This two-volume set features ten short comics, each inspired by songs from the popular travel show *Listen! Taiwan Is Singing*, hosted by renowned musician Chen Ming-Chang. The stories capture the emotional essence of the songs through imaginative adaptations.

Blending film, music, and comics, *Island Rhapsody* offers creative interpretations of ten Taiwanese songs curated by Chen, who traveled across Taiwan, immersing himself in its diverse local cultures and performing iconic tunes.

The ten comic artists reinterpret the melodies and sentiments of the tracks, crafting new narratives that explore themes of family, social change, gentrification, food, and daily life. Acclaimed music critic Hong Fang-Yi also provides insight into the songs.

This innovative collection celebrates the diversity and creativity of Taiwanese artists and musicians. Each story is paired with a QR code, allowing readers to listen to the original music while enjoying the visual storytelling.

Island Rhapsody: Listen to the Voice of Taiwan

GoodTrip Creative

GoodTrip Creative Ltd. is committed to its mission of "seeing the world and being seen by the world." The company specializes in producing high-quality, world-trending film and television works, including numerous internationally distributed and award-winning programs.

GGDOG

Making his living primarily through comics and illustration, GGDOG has developed a realistic style with manga influences that expresses his take on reality.

Ding Pao-Yen

Ding Pao-Yen, a semi-amateur manga creator who transitioned from pure painting, initially created manga for printing purposes. Interested in science fiction and dreamlike themes, Ding explores various possibilities in the medium.

Tseng Yao-Ching

Tseng Yao-Ching graduated from the Department of Fine Arts (Western Painting) at Taiwan Normal University. Through storytelling, Tseng explores themes such as dreams, theater, mirror worlds, and the deconstruction of values, gender, and desire. In 2020, *Lunatic is the Night* was jointly nominated for the Golden Comic Awards Best Comic Award.

ROCKAT

ROCKAT, often self-mocking as an unfree manga artist, graduated from National Taiwan University of Arts. In 2012, ROCKAT created the board game Wonderful Island and published the first manga volume *Nameless Song* at the end of 2014. *Nameless Song* won the Silver Award (Excellence Award) at the 9th Japanese International Manga Award in 2016.

Zuo Hsuan

In 2015, Zuo published the long-form manga *Rites of Returning*, which won the Bronze Award at the Japanese International Manga Award. Zuo represented Taiwan at the Angoulême International Comics Festival in France and the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany in 2017. *The Banana Sprout* Vol. 1 won the 14th Golden Comic Awards.

Sen

Sen is a manga creator who graduated from the Department of Theater Design at Taipei National University of the Arts, majoring in Stage Design. Currently focused on manga, illustration, and graphic design, Sen's works include the short story collection *Everyday Youth* and the independently published *Insomnia Diary* and *Black Cat*.

Ning Lo

Hsinchu native Lo Ning is a freelance illustrator and designer who has recently begun experimenting with digital formats. She currently resides in Taipei.
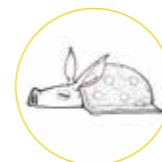
Cao Chian

A lover of comics and metal music, Cao Chian creates personal narratives around themes of growth, and draws in a style that fuses American and Asian comic book art. She is currently studying comic books and printmaking at Art Institute of Chicago.

Peter Mann

Born in Germany but Taiwanese through and through, Peter Mann worked in animation until, by a roundabout path, he became a comic book artist and illustrator. Much of his illustration work is connected to music, including visual design for music festivals and album cover design.

Mu Ke Ke

Young comic artist Mu Ke Ke has received numerous awards, including a special jury prize awarded by comic website CCC, and a silver prize at the ACG Awards run by gaming website Bahamut. She has represented Taiwan as artist-in-residence at the San Diego Comic-Con and the Angoulême International Comics Festival.

