

# Oasis Say China Banned Them over Tibet

**S**HANGHAI ~ British rock supergroup Oasis say Chinese authorities banned them from performing in China because guitarist Noel Gallagher played at a Free Tibet benefit concert 12 years ago.

Oasis, led by brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher, said authorities had abruptly ordered organizers to cancel two shows - April 3 in Beijing and April 5 in Shanghai - that would have marked their debut in mainland China.

"The Chinese authorities' action in cancelling these shows marks a reversal of their decision regarding the band, which has left both Oasis and the promoters bewildered," the band said in a statement this week.

The move came as tensions surrounding Tibet were on a knife-edge before the March 10 anniversary of a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule that ended

with revered spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile.

Protests have already erupted in Tibetan populated areas of China, with a Buddhist monk last week setting himself alight to protest Beijing's 58-year rule of his homeland.

Noel Gallagher's support for the Tibetan cause appears to date back to 1997, when he performed five of the group's hits in a solo appearance at the Tibetan Freedom Concert in New York.

"Officials within the Chinese Ministry of Culture only recently discovered that Noel Gallagher appeared at a Free Tibet Benefit Concert... and have now deemed that the band are consequently unsuitable to perform," Oasis said.

It was not clear what led to the discovery, but popular concert videos posted on YouTube show Noel Gallagher singing the band's hit



Wonderwall alone in front of a giant, banned-in-China, red, blue and yellow Tibetan flag.

A spokeswoman for China's Ministry of Culture declined to comment while the Chinese foreign

ministry referred media to a statement from the band's Chinese promoters denying Tibet was the reason.

Luo Xiaochuan, a spokesman for Oasis' Chinese promoters, said they had to

cancel the concerts because their business had been hurt by the economic crisis, and not because of a Chinese government directive.

However, Oasis said they were informed on Saturday that the government had ordered a stop to ticket sales, with refunds going to those who had already bought tickets.

The band's performing license, which had been approved, was also cancelled, they said.

Known more for lager-fuelled brawls than acts of political conscience, the Gallagher brothers make unlikely enemies of the state.

Noel Gallagher has criticized rock stars such as Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke for using music to highlight social issues.

In an interview with the British music weekly NME, he once advised U2's Bono: "Play One, shut the f--- up about Africa."

Oasis' other Asian tour dates, including their concert in Hong Kong on April 7, would proceed as planned, the band said.

Live performances in China have for a long time been tightly regulated. Foreign artists performing in China must have their songlists vetted by authorities.

Authorities toughened restrictions further after a Shanghai concert last year by Icelandic singer Bjork, who shouted "Tibet!" at the end of her song Declare Independence.

Tibet is not the only sensitive point. In 2006, the culture ministry ordered the Rolling Stones to not play some of their raunchier hits, such as Brown Sugar and Honky Tonk Woman, when they performed in Shanghai.

Oasis are one of the most successful British rock bands ever, selling tens of millions of albums worldwide since emerging in the early 1990s.

## Woody Allen's Whatever Works to Premiere in NY

**N**EW YORK ~ Woody Allen will reclaim his New York roots next month with the premiere of his comedy film *Whatever Works* on the opening night of the city's Tribeca Film Festival.

The festival and Sony Pictures Classics said the film, which like Allen's earlier and most enduring movies is set in the Big Apple, would have its world premiere as the opening-night film on April 22.

*Whatever Works*, starring Larry David, Evan Rachel Wood, Patricia Clarkson, and Ed Begley Jr, is Allen's first shot in New York since 2004.

"A lovely idea of showing my film in a film festival in my own city. It's very exciting," Allen said. Tribeca Film Festival co-founder Jane Rosenthal described *Whatever Works* as a "uniquely funny addition to his body of work."

Critics say Allen found some return to form after a long slump with his last film, which was set in Spain, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*.

His next film will be shot in London, with stars including Spanish actor Antonio Banderas and India's *Slumdog Millionaire* starlet Freida Pinto.



