myself into someone else's mind and imagining their story. As long as there is truth in your song, people will relate and react.

You are currently acoustically remaking Top 40 hits by other artists. When you re-create a song that was made famous by another artist, do you derive artistic satisfaction, or is it mainly a vehicle by which you gain recognition and momentum that will be useful when you launch your own songs? How would you feel if the next Marié Digby used your songs to achieve what you have been able to do? Has anyone done this yet?

When I do covers, I like doing a mix of Top 40 songs and older songs that I just love. I'm not sure if it's satisfaction that I feel, but I very much enjoy playing music in general, whether it's mine or someone else's. When I go to cover a Top 40 song, I try to choose something that is just beginning to climb the charts and hasn't been covered yet. Initially, I chose those popular songs because I knew that if I did something compelling enough, people who would have never heard of me before would randomly find my video. My hope was that I would spark their interest with the cover and that if they liked it enough, they would give my original songs a shot, as well. I never in my wildest dreams thought that my cover of *Umbrella* would go on to be played on radios nationwide. While I'm very grateful for the positive reaction, it will be much more fulfilling when one of my originals gets that exposure. There have been quite a few people who have started to cover my songs! I am SO flattered! I encourage anyone to cover my songs!

As long as there is truth
in your song, people will
relate and react.

What do you think of the whole so-called "viral revolution" (i.e. YouTube, Myspace, etc.)?

It seems to just be the natural transition from a world without widespread technology to one where almost every household owns a computer. People are simply spending more and more time on the computer for school, work, and entertainment. Because of this, the Internet is becoming an easy way to spread information and to connect with others. For musicians like myself, this is amazing because with a three minute video and a click of a button, you can reach 100 times more people than you could by doing a nationwide tour out of a van. YouTube and Myspace are changing the way that new artists are breaking through and I think it's incredible because anyone with talent has a shot.

You have taken Rihanna's *Umbrella*, Linkin Park's *What I've Done*, and Maroon 5's *Makes Me Wonder*, and made them all acoustic, using your piano or guitar as the instrumentals. Each of those is a completely different musical genre. How do you pick which songs to do?

I really love music from almost every genre. If I made a dream playlist, you would probably be pretty surprised at what would be on it! But when it comes to doing covers, there are a few key things I look for. The most important part is whether or not a song has a good melody. Next, I experiment with it on guitar or piano to see if I can "interpret" it rather than to do a direct copy.



Marié Digby on YouTube

For more information, visit mariédigbyunfold.com or catch her latest videos on YouTube



Photo taken by: David C. Lee
Stylist: Lilly Kha
Marié is wearing the "Marié" dress by DBLA Clothing
Marié is sponsored by DBLA Clothing

You recently visited Japan. How was that? How were you received? Any J-pop remakes in the works?

My family and I go back to Japan at least once a year to visit our relatives. I hardly have any family here in the States but I have tons of family in Japan! I have never played a show in Japan or gone there for business reasons...yet. I hope that I will be received well when the time comes. It would be a dream to find success both in the U.S. and Japan.

When you remake an original song, do you have to get some type of special permission? Have any of the original artists heard/commented on your renditions of their songs? If so, what did they say?

You don't need any permission to do a cover of a song. The only time that you do need permission is if you are going to re-write a song or use a piece of it in something that you create. I don't know about most of them but I do know that Mike Einziger from Incubus has seen my cover of their song *Love Hurts*. He jokingly told me that I messed up a few of the chords but I think he was pleased!

You are multi-talented in your craft: guitarist, pianist, singer, song-writer. Would you say music is something that comes naturally to a person or something at which you have to work extremely hard to excel?

Wow! Well thank you very much for saying such kind things. I'm an okay piano player but a pretty sloppy guitar player. I think that music can come to someone naturally but for those for whom it doesn't, hard work can make up for a lot and get you very far – even farther than someone who's naturally gifted but not motivated.

What is the most important thing in your life, and why?

Family. Friends. Music. Those are the three loves of my life and I'm pretty sure it'll stay that way until the day that I die :) Without any one of those, life would have very little meaning.

You were at the University of California – Berkley for a while, but found yourself coming back home to L.A. constantly to perform. Did you quit school to become a full-time musician? Do you plan to return? What were you studying? Was your family supportive of your pursuit of your dreams at the expense of your college education?

At the time, I only planned on taking one year off to see how far I could get with the music. That one year turned into two, which turned into three, etc... I'm sure it was a little difficult for my parents to see. In their eyes, I think that they were afraid that I was letting go of this amazing opportunity in pursuit of something much less certain. But they were as supportive as any worried parents could be. My dedication to what I was doing probably proved to them that I was very serious about making this work. When I was at Berkeley, I was in my auto-pilot mode of doing just enough to get by and get the grades. I wasn't soaking up the information or really coming away with the knowledge I was given. I would love to go back one day when I can really appreciate what is being taught. Although I was planning to major in Philosophy, if I went back, I think I would be interested in studying Science and Astronomy.

You recently performed for the creators of YouTube. How was it playing for the people who helped get you to where you are now?

I was so incredibly flattered to be invited to play at the YouTube Annual Holiday Party! For a while, I had forgotten that there are actual "real" human beings behind the machine that is YouTube. I loved meeting everyone because it was just a big friendly group of 20-30 somethings who love their jobs. Everyone

was laughing, drinking, and having a good time. I was definitely a little nervous to play for them but it turned out to be a great experience... I even did a video in their office "gym" on the treadmills, a la Ok Go because I was using that as my dressing room. However, the real highlight was meeting the original creators of YouTube who couldn't be any nicer or more down to earth.