A Groundbreaking Interpretation of Ten Popular Songs

By Itzel Hsu
Translated by Jacqueline Leung
(Originally published at Readmoo)

Comics may be a sequence of still images, but artists have long used the form to interpret music. Popular Japanese manga like *Nodame Cantabile* explored classical music, *Nana* portrayed a rock band, and *Blue Giant* followed the journey of a jazz musician.

Recently, Taiwan has seen a rise in music-themed comics such as *Demo* and *Bla Bla Song*. One particularly intricate and distinct collection is Island Rhapsody. It draws inspiration from the travel program *Listen! Taiwan Is Singing*, hosted by the renowned musician Chen Ming-Chang. In the show, Chen traveled across Taiwan, experiencing its diverse local cultures and performing famous tunes with his signature yueqin or guitar. Ten of these songs were selected for this comic collection, each accompanied by a QR code linking to the actual track, as well as printed lyrics and commentary by music critic Hung Fang-Yi.

This inventive, collaborative two-volume book features ten adaptations of ten classic Taiwanese songs.

The first volume opens with "If I Open My Heart's Door" by Sen, told through the perspective of a female protagonist returning to her old hometown. This story acts as a gateway that draws readers into a reflective and imaginative world. The second volume concludes with GGDOG's "Salt Ponds – The Home of the Black-faced Spoonbills," where the protagonist wakes up in the summer heat of his room. Despite the vastly different artistic styles, the collection's opening and closing stories share a dreamlike quality.

Among the ten comics, four lean toward science fiction, while six are set in real-life scenarios. As these narratives blend, reality and fantasy blur. Each story touches on a central theme: characters searching for a sense of belonging—whether to their environment, career, or life itself—leading them to act or reflect deeply on their paths.

Each comic reflects the distinct visual style of its artist. Ding Pao-Yen uses bold, urgent strokes and gray tones to depict a rain-soaked, desolate city, while Tseng Yao-Ching transforms the song "Miss So-Lan Wants to Get Married" into a modern-day vignette about human relationships. ROCKAT imagines a futuristic 2040 where Lukang is a tourist hotspot under the rule of a Chinese Federation, while Zuo Hsuan tells a heartwarming tale of a young foley artist seeking meaning in his career. Lo Ning draws scenes of rural landscapes and opera performances to evoke the nostalgia of returning home, while Cao Chian depicts the struggles of Beitou hostesses with dark, thick lines. Peter Mann's comic about women pursuing success provides a lighthearted exploration of family dynamics, and Mu Ke Ke narrates the meeting and separation of childhood friends, highlighting how loneliness touches everyone, regardless of age.

Alan Lee, editor-in-chief of the comics department at Gaea Books, remarked in an interview, "If these comics were simply adaptations of the lyrics, they'd feel too one-dimensional; readers could just listen to the songs. The artists needed the freedom to create new narratives, allowing their creativity to shine." As a result, the collection offers a variety of rich, engaging stories that breathe life into the songs.
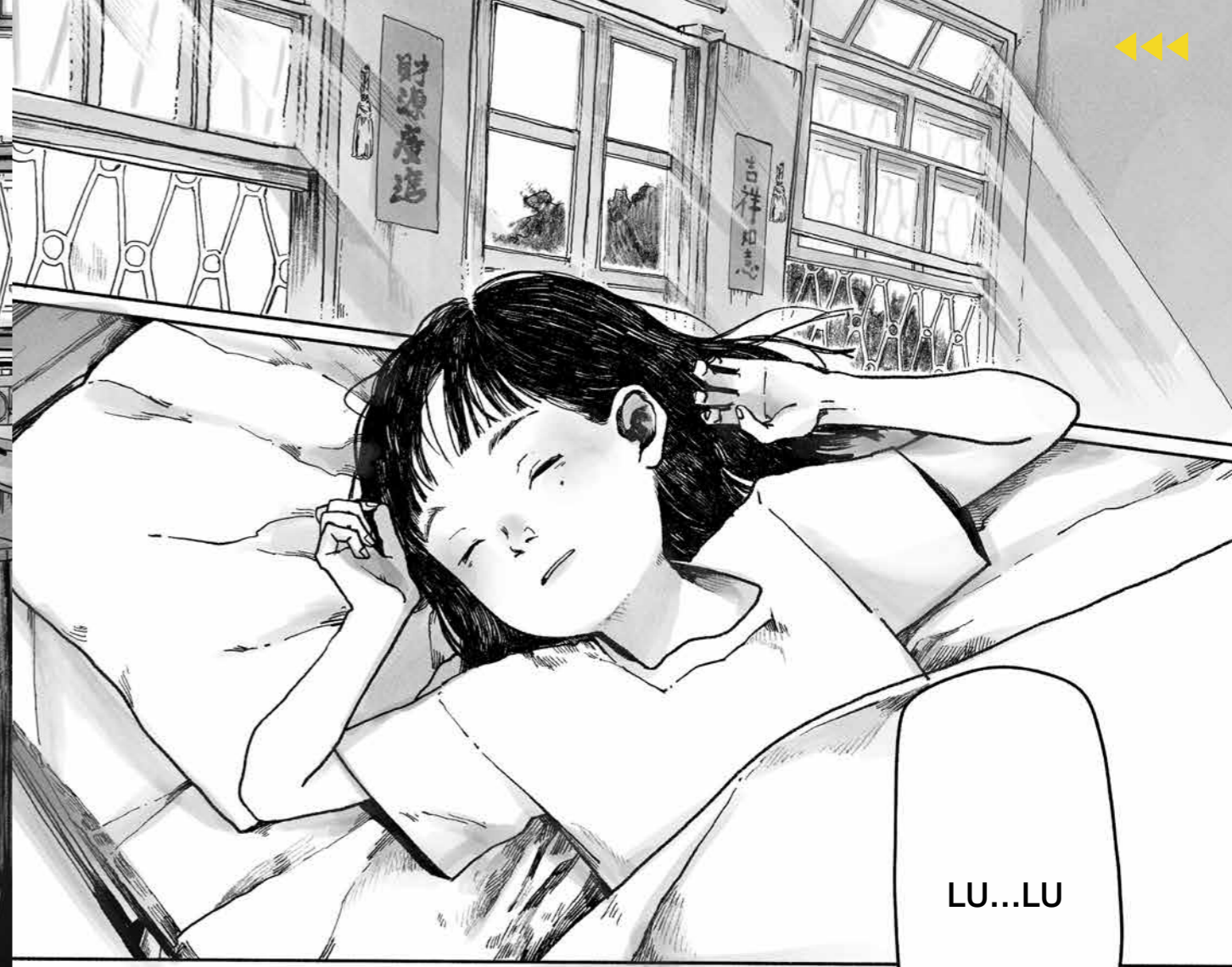
I GO TO A MIDDLING COLLEGE. I GET MIDDLING GRADES.

MY LOOKS ARE MIDDLING TOO.

I DON'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR INTERESTS.

I normally work the night shift at a convenience store.

I'm a fourth year now. Most days I don't have any classes, so I can come in.

Good morning! I noticed that you've been working day shifts recently.

I meet all kinds of people at work. I've seen all kinds but…

There's a 21 percent discount if you buy two. Do you want to get another one?

I still have no idea what kind of person I want to be.

No big deal. It's your break time now anyway.

Sorry. I'll be right back.

Lu! Your phone keeps ringing. Do you want to get it?

If We Open the Windows of Our Hearts
Jody Chiang

...open the windows
we will see the colorful light
of spring,

even though the person is gone
and the house empty,
It will ease the burden of sorrow,

Spring, oh spring,
where are you now?

IT'S GRANDPA ...HE PASSED AWAY THIS MORNING.

HURRY AND COME HOME.

MOM, WHAT'S WRONG? I'M AT WORK NOW.

MANAGER

THANKS!

I ALREADY HEARD. JUST TAKE A FEW DAYS OFF. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE SHIFT SCHEDULE. TAKE CARE OF THE FUNERAL STUFF