## Madea Charms Again

**L**OS ANGELES ~ Tyler Perry's wacky comedy about a gun-toting grandmother behind bars, *Madea Goes to Jail*, led the pack at North American box offices at the weekend, industry experts said.

It was the second weekend in a row that writer-director Tyler Perry's offbeat heroine was the Queen of Hollywood, earning US\$16.5 million from Friday through Sunday.

Ten sensations *The Jonas Brothers* premiered their 3D biopic in second place, taking in \$12.7 million.

Oscars darling *Slumdog Millionaire*, the love story about an Indian boy who rises from poverty to win millions on a television game show, was in third place, with \$12.1 million. The movie enjoyed a whopping 45-percent jump in sales after winning eight coveted Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Next was kidnap thriller *Taken*, starring Liam Neeson as a former spy whose daughter becomes a victim of human traffickers, with \$9.95 million.

In fifth place was romantic comedy *He's Just Not that into You* with \$5.9 million in weekend earnings, trailed by Paul Blart: *Mall Cop*, a comedy about a security guard who takes his job seriously, which earned \$5.6 million.

Trailing in seventh place was animated children's adventure *Coraline*, which racked up \$2.2 million in sales, and *Street Fighter: The Legend*, premiering in eighth place with \$4.6 million.

Romantic comedy *Confessions of a Shopaholic* took in \$4.49 million trailed by the comedy *Fired Up*, about a pair of high-school footballers who join a cheerleading camp. It earned \$3.8 million in 10th place.

## YouTube Symphony Orchestra selected

**T**he YouTube Symphony Orchestra is tuning up and getting ready to play.

YouTube has selected the winners of its contest to create the world's first online orchestra, choosing more than 90 professional and amateur musicians from over 30 countries through auditions on the video-sharing service.

Google-owned YouTube announced the

winning musicians in a post this week on the YouTube blog and the orchestra's YouTube channel, [youtube.com/symphony](http://youtube.com/symphony).

The winners will travel to New York to take part in a three-day classical music summit culminating in a performance at Carnegie Hall on April 15 directed by Michael Tilson Thomas, music director of the San Francisco Symphony.

## BOOKS

**The Sultan and the Mermaid Queen**  
By Paul Spencer Sochaczewski  
Editions Didier Millet,  
US\$13.95, 371 pp.

Reviewed by  
Hannah Black

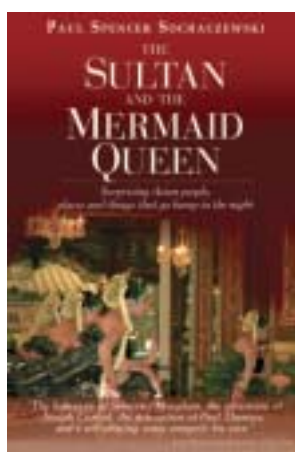
**O**nce in while I read a book that makes me kick myself for not writing down all the strange and wonderful experiences I've had whilst traveling. One such book is *The Sultan and the Mermaid Queen*, a collection of articles and essays by journalist and lifelong traveler Paul Spencer Sochaczewski.

Sochaczewski's stories are just bite-sized peeks into the cultures and folklore of Asian

peoples; his abridged version of the epic tale of Rama and Sita takes no more than half a page. He is often funny and always cynical as he searches for what he calls the Asian equivalents of Bigfoot, including a supposed tribe of white skinned cannibalistic giants in Halmahera and tiny relatives of *Homo floresiensis* in Flores.

The book certainly represents the eclectic collection of peoples Sochaczewski has met during decades of travel in Asia, but I get the feeling, especially in more recent stories, he was just stopping by and then heading back to his hotel to play a round of golf and write about his experience.

I also found the stories and articles were sometimes too



short, leaving me wondering what his point was. Did I really need to read two pages about a trek through the Himalayas culminating in a troublesome trip to a toilet under the stars?

There is no doubt he has



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