

20th

LONDON

5-18 November 2025

KOREAN

FILM

FESTIVAL

**Korean
Cultural
Centre UK**

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Never Ending Korea

All That is Called is Love

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the London Korean Film Festival. Since its first curtain rose in 2006, the festival has been on a precious journey, bringing the richness and diversity of Korean cinema to audiences across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Twenty years ago, Korean films were still a fresh and unfamiliar discovery in London. Today, they have become an essential part of world cinema. The global success of Korean film has been made possible by the passion of its creators and the enduring love of its audiences.

"All that is called is love." This phrase was born from my reflections on Korean aesthetics. For me, art is ultimately another name for love – and film, in its essence, is an art of love. The human condition can be understood as another expression of longing. Longing is the essence of our imperfect lives, the impulse that drives us to tell stories. For some, it awakens an unconscious desire to fill what is missing, and we strive ceaselessly to bridge that gap. Cinema is the meeting of that longing, emotion, and technology. Throughout the 20th century, film transformed the pain and dreams of human longing into moving images, becoming a universal language and one of the defining art forms of our time.

That the London Korean Film Festival has reached its 20th year tells us how stories of Korea have been shared and understood here in London. Korean cinema has illuminated both suffering and hope, memory and loss – its light and shadow, its silence and dialogue – connecting us to one another and to the world through the language of love. Over the past two decades, Korean cinema has embodied a unique aesthetic of humanity, reflecting the depth of Korean thought while engaging in a profound dialogue with the world. This 20th anniversary edition of the festival is both a celebration of that remarkable journey and the beginning of a new chapter.

This year's opening film, *Frosted Window*, delicately portrays human emotions through the changing seasons in the historic Seochon neighbourhood of Seoul. The closing film, *Harbin*, tells the story of independence activist Ahn Jung-geun, revealing the historical consciousness and moral depth at the heart of Korean cinema. Programmes such as *Cinema Now*, *Women's Voices*, and *Dramas of Resistance* each illuminate the past, present, and future of Korean films.

The London Korean Film Festival is more than a showcase of films – it is a bridge of understanding and empathy between Korea and the UK. To all the audiences, directors, actors, and staff who have walked this bridge with us over the past twenty years, I offer my heartfelt gratitude.

As we look towards the next twenty years, we call upon love once again. The journey of Korean cinema is far from over; it continues to whisper the love softly to our hearts.

Dr Seunghye Sun, FRSA
Director, Korean Cultural Centre UK

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THU 6 NOV

18:15 Hero 6
18:30 The Meryl Streep Project 5

FRI 7 NOV

18:20 Hi-Five 3
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15:00 Shades of the Heart 3
16:30 Time to Be Strong 4
18:30 The Land of Morning Calm 4

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13:30 Silver Apricot 4
15:00 The Informant 4
19:00 SAVE 5

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THU 13 NOV

18:10 Commission 4

FRI 14 NOV

20:45 YMCA Baseball Team 6

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BFI Southbank

Ciné Lumière

Institute of Contemporary Arts

Korean Cultural Centre

OPENING GALA

FROSTED WINDOW

호린 창문 너머의 누군가

WED 5 NOV, 18:30
BFI SOUTHBANK

Q&A with director Kim Jong-kwan, actor Yeon Woo-jin

DIRECTOR: KIM JONG-KWAN
WRITER: KIM JONG-KWAN
PRODUCER: PARK HYUN-SUK
CAST: YEON WOO-JIN, CHANG RYUL, OK JA-YEON,
JOO JONG-HYUK, JEON SO-YOUNG
PRODUCTION COMPANY: ALLEYWAY PICTURES
SALES: KT STUDIO GENIE
DRAMA / 2025 / 80 MIN / CERT. TBC

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
Shades of the Heart (2021)
Josée (2020)
Persona (2019)
The Table (2016)
Worst Woman (2016)
Come, Closer (2010)

Three episodes, each set in a different season in the Seochon neighbourhood of Seoul's Jongno District. The first two are bright and breezy affairs about the vagaries of love - and the last is a weightier, wintry story about a feeling of loss so complex that it must be uncovered from the involuted layers of different media (a diary, letters, poetry, a screenplay, a film-within-a-film, a flower arrangement).

With films like *Come, Closer* (2010), *The Table* (2016) and *Shades of the Heart* (2021), writer/director Kim Jong-kwan has carefully honed his mastery of the anthology form, collecting into a feature frame highly crafted short films which each work independently, but also reflect and interplay with each other to offer a bigger picture of the human condition. Delicate and witty, metacinematic and melancholic, this latest is a Rohmer-esque love letter to Seochon, and to our capacity for both fickleness and more profound change.

Anton Bitel



CLOSING GALA

HARBIN 하얼빈

TUE 18 NOV, 18:30
BFI SOUTHBANK

Intro by director Woo Min-ho

DIRECTOR: WOO MIN-HO
PRODUCER: KIM JIN-WOO, LEE YONG-SU
CINEMATOGRAPHY: HONG KYEONG-PYO
CAST: HYUN BIN, PARK JEONG-MIN, JO WOO-JIN, JEON YEO-BEEN,
PARK HOON, YOO CHEA-MYUNG, LEE DONG-WOOK
PRODUCTION COMPANY: HIVE MEDIA CORP.
SALES: CJ ENM
DRAMA / 2024 / 113 MIN / CERT. 15

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
The Man Standing Next (2020)
The Drug King (2018)
Inside Men (2015)
The Spies (2012)
Man of Vendetta (2010)
Who Killed Jesus? (2000)

The tale of Korean resistance fighter Ahn Jung-geun has been captured on screen before, but never so stylishly as in this riveting historical drama from *Inside Men* (2015) director Woo Min-ho. Driving towards the fateful moment when Ahn gunned down Japanese politician Itō Hirobumi in 1909, *Harbin* is a mood piece about the indomitable spirit of people who would rather lay down their lives than bow to foreign rulers. Hyun Bin leads an ace ensemble of thespians who brood in the shadows in this breathtakingly mounted period affair, lensed by *Parasite* (2019) cinematographer Hong Kyeong-pyo and scored by longtime Park Chan-wook collaborator Cho Young-wuk.

Pierce Conran



SPECIAL SCREENING



HI-FIVE 하이파이브

**FRI 7 NOV, 18:20
CINÉ LUMIÈRE**

DIRECTOR: KANG HYOUNG-CHUL
WRITER: KANG HYOUNG-CHUL
PRODUCER: LEE AN-NA
CAST: LEE JAE-IN, AHN JAE-HONG, RA MI-RAN, KIM HIE-WON,
YOO AH-IN, OH JUNG-SE, PARK JIN-YOUNG
PRODUCTION COMPANY: ANNAPURNA FILMS
SALES: CONTENTS PANDA
COMEDY, ACTION / 2025 / 119 MIN / CERT. 15

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
Swing Kids (2018)
Tazza: The Hidden Card (2014)
Sunny (2011)
Scandal Makers (2008)

The superhero saga gets a distinctly Korean twist in the high-octane, high-spirited romp *Hi-Five*, the latest from *Swing Kids* (2018) director Kang Hyoung-chul.

When a mysterious organ donor dies, the recipients of their vital organs, all unknown to each other, begin to develop strange new powers. Five of them band together as an unlikely superhero crew, while the sixth, the ailing leader of a cult, hunts them down to absorb their powers.

Bursting with comic book flair, *Hi-Five* blends mirth and mayhem, keeping the foot on the gas and tongue firmly in cheek throughout.

Pierce Conran

SPECIAL SCREENING



SHADES OF THE HEART 아무도 없는 곳

**SAT 8 NOV, 15:00
KOREAN CULTURAL CENTRE UK**

Q&A with director Kim Jong-kwan, actor Yeon Woo-jin

DIRECTOR: KIM JONG-KWAN
WRITER: KIM JONG-KWAN
PRODUCER: LEE JUN-SANG
CAST: YEON WOO-JIN, KIM SANG-HO, LEE JI-EUN,
LEE JOO-YOUNG, YOON HYE-REE
PRODUCTION COMPANY: BALL MEDIA CO.
SALES: KT STUDIO GENIE
DRAMA / 2021 / 82 MIN / CERT. 15

Separated from his wife in the United Kingdom, author Chang-seok (Yeon Woo-jin) is back in Seoul, working on his next novel, and trying to work (and walk) through his complicated feelings about what he has left behind. He also has encounters (some by arrangement, others by chance) with four people whose names become the formal headings for the film's first four chapters. As Chang-seok converses with each of them about ageing and memory, love and loss, truth and fiction, ever so gradually the focus shifts to Chang-seok himself.