Your hit rendition of *Umbrella* was on MTV's hit series *The Hills*; your original song *Spell* was featured on an episode of *Smallville* and another original of yours – *Bring Me Love* – was on the ABC family movie *Holiday in Handcuffs*. How does it feel to hear your own work when you're watching TV? Do your friends call you when they hear your songs on shows like these?

It never gets old! I can definitely say that! Whether I hear my song on the radio or on TV or in a movie, it's exciting every time it happens. I used to tell all of my friends about my song placements in shows but I stopped that after a few of the slots were a little disappointing. For example, my friends would end up watching a whole show just to hear 5 seconds of my song! But when there's something good, I definitely get some excited calls from friends and family.

You're on iTunes already. When does your first album come out?

My album will be coming out in April this year but my first single *Say It Again* reached radio stations in February. You can expect to hear everything you've already heard but a nicer recording of it! There may be a few songs that you don't know. For the most part, my fans have posted just about every song I've played live, so if you really wanted to, you could listen to every song on the album.

I know with everything happening right now, you're pretty busy, but musicians are known for having fun. How do you "party like a rock star"?

I party like I rock star by jumping onto the couch in my softest pajamas and a bowl of ice cream and watching episodes of *Intervention* or whatever is on the Learning Channel. Out of 365 days of the year, you will find me at a club or bar about twice... and that's when I'm dragged by friends :) I'm like a granny! I love cookies and planting things! Oh well...

Right now, your fan base is primarily online. Once your album is released, do you plan on continuing with the YouTube videos?

Absolutely! It would be my biggest mistake not to continue doing what made me successful in the first place. I really love playing music, whether it's my own material or someone else's song. So, making the videos has become another hobby of mine.

Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

5 years from now, I hope that I'll have several albums under my belt and that I've grown a lot as a musician and songwriter. I hope that I can say I've traveled the world three times around. I hope that I'll be madly in love with someone.

How has your heritage influenced who you are? Do you have any cultural Japanese or Irish influences?

I'm not entirely sure just how my heritage has influenced me. If anything, having parents from different countries allowed my family and me to travel often and that really opened my eyes as to how big our world is. I'm very proud to have two completely different backgrounds and histories as a part of me. Although I've traveled to Japan many times, I've never been to Ireland, so I have yet to make a connection with that part of my heritage. My father's side of the family lost touch with most of our Irish relatives because my grandfather was adopted as a child. I hope that I can make a trip to Ireland within the next 2 years - that is one of my main goals.



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Versace Fashion Show

Held at Versace Houston Boutique, The Galleria

On February 7th, the Versace Houston Boutique in the Galleria officially unveiled its fresh new look at an event that included a fashion show for a few (hundred) of its most avid fans, hosted by Versace's U.S. Retail President, Roberto Lorenzini. If you have not visited the Versace boutique in a while, you may not recognize it. Black and white dominates the interior space which offers shoppers maximum visibility and access to its fashionable apparel and accessories. It is against this impressively contemporary backdrop that Versace highlights the fashionable handbags and accessories that have come to define its revised retail strategy.

In 2004, the company observed that shoppers were expressing a keen interest in luxury accessories. In response, they began renovating every one of their 81 boutiques worldwide to emphasize and highlight their change in focus. As a result, Versace has continued its reputation for providing the highest quality ready-to-wear fashion while building an impressive collection of handbags and other accessories. In fact, accessories account for 35% of sales, up from 5% three years ago. One-third of the shelf space is dedicated to their elegant and sophisticated handbag collections. If you have a passion for luxurious handbags, your passion will be satisfied at Versace! Of course, there is also a fine collection of watches, belts, shoes and ready-to-wear apparel that will capture your attention, as well.



Roberto Lorenzini



Elle Molchan, Shante Byrd, Gabrielle Gunn



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Mimi Nguyen



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Yellow Magazine 2008 Cover
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All available at Neiman Marcus

Photographer : Collin Kelly Assistant to the Photographer : Andrew Dana Fashion Stylist : Leslie Rivas Make-up : Danielle Doyle for The Perfect Face Hair : Jonathan Luke for Sensia



Short dress by Marchesa
Skirt by Christian Lacroix
Striped shoes by Chanel
All available at Neiman Marcus
Vintage veil
Available at Vintage Oasis

Model of Achievement By Fan-Pei Koung

When you gaze upon Aileen Fitzgerald, you see a bright young woman with a sweet and engaging smile. Her subtle beauty sparkles, concealing the sultriness she exudes on the runway and during photo shoots. Once the music begins playing and the lights are turned on, the sixteen year-old transforms into an icon of allure. “The transformation after my makeup is done is shocking! I feel like an actress. It really does seem like I’m playing the role of another individual.” Indeed, until she signed the new modeling contract with Page Parkes, Aileen was simply an honor student who played soccer at Cy-Fair High School. She grins with kittenish ease and her long dark hair falls past her shoulders with the confidence of a young athlete. Her face and eyes are exotic and sleek – treasures of her Thai-Irish heritage. She is new to celebrity, a very pretty girl embarking on a new career as a model. “It’s nerve-racking to have so much attention thrown at you at once, but the sole fact that I have people believing in me pushes me to believe

in myself and to embrace this new experience. It is so exciting during the shoots, too! I really cannot explain how wonderful the feeling is.”

