

ON THE TRAIN

南方，寂寞鐵道：我們在時光列車上相遇

* Documentary film of the same name was released in 2023

On the Train is based on the documentary of the same name by Golden Horse Award-winning director Hsiao Chu-Chen. The director and her crew spent six years filming the South Link Line prior to its electrification, making a lasting record in images and words of a disappearing railway landscape.

Taiwan, small and densely populated, has relied on traditional trains to connect places for over a hundred years. The South Link Line, which runs through the southern part of Taiwan's Central Mountain Range, was the most challenging section of track to build, requiring eleven years of construction before it opened, but had the most beautiful scenery of any train route on the island. Upon completion, this line handled most of the east-west transportation and national defense traffic in Taiwan's southern tip.

As times changed, the noise and sweltering heat of the old trains slowly disappeared, however, replaced by a new, electrified railway system. Using her extensive experience as a documentary filmmaker, Hsiao Chu-Chen takes a nostalgic look at a time before the final section of Taiwan's South Link Line was electrified, creating a record of a railway experience that no longer exists.

Divided into four major sections, the book tells fifty stories about the South Link Line's construction and the mostly unknown life-and-death challenges faced by its frontline personnel. These individuals include three generations of a railway family that passed down their sense of honor and duty and the drivers who showed up for work even in life-threatening situations. In addition to the male crews and personnel who dedicated their lives to the railway, the book also introduces readers to the strong, hardworking women who were



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right beside them, including the first female station attendant.

After six years exploring the most isolated and beautiful rail line in Taiwan, Director Hsiao and her crew have succeeded in capturing the railway's historical trajectory, cultural landscape, and communal memories in deft prose and stunning images of mountains and rails.

Hsiao Chu-Chen 蕭菊貞

Hsiao Chu-Chen is a veteran documentary filmmaker who has worked as a reporter, columnist, television series producer, screenwriter, and director. She is currently an associate professor in the General Studies Center of National Tsing Hua University. She has twice won a Taipei Golden Horse Award as well as a Taipei Film Award and Taiwan International Documentary Film Award. Her films have also been nominated at major international competitions, including the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival.