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# Paris, Taipei

*Arvin Chen's feature debut shines with a deftly constructed script, strong cast and wide international appeal that has already won the film two awards on the festival circuit*

BY HO YI  
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During the height of Taiwanese new wave cinema, directors portrayed Taipei as a city of bleakness and anomie. Now younger generations of filmmakers have injected color and zest into their depictions of the capital.

In his feature debut *Au Revoir Taipei* (一頁台北), Taiwanese American director Arvin Chen (陳駿霖) evokes a city that is lively, splashy and heavenly matched for his fun-filled romantic comedy mostly set during the young protagonist's final night in the city.

Writer-director Chen paints nocturnal Taipei as romantically as cinematic depictions of Paris. The boisterous Shida night market, winding downtown alleys and narrow neighborhoods evoke a sense of magic as Taipei 101 flickers in the distance. The vivacious cinematography basks the city in opulent colors, while briskly moving scenes accelerate the plot at an energetic pace. The sound track by Chinese American composer Hsu Wen is an absolute delight, lending the story an irresistibly jazzy tone.

Kai (Jack Yao, 姚淳耀) bids farewell to his girlfriend before she heads off to Paris at the beginning of the film. Obsessed with joining her in Europe, Kai reads up on French in a bookstore when he is not waiting tables at his parents' noodle stall. His absent lover hardly calls, but bookstore assistant Susie (Amber Kuo, 郭采潔) shows interest.

When Kai's girlfriend dumps him over the phone, he seeks help from gangster boss and real estate shark

Bao (Frankie Gao, 高凌風), who offers the heartbroken lad a ticket to Paris in exchange for carrying out a courier delivery.

Believing the package Kai carries contains something extremely valuable, Bao's nephew Hong (Lawrence Ko, 柯宇綸) and three bumbling sidekicks embark on a scheme that sees Kai, Susie, Kai's goofy friend Gao (Paul Chiang, 姜康哲) and the two cops who are staking out Bao's operation all enmeshed in a night of high jinks that involves kidnapping, dancing in a park, and a love motel.

Kai and Susie traipse across the city and meet a number of likable oddballs, most of whom have their own problems involving love: Bao is an old gangster boss who wishes to retire with his much younger sweetheart, while cop Ji-yong, played by an amusingly gawky Joseph Chang (張孝全), is ditched by his girlfriend for being an indifferent lover. Ko is a likeable character, a slightly neurotic small-timer who dreams of making something big out of his dull life as a real-estate salesman. The brightest new find is Chiang, who possesses an instantly lovable goofiness that is well expressed in his character Gao, a tall, fumbling convenience-store worker.

The boy-meets-girl romance can be a tiresome genre, but Chen has enough in his scriptwriting bag of tricks to keep the audience engaged pretty much to the end. Sugar-coated with warm humor and kooky charm, the film is sweet and lighthearted, and audiences should not expect anything that

even slightly resembles the oeuvre of Wim Wenders, one of the film's executive producers.

*Au Revoir Taipei*, with a few character modifications, could be an expanded sequel to *Mei* (美), Chen's graduation film at the University of Southern California that won the Silver Bear in Berlin's International Short Film Competition in 2007. The 12-minute short tells the love story between a young man (also played by Yao) and a girl who plans to go to New York City, compacting emotions that linger much longer than its glossier follow-up does.

## Film Notes

### AU REVOIR TAIPEI (一頁台北)

DIRECTED BY:  
ARVIN CHEN (陳駿霖)

STARRING:  
JACK YAO (姚淳耀) AS KAI, AMBER KUO (郭采潔) AS SUSIE, LAWRENCE KO (柯宇綸) AS HONG, FRANKIE GAO (高凌風) AS BAO

LANGUAGE:  
IN MANDARIN, HOKLO AND FRENCH WITH CHINESE AND ENGLISH SUBTITLES

RUNNING TIME:  
85 MINUTES

TAIWAN RELEASE:  
TODAY