Aileen also has big dreams for the future and plans to use her new found fame and potential to help her home country, Thailand. “When my family visited Thailand again this past summer, we walked through the streets of Bangkok and I saw hundreds of homeless families living under bridges and wearing rags. I got to see the crumbling states of poverty that do not exist in the United States. Sure, you can watch TV and see the same thing, but you cannot feel the grittiness in the air, the dryness, and the sour stench that envelopes you. I am blessed to live in a place of opportunity, and I am not going to waste my chances of being great. I know if I work on it, I can be a model who earns money. If I can do something I love and use it to benefit others, there really is no greater reward than that.”

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Hidden Treasures of Chinese Photography

FotoFest2008 - China

by **FRED BALDWIN**
and **WENDY WATRISS**



During the months of March and April, Houston will be alive with photography exhibited during FotoFest's 12th Biennial, March 7-April 20, 2008. The focus is China and has an ancillary theme of transformation. Among the 135 exhibitions being shown throughout the city will be those of 10 Chinese photographers from mainland China, *Photography from China, 1934-2008*. Forty Chinese exhibiting artists, curators, and scholars will be visiting Houston for FOTOFEST2008. The organization is also sponsoring a public symposium on 20th Century Chinese Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on Wednesday, March 12th.

In addition to FotoFest's programs, nineteen other locations will present exhibitions related to China. Among several shows by Houston-based Chinese photographers, members of the Houston Chinese Photographic Society will be showing their work at the Houston Center for Photography (March 8-April 20) and at Phoenix Seafood Restaurant (March 8-March 23). Houston Center for Photography will also present *Mined in China* in collaboration with FotoFest.

In putting together the China exhibitions, FotoFest's creative directors and co-founders made more than ten trips to China to meet with artists, curators, scholars and journalists. Among the newly recovered historical archives are the photographs of a remarkable photographer-artist ZHUANG Xueben, who traveled throughout China's remote western regions in the 1930s and 1940s to take portraits of the non-Han peoples who lived there. His large-format black and white portraits, taken between 1934 and 1939, are on par with the genius of Edward Curtis.

ZHUANG Xueben was one of China's first and finest ethnographic photographers. In his twenties, he trekked to western China and took photographs in the four provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, XingHai and Yunnan. Although he accompanied the Panchan Lama on his journey through China to Tibet, he was not able to enter that region because of the political tensions that existed. For long periods of time, he lived among the sixteen minorities he photographed, each of which spoke a different language. Many of his subjects were Tibetan Buddhists who lived in China.

We were fortunate to be able to interview ZHUANG Xueben's son, ZHUANG Wenjun, who was instrumental in recovering his father's work.

Your father did a remarkable series of portraits of the people of Western China from 1934-1939. How did he talk about his experiences during those years?

From my father's published works and unpublished dairies, I feel his portraits were vivid and natural because he treated the people he photographed as equals, and was able to communicate deeply with them. He lived and ate with them, exchanged presents based upon their customs and etiquette, entertained them by playing a gramophone, and gave them pictures as gifts. The pictures astonished them, and were passed on to others, which created a believable, warm atmosphere between them. It also made his pictures vivid, natural, relaxed and genuine, reflecting the true living status of China's western minorities.

While you were growing up, did your father share his dreams about photography and his craft with you?

In 1935, my father left his hometown of Shanghai to travel to the remote and uninhabited western desert just before I was born. He was gone for a long time because Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese army. After the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1945, he returned home. In 1954, he gave me his Zeiss Super Ikon, which he owned for 20 years, and he taught me the art of photography, including film development techniques. We shared the joy of photography together.

Can you recall a story that represents the meaning of his journeys?

In 1934, as a postman's companion, my father entered into the Zhaojue cities in the Da Liang Shan mountains. There were just two Han households and three Yi households living in that insecure area. My father played a gramophone for the Yi villages and the people were astonished by a machine that could sing and speak. Word of mouth resulted in people from more than a hundred villages coming to listen to the gramophone. It helped my father become familiar with those villages, and he was invited to dinner and to take pictures.

Where were your father's images and negatives stored for the five decades of relative silence?

My father's best pictures are in my hands. There are also some brilliant pictures stored in the China Minority Culture Center. Others were lost during the Cultural Revolution. Because the study of photographic art and ethnology was not in style in China before, my father's photographs were kept hidden for five decades. I was not clear how to deal with his historic significance until 2002 when the Chinese Photo Magazine published a special column named, *ZHUANG Xueben, the Master Fading from Our Memory*. It aroused public interest, made a big impact, and generated much attention.

Only in recent years has your father's work received renewed acceptance and recognition. Can you tell us the circumstances that motivated your family, and the process by which this took place?

I was a vice general engineer of the Beijing Municipal Administration and Infrastructure Bureau. Now I am retired. I used to focus on technical things instead of contacting others in the field of photography. I know my father's photographs were taken during a dangerous time and that they are very precious. But I did not know how to share this information with the public until the Chinese Photo Magazine column was published. There were many articles and three books published. As for exhibitions, we have been involved in just three small ones. All of these activities produced a wide interest in Chinese photography. My father is now regarded as a master in Chinese photographic history. Participating in FotoFest Houston 2008 happened coincidentally because Fred Baldwin and Wendy Watriss saw my father's works at the Lianzhou Photo Festival. I am thankful to them for choosing to show my father's works. I hope the world will know ZHUANG Xueben and his photographs of western China that were rarely seen 70 years ago. These scenes have disappeared, along with many of the stories behind these pictures. This is a heritage that belongs to all of humanity.

See ZHUANG Xueben's photos at One Allen Center, 500 Dallas, March 7-April 20, 2008.

Opening Night Reception is Monday, March 10, 2008, 5:30-7:00pm and the public is invited.

fotofest.org



Focus on Pairing
and Presentation

Zushi Japanese

by HENRI MERCERON

I often exit Loop 610 to take Memorial Drive downtown. Several months ago, I became aware of the clean new structure that houses Zushi Japanese Cuisine as soon as the bold red letters identifying the restaurant were placed against the attractive cream colored facade of the building.



Zushi Japanese Cuisine
5900 Memorial Drive
@ Westcott
713.861.5588

Happy Hour Menu
Monday through Saturday
3:00-7:00pm and all day Sunday.

It is not often that I write about sushi restaurants and, frankly, I would not consider myself to be a connoisseur. I am just an average guy who loves sushi. For the most part, if it tastes good, I like it. If it doesn't, I don't. You may have observed that I always like the food about which I write; while part of that is attributable to the fact that I *love food*, in fairness, I ask each restaurant to provide me with what they consider to be their specialties or items that are most popular with their customers. I believe that this strategy is the one that best serves the establishment and, more importantly, our readers who may want to consider trying some place new.

The decor of Zushi compares favorably to other contemporary sushi restaurants that have attended to every detail to create an elegant and soothing ambiance. There are several stand out features that caught my attention; a golden Buddha that towers more than six feet off of the floor greets you upon entering the restaurant; a wall of red, yellow and blue panels illuminated from behind glows warmly and forms the rear of a private dining area; and a truly remarkable ceiling treatment composed of waves of dark wood that resemble the scales of a giant fish that glides the full length of the restaurant.

Chris Nemoto, the executive chef at Zushi, has been preparing sushi for ten years. Being half Japanese, he took a job at one of Austin's first sushi restaurants to improve his Japanese proficiency. Mentored by one of Austin's premier sushi chefs, Chris developed a passion for fish. While he appreciates all compliments about his sushi, he is particularly proud of those from Japanese patrons. In Japan, sushi chefs abide by a very strict set of rules and procedures, and customers know how to measure quality. Chris has joined the owners of Zushi on a mission to deliver the finest quality sushi in Houston, coupled with impeccable presentation.

Chris believes that the current trend in sushi is what is on Zushi's menu under "Cold Appetizers": sashimi enhanced with sauces specifically paired with the type of fish being used. I sampled three of these.

Salmon Tiradito uses partially cured Scottish salmon that is favored for its rich buttery flavor. The flavor is enhanced by the addition of pickled fennel, naga negi, a mere drop of habanero miso, yuzu kosho, soy vinaigrette and garlic chips. Waipahu Carpaccio consists of Hawaiian albacore tuna that is slightly seared and finely sliced. It is topped with guerito peppers which are not spicy but add a crunchy texture, chives, citrus soy and accents of pickled vegetables. Tuna Terrine consists of Kochijan spiced tuna stacked on cucumber, chives, daikon, crispy chips and a fried quail egg. The tuna is so soft it requires almost no chewing. Overall, the dish is mildly spicy with sweet undertones.

Photos by Sopheavy Than



I sampled six of the House Specialty Rolls, the other section of the menu that sets Zushi apart from most sushi restaurants.

Deadliest Catch is made with soft shell crab, spicy salmon and a dose of habanero miso at the core. Chris recommended adding a little soy sauce, which I did. (Zushi provides low sodium soy sauce). The spiciness visits your palate after you've swallowed and it lingers "like a good friend," as Chris stated. You can request that it be prepared spicier or simply ask your waiter for spice on the side so that you can better tailor it to your tolerance.

Nikii Maki is served warm. Escolar and asparagus are tempura flash fried, quickly baked and topped with scallops and green onions baked with a spicy Asian chili mayo sauce. The asparagus added an almost unidentifiable subtle flavor but contributed a slight crunchy texture. Escolar is my new favorite sushi fish. It has the appearance of pale tofu and a soft buttery texture and richness that is unmistakable and terrifically satisfying.

Surf and Turf consists of finely sliced grilled rib eye that is wrapped around carrot, jalapeno strips and avocado dressed in a citrus soy vinaigrette. It is topped with lobster and a lemongrass and chive cream sauce. The dominant flavor derives from the rib eye. The lobster contributes that unique texture that distinguishes it from other seafood.

Puff the Magic Dragon will appeal to those who enjoy foods on the sweeter side of the scale. This item consists of an unusual combination of a snow crab puff and cucumber topped with unagi, avocado and strawberries. All the ingredients contributed to a symphony of flavor that did, in fact, leave your palate feeling refreshed and sweet. Psychologically, when I consume something with slices of strawberries, my brain is thinking "dessert" ...until it has to reconcile the fact that there is also freshwater eel and soy sauce. BUT it was unique and tasty.

Escolar is my new favorite sushi fish.

One of the House Specialties that I did not try is the Foxy Brown, which includes brown rice as an ingredient. While it is the only menu item that is specifically made with brown rice, any of other items may be prepared with it in place of white rice. Of course, being the health nut that I am, I ordered everything with brown rice. Perhaps it was for this reason that Chris joined me in tasting everything I requested – he had not tasted the menu items prepared as I ordered. I was altering his carefully crafted menu of sushi paired with precisely the right combination of sauces and ingredients, one of which was white rice. During my visit, he tasted each item I ordered cautiously (probably fearing the worst) and smiled with satisfaction each time. Perhaps I am more of a connoisseur of good sushi than I thought. (Or perhaps it tastes even better with white rice!) I'll have to try that next time.

