

## Brother Wang and Brother Liu on the Road in Taiwan - Parts I & 2

王哥柳哥遊台灣 - 上集, 下集

(Wang Ge Liu Ge You Taiwan—I & II)

Taiwan, 1959, 83' (part I), 67' (part 2), b/w, Taiwanese, Betacam NTSC

Dir: Lee Hsing, Fang Zhen, Tien Feng

Scr: Xiao Tong, Ph: Chen Zhong Xin, Ed: Shen Ye Kang, Music: Zhou Lan Ping, Exec Prod: Lai Guo Cai, Prod: Yang Zu Guang

Cast: Li Guan Zhang (Brother Wang), Zhang Fu Cai aka Shorty Cai (Brother Liu), Ke Yu Xia (A-hua), Gao Lai Fu aka Hu Dou (Fortune Teller)

Tai-lien Co. (Tai Lian Ying Ye Gong Si)

Source: Chinese Taipei Film Archive

Overweight shoeshiner Brother Wang (Wang Ge) and skinny rickshaw driver Brother Liu (Liu Ge) are best friends and roommates. One day, they come across a fortune teller who offers a peculiar forecast: that Wang will become very wealthy in three days but that Liu will die in 44 days. When Wang strikes gold by winning the lottery, just as predicted, the celebratory mood is soon eclipsed by the reminder that Liu's death also has been forecast. With his newfound wealth, Wang decides to reward his dying buddy with the trip of a lifetime. Carrying around a suitcase full of cash, the working-class twosome embark on a road trip around the beautiful island of Taiwan. Enjoying a lavish lifestyle as inexperienced big spenders, they find themselves in unexpected situations and amusing predicaments, one after another.

As the 44-day "deadline" approaches, Liu begins to feel ill and homesick. The two return to Taipei so that Liu can spend his last moments with his girlfriend A-hua. On the day of his anticipated death, a seemingly unwell Liu rests in his coffin at home, fully dressed and somberly waiting for his life to end. Many hours pass by, Liu becomes impatient and gets up to use the restroom, after which he feels much better. As midnight falls, it is obvious that Liu has been spared from death. The next day, Wong happily accompanies a lively and cheerful Liu on his way to get married with A-hua.

Overlooking the unhurried pace and primitive quality typical of many Taiwanese dialect films from this era, *Brother Wang and Brother Liu on the Road in Taiwan* is significant for providing valuable visual documentation of pre-industrialized Taiwan with its nostalgic scenes from Taipei to

Beitou, Kaohsiung, Pingtung, Tainan, Taichung, Chiayi and Sun Moon Lake. It also provides a window into Taiwanese social and political views at the time with its demeaning portrayals of women and indigenous tribes. A black-and-white feature originally released in two parts because of its length, *Brother Wang and Brother Liu on The Road in Taiwan* is celebrated as the island state's first blockbuster comedy. Inspired by Hollywood's Laurel and Hardy, the film gave birth to Taiwan's iconic comedy duo of Wang Ge and Liu Ge, who became household names and went on to headline seven more sequels in this popular silver screen franchise.

George Chun Han Wang

**Lee Hsing** (Li Hsing/Li Xing) was born in Shanghai in 1930. He moved to Taiwan in 1948 and graduated from Taiwan Provincial Teachers College (now National Taiwan Normal University), where he discovered a passion for stage play performance and direction. Having acted and assistant-directed for mentor/filmmaker Tang Shao-hua, Lee made his successful debut with *Brother Wang and Brother Liu on The Road in Taiwan* as the main co-director, then went on to become the forerunner of Taiwan's "Healthy Realism" genre with *Beautiful Duckling* (*Yang Ya Ren Jia*, 1964) and *My Silent Wife* (*Ya Nu Qing Shen*, 1965). With two Golden Horse (Taiwan's Oscars) nods for the direction of *Execution in Autumn* (*Qiu Jue*, 1972) and *He Never Gives Up* (*Wang Yang Zhong De Yi Tiao Chuan*, 1978), plus the unprecedented three consecutive Best Picture wins with *He Never Gives Up*, *The Story of a Small Town* (*Xiao Cheng Gu Shi*, 1979) and *Good Morning Taipei* (*Zhao An Tai Bei*, 1979), Lee is deservedly recognized as the godfather of Taiwanese cinema. Although he has not helmed a film since the historic epic *The Heroic Pioneers* (*Tang Shan Guo Tai Wan*, 1986), at the age of 81, Lee recently directed a large-scale stage play, *Summer Snow* (*Xia Xue*, 2010), at the National Theater in Taipei.