Kim Jong-kwan's assured feature concerns the stories we tell ourselves and each other to go on living in a world of sadness, death and oblivion. In this stylish, sophisticated set of slyly interweaving narratives (all told in a whisper), dreams and delusions slip into an otherwise realist frame, with a cumulative impact that is miraculous if also quietly devastating.

Anton Bitel





PROGRAMMER'S NOTE

One of cinema's paradoxes is that it is both never and always of the now: never, because it is inevitably a medium of the past, and even the most contemporary of films were conceived and made months if not years before they are first seen; and always, because the consumption of cinema is bound in the present, as its sights and sounds overtake our eyes and ears, and commandeer our immediate experience, with its reflections often lingering into the future. Cinema preserves moments from any age like lightning in a bottle, but only the most recent films capture the current - or near current - moment and mood. All of which is to say that the London Korean Film Festival's 'Cinema Now' strand, which draws on contemporary releases from the national cinema, is as close as you can get to the coalface of today's Korea.

As always, my programming choices are predicated primarily in questions of impact and quality. In other words, I tend to select the individual titles that make the biggest impression on me and that I like the most - and think you will too. Still that criterion must also be weighed against the need for a varied and eclectic spread of films, so I always make an effort to ensure that there is a broad mix of different genres, tones and thematic preoccupations on offer, in keeping with a country that is similarly multi-faceted. The hope is that there will be something for everyone: if one of these films does not sound quite to your tastes, another will be.

Of the seven features in this year's strand, two are thrillers, displaying not just the cutting edge of techniques in Korean filmmaking, but the tensions in Korean society. *Somebody* (2025) pushes the mother-daughter bond to its outer limits. For a character who, as a little girl and daughter to an increasingly alarmed single mother, is clearly a dangerous psychopath in the making grows up to be, well, somebody - but co-writers/co-directors Kim Yeo-jung and Lee Jung-chan keep the viewer guessing who exactly. Meanwhile Shin Jea-min's sophisticated psychodrama *Commission* (2024) sees aspiring webtoon artist Kang Dan-kyung (Kim Hyun-soo) at odds with her more successful sister (Kim Yong-ji), with her own errant imagination, and with the contradictions, complicities, delusions and jealousies that constitute the creative process itself. This may be a portrait of the modern artist, but with the dark web and a serial killer playing key parts in the proceedings, you can be sure that this is a twisty ride into Dan-kyung's very soul.

Jang Man-min's feature debut *Silver Apricot* (2024) also has a (part-time) webtoon artist for its protagonist, but the return of urban graphic designer Kim Jung-seo (Na Ae-jin) to her coastal roots to collect a debt from her estranged father Yeong-joo (Ahn Suk-hwan) is less thriller than domestic drama and journey of (self-) discovery - even if, as she goes down memory lane, Jung-seo's spiky callousness avoids the pitfalls of cloying sentiment that bedevils so

many Korean family films. Also on a journey are Su-min (Choi Sung-eun), Tae-hee (Hyun Woo-seok) and Sa-rang (Ha Seo-yoon) in Namkoong Sun's *Time To Be Strong* (2024). They are all ex-performers whose trip to Jeju Island exposes the darker side of the K-pop industry. Like walking wounded or arrested children, these three twentysomethings stumble dazed into a world of which they have little experience, even as they struggle to put behind them the trauma of their recent musical misadventures. This is a film that takes stock of the more exploitative, abusive side of Korea's most popular export.

Another stranger in a strange land features in Park Joon-ho's *3670* (2025), whose modest protagonist Cheol-jun (Cho You-hyun) is doubly alienated in Seoul both by his status as a North Korean defector, and by his homosexuality. As Cheol-jun must simultaneously navigate two new lifestyles while also trying to stay true to himself, this quietly observant intersectional drama is all at once coming-out and fitting-in story, with appeal to anyone - which is to say everyone - who has ever felt like an outsider looking in. The protagonist of Park Ri-woong's *The Land of Morning Calm* (2024) could not be more different. For Yeong-guk (Yoon Joo-sang) is a much older, divorced, bullying, hard-drinking fisherman who has lived his whole hard life - apart from a brief Vietnamese tour of duty - in his small coastal village. Yet as his assistant Yong-soo (Park Jong-hwan) vanishes at sea, and Yeong-guk is left to keep an eye on Yong-soo's doting mother Pan-rye (Yang Hee-kyung) and Vietnamese wife Yeong-ran (Khazsak), amid their mixed hope and grief secrets must out, and Yeong-guk's own largely deserved desolation comes to reflect the neglect of his ageing, dying community, running on empty.