There are some important non-culinary aspects about Zushi that should be noted. It is ideally located for anyone who works downtown or near it. You can literally get there within ten minutes during the lunch hour. And even though Zushi prides itself on the presentation of the dishes that come out of its kitchen (which all have "gourmet" appeal), service is prompt. You'll have plenty of time to make it back to work without the boss giving you "that look". If you ARE the boss, take your clients for an efficient power lunch that will leave them impressed. And, finally, if the weather is inclement, parking is available at a contiguous garage with covered passage to Zushi's front door.

Internationally Recognized Artists
Stop Off in Houston

Bayou City Arts Festival by FAN-PEI KUONG

The Bayou City Arts Festival has been held in Memorial Park since 1996 and features over 300 artists, musicians and thespians. The festival has been named the third best festival of its kind in the nation by Sunshine Magazine. We interviewed two very impressive artists who will be showing their work during the event this month in Memorial Park.

Michael Chen

Photographer Michael Chen has traveled extensively around the world in search of beauty. Chen's favorite locations are the untapped regions of Asia. To look at his work is to delve into the substance of Asian consciousness, to wander, to meditate, and to find one's inner being.

What about Asia inspires you?

I think if you know the culture, you can definitely get more evocative photos. Photos that touch my heart also touch my audience. Traveling to places like Myanmar provides my living, and I'd like to reciprocate. I also do a lot on location; I have an agent in New York who works with movie scripts. My work determined that *Mission Impossible III* would be set in Shanghai, and that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *The Shinjuku Incident* would be in Mongolia. I want to help those countries' economies.

When you set out to take a photograph, what do you look for?

I like to take pictures in the early morning. To be a photographer, you have to have patience and discipline, and focus on light. I want people to understand Asia through my eyes, that Asia is not just China. I want them to recognize Taiwan, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, as well.

Yang Yang

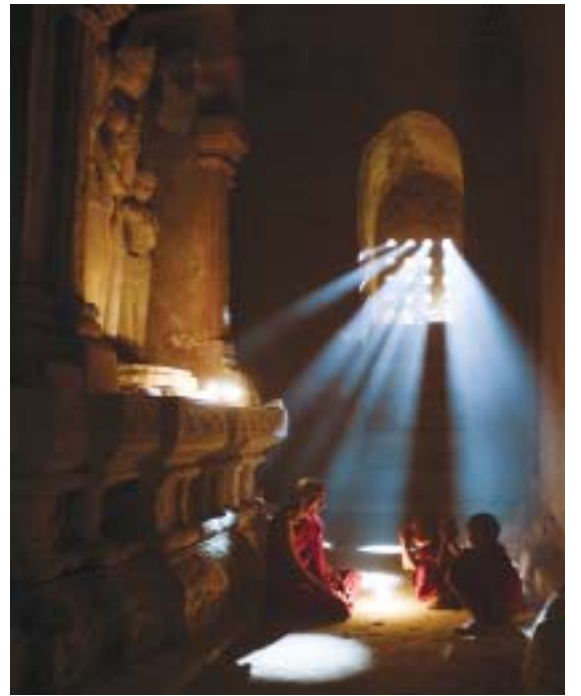
Yang Yang's works have the color and energy of Matisse but the movement of cave paintings. Forms open and close and melt into each other with the vividness of nescience and the whisper of unfinished thought. His works are, in Yang's own words, narratives of "sophistication and childishness, bitterness and contentment... a place without reference."

Describe your thinking when creating a piece of art.

Philosophy and art are closely connected. My stories are made by the viewers. Philosopher Lao-Tzu claimed over 2,500 years ago that people looking at the same piece will understand it differently. "One gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, and three forms the universe and all substance, which all combine to one." Tao is indescribable, and the describable is not Tao.

Your statuettes are breathtaking and mysterious. What is your technique?

I work in ceramic and create my own coloring method. I want the color to come from within. My fiberglass works are light but look heavy, so I create an interesting dynamic by suspending them. My process varies and that is why I remember every one of my works.



Michael Chen, *Path to Enlightenment*



Yang Yang, *Crazy Horse*

These artists and many more will participate in the Bayou City Arts Festival in Memorial Park on March 28-30th. For more information, visit bayoucityartfestival.com

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Where On Earth
is Kathmandu?

Exploring Nepal, pt. 1 by MATT SIMS

Certain cities such as New York, Paris, London, Beijing, and Bangkok conjure up strong images of iconic buildings and street scenes unique to each. But when you hear the name Kathmandu, you will probably draw a blank. It is definitely not one of those common destinations that a family will think of when discussing vacation plans.

Kathmandu is the name of one of those mysterious places that is more likely to be whispered in the back of black market antique shops or mumbled by shifty looking characters in an Indiana Jones movie. But what kind of place is it? Is it a small, quaint, provincial capital tucked away in high mountains, or a sprawling Asian metropolis choked by traffic jams? A mountain climber I once met spoke of Kathmandu with a strange mix of wonder and revulsion in his voice saying, "Wow, that place... is like no place you have ever seen."

While many people have heard of Kathmandu, it is so far away and shrouded in mystery that few know much about it. I had heard that it was once rumored to be the fabled Shangri-La at the foot of the Himalayas, and as the capital of Nepal, it was home to many of the most important temples and shrines in the region. But to me, it brought to mind a great unknown – a city in a distant part of Asia that relatively few Americans had ever visited. Most travelers who do visit Kathmandu do so while on their way to see Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain. Although I, too, had plans to see the high Himalayas, I had to explore this ancient city about which I was curious.

Nepal is nestled between India and Tibet on the southern flank of the Himalayan Mountains. Since there are no major American or European air carriers which fly to Kathmandu's small airport, I took a Thai Airways flight from Bangkok. My first views of Kathmandu were from the back seat of a rickety old taxi which sped through the streets and alleyways with controlled recklessness, narrowly missing pedestrians, cows, motorcyclists, and other cars.

I was immediately impressed by the sheer number of people. Some of them were carrying huge loads on their backs – boxes, baskets, sacks, even whole cabinets – as others shopped nonchalantly while avoiding large holes in the concrete, and still others drank tea by the roadside purchased from vendors who pushed rusty carts. There were men dressed in suits, beggars in rags, children in neat school uniforms, and women in beautifully colored saris. It seemed that every patch of ground or sidewalk was occupied by someone.

Depending on your attitude,
you will probably either love or
hate Kathmandu on any given day.

Many of the buildings leaned against one another like tired drunks, crumbled at the edges where still older levels of decaying bricks and mortar were visible. Large billboards loomed above the busiest streets and proclaimed the great taste of certain biscuits or the latest energy drink.

One area that particularly excited me when I visited it was the Boudhanath, a large Buddhist stupa, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage site. A stupa is a mound-like structure often thought to contain a relic of the Buddha. This enormous, white spherical building is the size of an entire city block and dominates the area. It is also the center of a vibrant Tibetan refugee community. Each morning you can find hundreds of religious devotees walking circles (known as koras) around this holy site, turning prayer wheels, and prostrating themselves on the ground in prayer as the mist in the valley mixes with incense smoke to create a ghostly fog. The dome of the Boudhanath is crowned with a brick steeple that rises high into the sky and topped by an ornamental spire from which prayer flags hang. On the steeple are four pairs of painted eyes that stare down in every direction upon the crowds below symbolizing an all-seeing God. You can easily spend the entire day watching people, shopping for souvenirs at the small stores that surround the structure, or enjoying a drink and meal at one of the multi-story cafes with balconies that overlook the whole area.

From there, I headed to Pashupatinath, a sacred place along the Bagmati River where Hindus worship at a temple and hold funerals and cremations.



On the steps that go down to the riverbank below the temple, families pay their respects to loved ones and watch as bodies are cremated and ashes released into the river. Sadhus (holy men who have renounced all earthly possessions in favor of religious meditation and devotion and who often paint their bodies with unusual designs) pray here and pose for photographs by tourists. I watched from a distance as wood for the fire was prepared and the body, covered by a cloth and decorated in garlands of flowers, was placed on top and set alight.

Another UNESCO heritage site with a large stupa is Swayambunath, also known as the Monkey Temple due to the large number of monkeys living there. This stupa and its surrounding buildings are located on a high hill on the western side of Kathmandu and provide a tremendous view of the city for those willing to climb the 365 steps to the top. As I slowly made my way to the top at sunset, I passed many monkeys balancing on handrails and on the branches of trees. I was told that they were no trouble as long as I did not display any food. I noticed that the temple was visited by both Hindus and Buddhists. Nepal has substantial populations of both, and it is interesting to see them worshipping in the same place. The Hindus gravitate toward certain statues of their deities and leave offerings as they pray, while the Buddhists turn the many prayer wheels and pray in their traditional ways. A few shops at the top sell small statues and other religious items. Incense permeated the air.

After I descended the steps, I took refuge in a small roadside tea shop and enjoyed a hot cup of Nepali style milk tea. This style of tea is heavily sweetened and pairs well with baked goods. As I sipped, a small group of red robed monks joined me at the table.

Nepalese food shares many common elements with Indian food, but it also has flavors of its own. Dal Bhat (lentil soup poured over rice) and momos (dumplings which are either steamed or fried) in a spicy sauce are the most common dishes, but many types of curry meals can also be found. In the end, my favorite was a dish of shredded, spicy chicken steamed in a leaf wrapper and said to be an old Kathmandu specialty. But don't worry, if you tire of local dishes, you can find many restaurants serving Chinese or Thai food as well as western style cafes that make good pizzas, pastas, and sandwiches.

Most travelers stay at one of the small guesthouses in the tourist area known as Thamel, and basic rooms can be had for between \$10 and \$40 per day. Staying in this area provides you easy access to the greatest variety of good restaurants, quirky shops, and trekking stores, but it also places you in the middle of a busy and occasionally noisy city. In the Thamel neighborhood, you can shop for anything from high quality pashmina shawls to Gurka knives. If you prefer to stay in a quieter place a little farther from the constant action, the Crowne Plaza or Hyatt Regency offer a higher standard of service and better rooms.

Depending on your attitude, you will probably either love or hate Kathmandu on any given day. It certainly is not a place for the faint of heart or those who expect everything to be clean and to work properly all the time. This city of almost a million people has its problems. The poverty evident in some areas and the feeling that the city is falling apart may cause you to want to leave as soon as you can and head for the mountains. But then you'll recall the smile of the kindly old woman who served you tea in some out of the way shop or the concentrated devotion on the faces of the worshippers at the temples, and you'll put the small inconveniences into perspective.

After a few days in Kathmandu, I was ready to move on and start my trek in the Himalayas. I had gained a better understanding of the place and appreciated it once I stopped trying to categorize it. Kathmandu is not a peaceful Shangri-La, but it is also not just another sprawling, overpopulated Asian city, either. It is a vibrant yet crumbling, spiritual yet manic, fun yet fatiguing overdose of old and new culture. How can I best describe it? This is Kathmandu and it is quite unlike any place you have ever seen.



