

## Document Citation

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# Cafe Lumiere

**H**ou Hsiao-hsien's most minimalist film to date (2003) is a bracing return to form, a provocative and haunting look at Tokyo and the overall drift of the world that's slow to reveal its secrets and beauties. Commissioned by the Japanese studio Shochiku as an homage to its famous house director Yasujiro Ozu, it references Ozu only indirectly, through the repetition of a few visual motifs and through details that indicate how much the world has changed since his heyday. The 23-year-old heroine (pop singer Yo Hitoto), single and pregnant, is a freelance writer obsessed with the life of Taiwanese classical composer Jiang Wenye (whose music we hear in the film); she's helped in her research by a friend equally obsessed with recording the noises of subway trains. The plot is spare, but the sounds, images, and ambience are indelible. In Japanese with subtitles. 103 min. Reviewed this week in Section 1. ➡ Music Box. —**Jonathan Rosenbaum**