Last but not least is Kim Seok's *The Informant* (2024), a rambunctiously funny cops-and-robbers comedy that knows every cliché in the police book and subverts them all with chaotic-good glee. As 'dumbass' Detective Oh Nam-hyuk (Heo Sung-tae) and his informant Cho Tae-bong (Cho Bok-rae) infiltrate a gang as much for their own personal gain as for any nobler purpose of crimefighting, complications quickly accumulate, and deceit, disguise and double-dealing set in on all sides. Think of this as *Internal Affairs* (1990) retold as an undercover farce, and be prepared to be surprised at every turn.

Anton Bitel



TIME TO BE STRONG

힘을 낼 시간

SAT 8 NOV, 16:30
ICA

DIRECTOR: NAMKOONG SUN
WRITER: NAMKOONG SUN
PRODUCER: LEE SANG-HYUN
CAST: CHOI SUNG-EUN, HYUN WOO-SEOK, HA SEO-YOON
PRODUCTION COMPANY: NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF KOREA, BEFORE WE DIE
SALES: M-LINE DISTRIBUTION
DRAMA / 2024 / 99 MIN / CERT. 12

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
Love Untangled (2025)
Ten Months (2021)
Worst Friends (2009, short)
The End of the World (2007, short)

"Finding our way is difficult," says Su-min (Choi Sung-eun) in voice-over, as she emerges from Jeju Island's airport with Tae-hee (Hyun Woo-seok) and Sa-rang (Ha Seo-yoon). They certainly look lost, out of place, even shell-shocked - like ex-cons or extra-terrestrials - and soon, Sa-rang will leave her baggage on the airport bus. At 26 they are trying to have the excursion that they missed out on as high schoolers, but these surviving members of two recently disbanded K-pop groups will spend the next few days confronting their damage, grief and guilt, and trying to find their lost youth - with help, appropriately, from a local woman (Kang Chae-yoon) who works at the Lost and Found office.

This trip through trauma exposes the seamy side of Korea's manufactured entertainment industry, and its horrific, scarring exploitation of young people. Namkoong Sun's story of confused kidsults' rest, recreation and recovery is indeed difficult but ultimately rewarding.

Anton Bitel



THE LAND OF MORNING CALM

아침바다 갈매기는

SAT 8 NOV, 18:30
ICA

DIRECTOR: PARK RI-WOONG
WRITER: PARK RI-WOONG
PRODUCER: AHN BYUNG-RAE
CAST: YOON JOO-SANG, YANG HEE-KYUNG, KHAZSAK
PRODUCTION COMPANY: GOZIP STUDIO
SALES: HIVE FILMWORKS INC.
DRAMA, FAMILY / 2024 / 113 MIN / CERT. 12

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
The Girl on a Bulldozer (2022)
Let Us Go (2007, short)

In a neglected coastal village, bullying, cantankerous, divorced Vietnam vet Yeong-guk (Yoon Joo-sang) drowns his sorrows every night, and goes out early each morning in a fishing boat that, like him, has seen better days. With his straight talk and bellowing voice, he is perhaps the worst man to keep a secret, but he has several: one about the circumstances of his marital breakup; and another about the fate of his vanished boat assistant Yong-soo (Park Jong-hwan) whose mother Pan-rye (Yang Hee-kyung) and Vietnamese wife Yeong-ran (Khazsak) have been left in a legal limbo.

Park Ri-woong's drama is a bleak portrait of an ageing, dying community, of those left behind by Korea's economic boom, and of a whole way of life that is running on empty. All these characters lead harsh, precarious existences - and there seems to be only one way for any of them truly to escape their misery.

