

Interview, Audio: Director Mei-Juin Chen of 'The Gangster's Daughter'

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CHICAGO – Opening Night of the fifth season of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema is Wednesday, September 20th, 2017, and the first film is a doozy. "The Gangster's Daughter" is a different take on the popular Taiwanese mobster movie, a relationship film as much as the pure crime. At the helm is director Mei-Juin Chen, with her first narrative film.

"The Gangster's Daughter" is about the relationship between Keigo (Jack Kao) and Shaowu (Ally Chiu), as a father who practices organized crime in Taipei (the capital of Taiwan) is forced to take in his rebellious teenage daughter after her mother dies. The move creates a different direction for the gangster, and allows him to reassess his entire life of crime. Shaowu, in the meantime, is flexing her adolescent freedoms, which includes a deep Daddy Complex. This clash disrupts both paths for the father and the daughter.



'The Gangster's Daughter,' Directed by Mei-Juin Chen

Photo credit: [AsianPopUpCinema.org](#)

Mei-Juin Chen built her reputation as a documentary maker, her first film was "Hollywood Hotel" (1994). She has also made two Kung Fu docs, the "Kung Fu Secrets" episode of "National Geographic Inside" (2009), and went to Jamaica for "The Black Kung Fu Experience" in 2012. She spoke with [HollywoodChicago.com](#) on the eve of the Midwest Premiere of "The Gangster's Daughter."

HollywoodChicago.com: What fascinated you about gangsters and organized crime, that led you to create 'The Gangster's Daughter'?

Mei-Juin Chen: In Taiwan, the gangsters are in the neighborhood, it's part of the culture there. Since little girls like heroes, some of the

gangsters in Taiwan are heroic, they have a righteous Robin Hood type of reputation. These characters kind of fit into an imagination, and that's what fascinated me when I was a child.

My uncle was also a gangster, while at the same time my grandfather was a supreme court judge. He was the black sheep in the family, and I based one of the characters in the film on him. Even though he was a gangster, he was very colorful and loved children. He would tell us stories, and I never forgot them. He was always saying, 'study hard and don't be like me,' which I also put in the film.

HollywoodChicago.com: Did your uncle help you create the story in the film?



Director Mei-Juin Chen of 'The Gangster's Daughter'
Photo credit: Mei-Juin Chen

Chen: Yes, he brought in his 'sidekicks' and they told me many stories, and I used that material... that was my field work. I also had made a documentary about the Taiwanese gangs, which has 400 years of history. These guys are like family, and I wanted to be more subtle and tender in showing the relationships. The Asian gangster genre is dominated by men, and I believe mine is more of a feminine point of view.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finding the right chemistry between the father and daughter was important. What did Jack Kao and Ally Chiu bring to that relationship that was even better than you expected?

Chen: I've known Jack Kao since 2000, and he's a big star in Taiwan. When I first met him, he scared me, because he has a gangster sort-of presence, and his father was involved in that crime. He observed how they walked, talked and moved, he had the swagger. Now he's a Buddhist, and his whole aura has changed... he's sweeter now, like a teddy bear. He bonded with Ally Chiu right away, and always builds relationships with people he co-performs with, and is really good at relaxing them.

HollywoodChicago.com: In Taiwanese culture, what is the expected relationship between a father and daughter, and did Shaowu and Keigo stay inside that relationship or did they go outside of it?

Chen: In general, the Taiwanese people are warm in their interactions, most people who visit remark on this. But ironically, between a father and a daughter, this is often not the case. In a 'Confucius' tradition, they cannot mention their love for each other. There is a lot of love, but it is repressed. That is Taiwan. There is a beauty in the non-verbalized connection, and I tried to show that in the film.

In the audio portion of the interview, Mei-Juin talks about guns, teenage girls and the best advice she received about being a first-time narrative film director.

Season Five of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema series kicks off with the Midwest premiere of "The Gangster's Daughter" on Wednesday, September 20th, 2017 (7pm) at the AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois, Chicago. Director Chen Mei-Juin will make a special appearance on behalf of the film. For the complete schedule of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema series for Season Five, [click here](#). [18]



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