Rose Gala benefiting the Women's Home of Houston Held at the Corinthian

Gordon and Sylvia Quan chaired the Rose Gala which raised \$300,000 to help the Women's Home of Houston. The evening honored former Council Member Eleanor Tinsley for her work on behalf of Opening Doors for Women. Other honorees included Donna Cole, Martha Turner, Lauren Anderson, Minerva Perez, and Monica Pope.



Bob Berryman, Donna Cole



Sylvia and Gordon Quan



William and Mandy Kao,
Joanne Herring

Asian Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting Held at the new Chamber office

The Asian Chamber of Commerce celebrated the completion of their new office at 6833 W. Sam Houston Parkway.



Richard Cole, Don Wang, Glen Gondo, John Kim



Cutting of the ribbon.

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There's Always
Take-out!

Cooking Chinese?

Trish Volore and her husband, Vuthy “Woody” Kuon, have been blissfully married for more than a year. Like so many couples have experienced, their first year of marriage presented a wide array of challenges, discussions and compromises. Coming from different cultural backgrounds, they found that there are some challenges that are unique to their special circumstances. This month, we get their perspective on cooking Chinese food.



While we were dating, cooking Chinese food was irrelevant. Because he was chivalrous, Woody drove from Houston to Fort Worth to visit me and always took me out to eat. Of course, I knew that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach. Once I decided I might actually consider keeping Woody around for a while, I wanted to impress upon him that I did know how to cook. So, I made some of my most delicious dishes for him including chicken pot pie and Southwest Chicken casserole. Woody was kind and very complimentary of my cooking. He raved about my casseroles and declared that they were among the most delicious foods he had ever eaten. Then, we got married.

After we were married a day or two, Woody started talking about the food his mother used to make when he lived at home. I patiently listened to him rhapsodize about the wonderful, delicious (even healthy) Chinese food his mom cooked. Apparently, in Woody's family, they actually ate a lot of vegetables, sometimes three or four or more, in a single meal. In my family, we ate meat (usually “chicken fried”), potatoes (almost always mashed and with gravy), and green beans or peas and bread. When I grew up and learned what the FDA recommended in terms of daily vegetable intake, I was obviously shocked and laughed as I noted, “No one eats that many vegetables every day.” I didn't yet know Woody.

For me, it's difficult to go without authentic Chinese food for too long. Every chance I get to be anywhere near the west side of Houston, I drive to Chinatown for a cheap, delicious, authentic Chinese meal. In fact, I was there earlier today. I had pork and cabbage, chicken in sweet brown sauce, and a tofu dish with steamed rice and a side of pickled cabbage... all for just \$2.99! Can you believe that? At those prices, I don't understand why everyone doesn't love Chinese food.

Well, you see, I grew up eating Chinese food all the time. I had rice for every meal... and lots of it! Not just as a side dish like Americans have it. I want a huge mound of steaming white rice, with all the other dishes used to accompany the flavor of the rice. When I was a young child, I would anxiously await for all the food to be gone so I could add rice to the remaining sauce. Sometimes I would lick the plate so clean it looked like it didn't even need to go into the dishwasher. We washed it, of course.

Anyway, the point is, “I LOVE CHINESE FOOD!” I don't mean to be elitist, but I truly believe the Chinese prepare the best food in the world! There are so many flavors and variety, with a focus on textures and spices. It is a true art form. Yes, it is a lot of work: tedious cutting and time-consuming marinades, but it is all so worth it!

I remember a quote from a movie or TV show referring to Chinese

It is very time-consuming to cook really good Chinese food!

I quickly grasped Woody's hints about missing home-cooked Chinese food but there was a problem or two with me cooking Chinese food. For one thing, it is very time-consuming to cook really good Chinese food! When we were dating, I went to a family get-together with Woody's family and was put in charge of shredding the mango. I was delighted. I could do that! I knew how to grate cheese. How much harder than grating cheese could it be to shred a mango? I knew nothing. It took me 2 hours to shred that crazy mango.

Next, I was charged with de-shelling crab so that the children wouldn't have to try to do it themselves. I had never eaten crab before since it could not have been served as “chicken fried.” Oh my gosh! It is so hard to get one bite of meat out of a crab. I spent quite a long time getting meat out of those crabs along with the other women. Five of us worked for hours to prepare one meal and it wasn't even Thanksgiving.

My next experience with Chinese cooking came after we were married and Woody's hints had an impact on me. I decided to try really hard to be a good Chinese-ish wife and learn how to cook some of his favorite dishes. I talked to his mom to get the recipe for a brown sugar pork dish that Woody absolutely loves. The problem was that although she made the dish regularly she didn't know how much of each ingredient she used or how long she cooked it, at what temperature, etc. It was supposed to have a thick, sweet sauce with the meat made very tender as a result of being cooked in it. Sadly, my sauce was thin and watery and the meat was so tough I was afraid to eat it because it might cause me to choke. Even though I was sad that I was a terrible Chinese cook and cried, Woody thoughtfully ate the whole thing to show me how good he thought it was. Through my tears, I decided that if he was willing to eat it, maybe I could learn to cook Chinese food, after all...

– TRICIA VOLORE

food, in which they said that “in China, it's just called food.” Tricia views Chinese food as she does Indian, Mexican, or Italian foods – just another meal in the rotation. I grew up hearing my mother telling me to marry a nice Asian girl so she can cook the foods I like. Believe it or not, this consideration was one of the criteria I used in finding a life-long mate.

I had visited a cousin of mine in California several years ago and met his wife for the first time. She was Italian and seemed very sweet and caring. I thought this because she told me how hard she tried to cook the authentic Chinese dishes my family grew up with. She showed me her notebook filled with recipes of dishes I've been eating all my life, but never knew the names of or had never seen written down. She said she cooked unbelievable Italian food, but prepared Chinese meals every day because that's what her husband liked.

I got to thinking how wonderful life would be if I could have a wife like that. That is, until I met Tricia. She rocked my world! She was a strong confident American woman who knew what she wanted and would not settle for less. I knew I could choose someone who would cater to all my needs, but I chose to be with someone for whom I wanted to become a better person for. She made me WANT to be with her and to love all of who she is. Honestly, when we were dating, all my thoughts about “criteria” for that perfect woman had disappeared. I didn't need it anymore. That's because I had already found her.

I have never told my wife she has to cook Chinese food for me every day, even though I would REALLY love that, but I just love the fact that she tries. Every mango strip she has shredded, or miniscule piece of crab meat she's dispensed shows me how much she cares. That's enough for me. I really don't need my wife to continually cook Chinese food for me... as long as she doesn't mind making a few extra trips to Chinatown.

– VUTHY KUON

WOODY & TRISH



By Vuthy Kuon

An Offer You
Can't Refuse

Wines of Sicily

by PHILIP CUISIMANO

Not only does March mark the third anniversary of *Yellow Magazine*, it is also the month in which we traditionally celebrate St. Patrick's Day. In addition, this year, Easter will be celebrated unusually early in March.

Although it goes unmarked on many calendars, Saint Joseph's Day falls on March 16th. It is observed around the nation by Italian-Americans with the most elaborate celebrations held in New Orleans and New York. According to legend, a terrible famine occurred in Sicily during the Middle Ages as a result of a drought, and the people prayed to St. Joseph for intervention. Rains followed, crops recovered, and the famine ceased. Grateful Italians vowed to honor St. Joseph each year with a special celebration in which a great feast would be prepared and shared with the poor. So, in honor of Saint Joseph's Day, let's explore the rich and tasty wines of Sicily.

Sicily is Italy's predominant wine producing region.

Sicily is an island just off the toe of Italy's boot. Because of its strategic location, the island has played an important role in the history of the entire region for centuries. Today, the people of this Italian state share a rich and unique culture. As you travel the island by car, you can view landscapes similar to those found in California and then, amazingly, you run into the ruins of an ancient Greek temple.

Sicily's economy is agriculturally based, not surprising given its rich soil and the moist breezes that continuously blow across the island from all directions. Most importantly, there is an abundance of bright sunlight that bathes the soil in a healthy, fertile glow. International demand for the Sicilian oranges and lemons that grow under these conditions is strong.

Sicily is also Italy's predominant wine producing region and has an annual output that exceeds that of Tuscany and Piedmont combined. Sicilian wines, like most good Italian wines, are considered to be "very tasty". The whites are remarkable for their minerality, as well their balanced acidity levels. Acidity gives a wine the crispness and briskness that is an important aspect for food pairing.

Sicilian red wines also have specific characteristics that serve to differentiate them from those of other countries, most notably their inherent notes of pepper and spice. These wines are infused with native peppery and spicy flavors that you can both smell and taste. When the peppers and spices in the wine are correctly matched with the peppers and spices in food, one can only exclaim, "Bellissimo!!"

A good selection of Sicilian wines can be found in the market, and I predict that demand will grow as the offerings continue to receive favorable press. It is also important to note that the overwhelming majority of Texans of Italian descent have roots that originate in Sicily and southern Italy. Hence, we may comprise a built in market for wines from that region.

Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit specsonline.com for the store nearest you.



Here are Sicilian wine suggestions that we hope "you can't refuse":

Chiamonte Nero d'Avola 05

Nero d'Avola is Italy's most important indigenous grape variety and this rendition is a terrific offering. It has an intense purple color that heralds a nose of black fruits, peppers and spice. The taste is round and complete with a natural balance of tannin, structure and length of finish. The wine is fermented under temperature-controlled conditions and a portion of the vino is matured for six months in small French barriques, achieving a unique combination of freshness and ripe fruit flavors in a muscular body. Serve with red meats, game and grilled peppery poultry. \$19.97

Altavilla Bianco Grillo

Grillo is one of Sicily's more important indigenous white grape varieties and Altavilla Bianco is a real treat. The grapes are softly pressed and fermented at controlled temperatures in a state-of-the-art wine cellar. A portion of the wine is then matured for five months in French oak barrels which adds complexity. The bottom line is a wine that offers to the eye an intense yellow hue while the nose and mouth are treated to a bouquet of apples, pineapple, bananas and an underlying hint of toasted nuts. It is a wonderfully soft and delicious wine that you will long remember. Serve with seafood. \$18.40

Sant'Agostino Rosso 05

This tasty blend is named after Saint Augustine and is a unique mixture of 50% Nero d'Avola and 50% syrah. It demonstrates that Sicily can master international varieties as well as produce wine from indigenous grapes. This cuvee is matured for six months in a combination of both French and American oak. Sant'Agostino is a serious wine that delivers a dark ruby colored mouthful of ripe, red fruits undercoated with spice and pepper. The tannins are soft and tactile and the finish is deep and long. Serve with red meats. \$31.12

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