Anton Bitel



SILVER APRICOT

은빛살구

SUN 9 NOV, 13:30
ICA

DIRECTOR: JANG MAN-MIN
WRITER: JANG MAN-MIN
PRODUCER: CHOI YI-SEUL
CAST: NA AE-JIN, AHN SEOK-HWAN, KANG BONG-SEONG,
KIM JIN-YEONG, CHOI JUNG-HYUN
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KAFA (KOREAN ACADEMY OF FILM ARTS)
SALES: M-LINE DISTRIBUTION
DRAMA / 2024 / 121 MIN / CERT. 12

When she is not doing graphic design for her Seoul day job, 32-year-old Kim Jung-seo (Na Ae-jin) writes a vampire-based webtoon - and blood is on her mind. For she is returning to her seaside hometown of Donghae City to secure money owed by her estranged father the caddish restaurateur Yeong-joo (Ahn Seok-hwan), so that she can place a downpayment on a new Seoul condo and start putting down roots of her own with fiancé Park Gyeong-hyun (Kang Bong-seong).

Sullen, ever dissatisfied Jung-seo bonds with her sunny half-sister Kim Jung-hae (Kim Jin-yeong), who harbours similar if younger dreams of being an artist. Jung-seo also both embraces and despairs of the transactional, indeed vampiric nature of all her relationships, recognising something of her father's mischievous hedonism in herself.

Jang Man-min's feature debut is a messy saga of blood, roots, family dysfunction and the transient nature of material things in our lives.

Anton Bitel



THE INFORMANT

정보원

SUN 9 NOV, 15:00
BFI SOUTHBANK

DIRECTOR: KIM SEOK
WRITER: KIM SEOK
PRODUCER: JUNG DAE-HOON, BYUN YOUNG-CHUL
CAST: HEO SUNG-TAE, CHO BOK-RAE, SEO MIN-JU, CHA SOON-BAE
PRODUCTION COMPANY: POPCORN FILM
SALES: KT STUDIO GENIE
COMEDY, ACTION / 2024 / 104 MIN / CERT. TBC

In Gosan, 'dumbass' Detective Oh Nam-hyuk (Heo Sung-tae) faces repeated demotions for incompetence. Nam-hyuk admits that his ace in the hole, the informant Cho Tae-bong (Cho Bok-rae), is better at infiltration work than an actual undercover cop. Yet Tae-bong is also using their low-level sting operations as a clandestine way of enriching himself - something that Nam-hyuk too is contemplating. Yet these small fish are about to stumble across a much bigger criminal pond involving Nam-hyuk's corrupt chief (Jang Hyuk-jin), a murderous property kingpin (Cha Soon-bae), an abducted undercover detective and a missing ledger. Deceit, disguise and double-dealing reign amid the ensuing chaos, as seemingly everyone is hiding something.

Kim Seok's action comedy knowingly - and relentlessly - subverts the established tropes of 'cops and robbers' movies, and keeps wrong-footing our expectations, faking us out in much the same way that its characters constantly dissemble. It is a broad, barrelling entertainment, never predictable but always funny.

