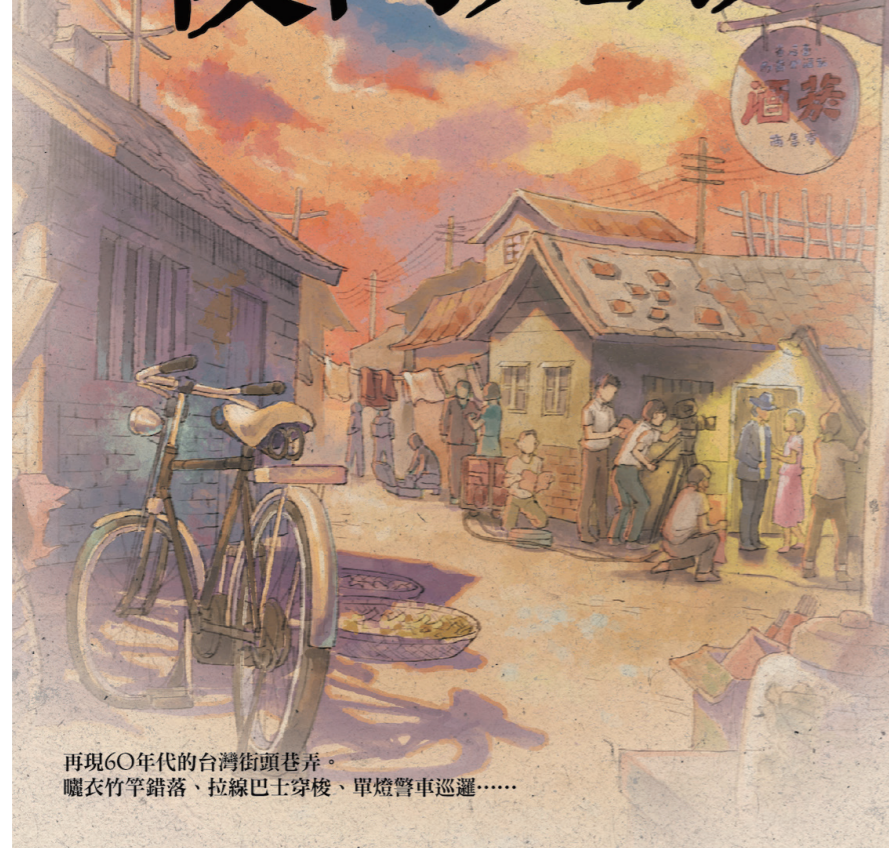


# 消逝的 後街光影

簡嘉誠——作品



再現60年代的台灣街頭巷弄。  
曬衣竹竿錯落、拉線巴士穿梭、單燈警車巡邏……

172 | 173

BOOKS  
FROM  
TAIWAN

## Back Street Dusk

A Full English translation is available.

消逝的後街光影

**Author:** Chien Chia-Cheng **Illustrator:** Chien Chia-Cheng **Publisher:** Gaea Books

**Date:** 01/2019 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

250 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

**Rights sold:** Arabic

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Catherine Yu

In the 1960s, as television broadcasting took hold in Taiwan, the government vigorously promoted Mandarin-language films while imposing strict censorship on Taiwanese-language cinema. This led to the gradual decline of a once-thriving industry. Fifty years later, Chung, a young YouTuber, discovers a box of his grandfather's belongings. He's shocked to discover that his grandpa was a famous and beloved Taiwanese-language director. Yet this past seems to be a family taboo, avoided even by Chung's mother.

Chien Chia-Cheng's comic reminds us that once the chance to restore old films is lost, they may vanish forever. Through meticulous research and deeply moving storytelling, Chien explores the meaning of film restoration while vividly bringing the streets of 1960s Taiwan back to life. Do unspoken regrets simply fade with a life, or can they be confronted and preserved through memory and art?



Author **Chien Chia-Cheng**

Chien Chia-Cheng is an independent comic artist and visual storyteller renowned for blending meticulous historical research with cinematic visuals. His body of work explores a diverse range of themes, spanning from railway and film history to the complexities of war and collective social memory. His books include *Wind Chaser Under the Blue Sky*, *Memories of an Actress*, and *The Movie Painter*. He is a multiple Golden Comic Awards winner, with works recognized by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture. His *Wind Chaser Under the Blue Sky* won the Grand Prize at the 17th Japan International Manga Award in 2023.

# Filmed in Local Languages, Beloved by Audiences: The Golden Age of Taiwanese-Language Cinema and the Art of Modern Film Restoration

by Chi-Hsuan Wu

In the digital age, do old black-and-white films without special effects still hold value? This question troubles the protagonist of *Back Street Dusk* and reflects a doubt shared by many today. Created by Golden Comic Award-winning artist Chien Chia-Cheng, this graphic novel responds through a journey to recover lost Taiwanese-language film reels, offering a meditation on cinema, memory, and time.

Taiwanese-language cinema, often called *taiyupian*, flourished from the 1950s to the 1970s. Shot in local languages and deeply loved by audiences, these films later declined due to political

factors and the industry's shift to color filmmaking. Like early cinema in many countries, Taiwanese-language films were overtaken by rapid social change. Film stock itself is fragile and prone to deterioration, a problem made worse by Taiwan's hot and humid climate. Once numbering around 1,200 titles, fewer than 200 Taiwanese-language films are known to survive today, leaving countless works permanently lost.

The story unfolds through two interwoven timelines. In the present day, Chung, a young YouTuber, discovers several large, round metal canisters in his home. When opened, they emit a sharp

acidic smell. On a whim, he uploads a video of the find, unexpectedly drawing the attention of A-le from the Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute. The canisters turn out to contain precious Taiwanese-language film reels.

Chung is shocked to learn that his grandfather, Chiang Cheng-Hsin, was once a renowned Taiwanese-language film director. Yet this past seems to be a family taboo, avoided even by Chung's mother. What secrets lie behind this silence?

Following clues among his grandfather's belongings, Chung seeks out Lee Chi-Ming, Chiang's former cinematographer, hoping to learn more. Instead, he encounters anger and refusal—Lee does not wish to revisit those years. Is there an unresolved misunderstanding between them? Perhaps the truth can only be revealed through Chiang's most celebrated work, *Backstreet Dwellers*. Determined to understand both the film and his family history, Chung sets out to find this lost masterpiece.

The second timeline returns readers to the 1960s, the golden age of Taiwanese-language cinema. Here, we witness the rise and decline of the industry alongside the passionate dreams of two young filmmakers. With limited resources but boundless creativity, they achieve remarkable effects in an era without computers or digital tools. Their dedication to their craft, their seamless

partnership, and the deep bond forged through years of shared struggle—even building a studio from scratch to save costs—make it difficult to understand how such a relationship could eventually collapse.

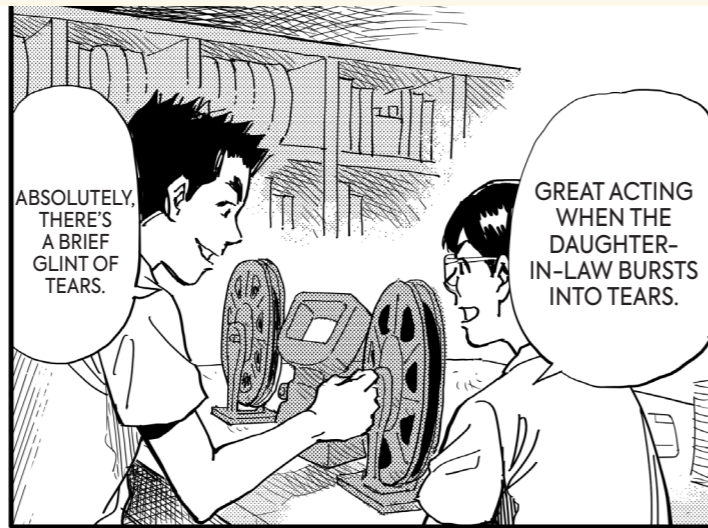
Chien distinguishes past and present through shifts in black-and-white tones, allowing readers to easily navigate the dual timelines. His skill is evident in scenes of every scale, from crowded film sets to intimate moments, rendered with dynamic, cinematic paneling. Touches of humor balance the technical aspects of film restoration, keeping the story engaging and fluid.

Ultimately, *Back Street Dusk* reminds us that some things, once lost, cannot be repaired—whether fragile film reels or broken human relationships. Yet it also shows that certain values endure across time. Bound together by love for cinema, friendship, and family, the story gently suggests that in an age obsessed with measurable outcomes, some things matter far more than visible returns.

*Chi-Hsuan Wu hails from Taiwan, an island at the intersection of the Kuroshio Current and the Tropic of Cancer. A graduate of National Tsing Hua University, she has worked as an editor for online courses and audiobooks. Now, she seeks to remain in conversation with the world—through words, sounds, or whatever medium feels right.*



HER FEELINGS ARE PERFECTLY CAPTURED.



ABSOLUTELY, THERE'S A BRIEF GLINT OF TEARS.

GREAT ACTING WHEN THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW BURSTS INTO TEARS.



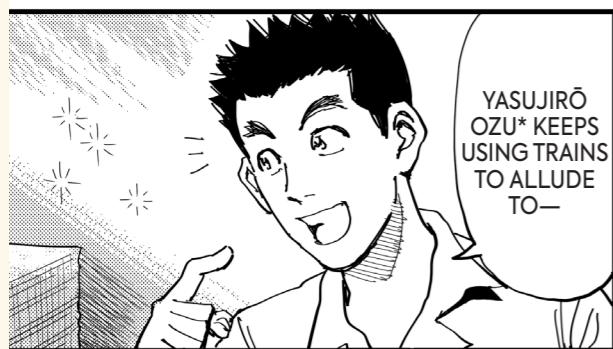
IT PROBABLY MEANS TAKING A DIFFERENT DIRECTION IN LIFE!

BUT AT THE END, THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW RIDES A TRAIN THAT MOVES TOWARD THE LEFT.



AT THE BEGINNING, THE TRAIN MOVES TOWARD THE RIGHT.

YEP, THEY WERE HEADING TO TOKYO FULL OF HOPE.



YASUJIRO OZU\* KEEPS USING TRAINS TO ALLUDE TO—

\* Yasujiro Ozu (1903-1963): a Japanese film director known for works featuring ordinary families and everyday life.



DAMN, WE MUST RETURN THE FILM BEFORE THE CINEMA OPENS.

IT'S DAWN!



第一幕  
SCENE 1

THE SCENES ARE SHOT FROM THE PARENTS' BACKS.



SO THE BACK SHOTS LAY OUT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND POSITIONS?

BEFORE MOVING TO A CLOSE-UP OF THEIR FACES.



\*Tokyo Story: a 1953 Japanese film directed by Yasujiro Ozu and one of the representative works that depict an ordinary family's breakdown.