Anton Bitel



3670

3670

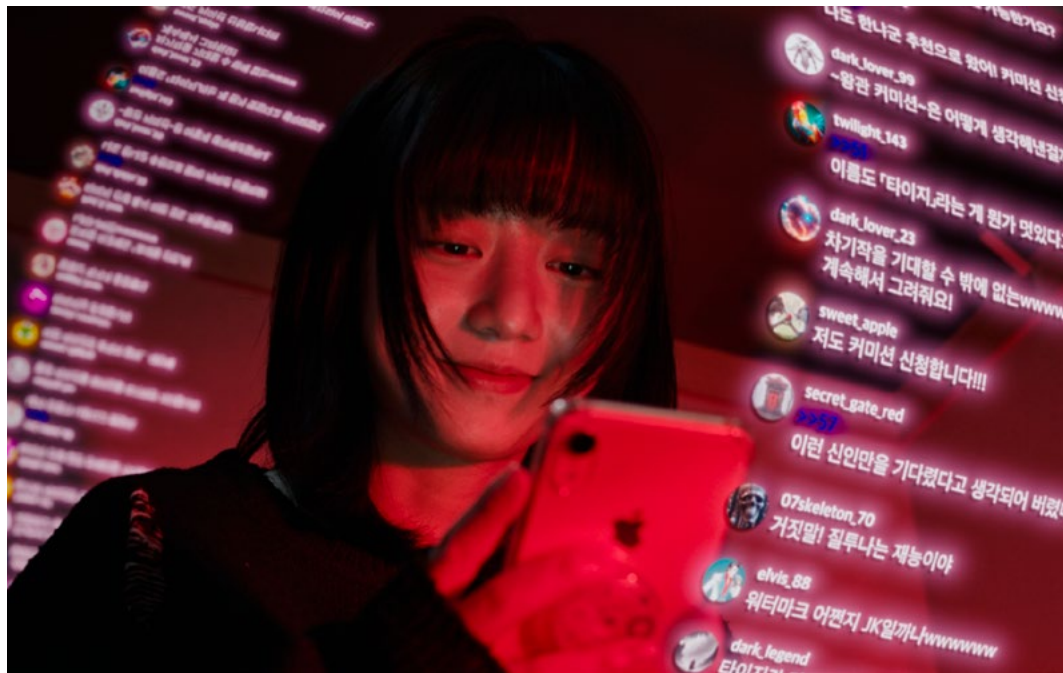
WED 12 NOV, 20:30
BFI SOUTHBANK

DIRECTOR: PARK JOON-HO
WRITER: PARK JOON-HO
PRODUCER: LEE HYE-IN
CAST: CHO YOU-HYUN, KIM HYEON-MOK
PRODUCTION COMPANY: OROT FILM
SALES: LUMINALIA
DRAMA, ROMANCE, QUEER / 2025 / 124 MIN / CERT. 15

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
EUNSEO (2019, short)
Almond: My Voice is Breaking (2017, short)

Park Joon-ho's feature debut finds the sweet-spot intersection between two marginalised communities. For its protagonist Cheol-jun (Cho You-hyun) is both a North Korean defector, and gay. As he navigates the codified conventions of his new world(s), he tries simultaneously to come out and to fit in. Take the challenge and the plunge, and with Cheol-jun reap the eventual rewards.

Anton Bitel



COMMISSION 커미션

THU 13 NOV, 18:10
BFI SOUTHBANK

DIRECTOR: SHIN JEA-MIN
WRITER: SHIN JEA-MIN
PRODUCER: AHN BYUNG-RAE
CAST: KIM HYEON-SOO, KIM YONG-JI, KIM JIN-WOO
PRODUCTION COMPANY: PAN ENTERTAINMENT, DG ENTERTAINMENT
SALES: KT STUDIO GENIE
MYSTERY, THRILLER / 2024 / 113 MIN / CERT. 15

Assistant art teacher Kang Dan-kyung (Kim Hyeon-soo) longs for a career and fame as a webtoon artist, but is in the shadow of her 'genius' older sister Ju-kyung (Kim Yong-ji). When Dan-kyung starts working as colourist for legendary webtoon artist Mok Jin-pil (Nam Myeong-ryeol), she is also drawn into doing hardcore illustrations for private clients on the dark web. When the mysterious Hannya-kun (Kim Jin-woo) commissions gory murder scenes from her, he helps Dan-kyung find her voice, her calling and the recognition that she craves, even as he is inspired in turn to recreate her art in the real world.

Structured as a serial killer thriller, Shin Jea-min's sophisticated psychodrama stages the creative process itself in all its pain and plagiarism, its nerdiness and narcissism, its cutthroat competitiveness and dark fantasy. Here sibling rivalry outlines the tension, jealousy and ambition that drives art - even art of an underground, confessional kind.

Anton Bitel



SOMEBODY 침범

SAT 15 NOV, 20:45
ICA

DIRECTOR: KIM YEO-JUNG, LEE JUNG-CHAN
WRITER: KIM YEO-JUNG, LEE JUNG-CHAN
PRODUCER: YOON HYE-JIN
CAST: KWAK SUN-YOUNG, KWON YU-RI, LEE SUL, GI SO-YOU
PRODUCTION COMPANY: STUDIO SANTA CLAUS ENTERTAINMENT
SALES: CONTENTS PANDA
MYSTERY, THRILLER / 2025 / 112 MIN / CERT. 15

This starts off like *We Need To Talk About Kevin* (2011), as divorced mother Young-eun (Kwak Sun-young) struggles with her kindergarten-age daughter So-hyun (Gi So-you), who is a budding sadistic psychopath desperate for a maternal love that Young-eun cannot bring herself to give. Two decades later, as bereft mother Hyeon-gyeong (Shin Dong-mi), who has already adopted adult orphan Kim Min (Kwon Yu-ri), takes in another orphan Hae-young (Lee Sul) in need of love, the tensions, jealousies and secrets in this domestic set-up will have the viewer suspecting that *somebody* here is the dangerous So-hyun, but not sure who exactly.

The thematic preoccupation of Kim Yeo-jung and Lee Jung-chan's thriller is the mother-daughter bond, whether over, ersatz or impending. For here maternity itself comes battered and scarred, in an intense portrayal of desperate neediness and affectless determination, with an ending that is breathtakingly uncompromising in its refusal to pander to sentiment.

Anton Bitel



WOMEN'S VOICES

PROGRAMMER'S NOTE

This year, the London Korean Film Festival will introduce the first full-length feature films of three up-and-coming female directors. What kind of resonance will be carried in the voices of these films, having endured so much time waiting to be seen? How will the lives of women in Korean society look through the eyes of these filmmakers? Hwang Seul-gi's *Red Nails* (2025), Bang Mi-ri's *SAVE* (2025), and Park Hyo-sun's *The Meryl Streep Project* (2024) are each, in their own ways, a small preview of the answers to those questions. Although these three works differ in terms of their material, subject, and form, they share a commonality as well: Each of the films examines the meaning of survival for contemporary young women finding their own ways through the world. Amidst the various difficulties faced by Korean women today—economic hardships, the need for care, contradictory relationships, and frustrated aspirations—through film, female creatives strive to present the audience with a path to small rays of light in the darkness.

The conditions of the protagonist of *Red Nails* are, simply put, suffocating and frustrating. Although she's being pressured on all sides to pay back the money she's borrowed from various sources, Hong nonetheless brings her mother Seo-hee from her care facility to live with Hong instead. The contents of Seo-hee's bank account are enough to buy Hong a little time to breathe, but nothing truly dramatic happens with regards to the money. Instead,

what stands out is the portrayal of the subtle emotions and cracks in the relationship caused by that money. It's easy to feel insulted by questions of finances, and money can cause shame and anger and make people question their position in the world. These emotions naturally seep into the daily lives of Hong, who has no fixed source of income, and Seo-hee, who relies on the care of others as she grows older. *Red Nails* examines both the survival conditions of modern society as well as the sadness contained in and caused by the simple phrase, "Is it because you need money?" Rather than portraying dramatic, exaggerated events, the film is a close examination of the landscape of women's lives today.

The situation faced by Se-jeong, the protagonist of *SAVE*, is similarly quite difficult. She is an orphaned teenager on the brink of adulthood, who lost her mother to a fire in a single mother's care home where she spent her childhood. Her circumstances are challenging enough that they would make a good subject for a news station's docu-drama, but the film's attitude toward Se-jeong is very different. Now that she's facing the reality that a 5 million Won (about £2,600) settlement fee isn't even enough for a deposit on a house, Se-jeong is well aware that fairy tales aren't real. On top of that, she has recently been asked for a loan by Eun-sook, who claims to be the woman who saved Se-jeong from the fire that killed her mother, and who says she needs

the money to treat the lung cancer she says she has. To Se-jeong, the world seems to be a cold and heartless place, yet she and Eun-sook are able to form an unconventional relationship. In the film, which takes the form of a detective film as the two work to uncover a fraud settlement scheme, Se-jeong and Eun-sook take care of each other, protect each other, and face their long-held feelings in their own ways. *SAVE* thus turns the question of immediate survival into one of self-reliance.

Finally completed after a long production period, *The Meryl Streep Project* touches on urgent issues faced by Korean society, including the Me Too movement, the Gangnam Station murder case, and the abortion law abolition movement. However, its examination of these major challenges comes from an unexpected starting point: The director's feelings toward American actress Meryl Streep, who is also an activist representing a huge variety of women. In watching the film, one gets a sense not only of who the director is as a female filmmaker in the Korean film industry, but also of how much she had to encounter to get there, as well as her answer to the question of the true nature of someone looked up to and revered by so many fans. It asks, "In this absurd world, how are you, and how are we meant to survive?" There will always be many possibilities, not all of them dark, in a world where conversation is open and honest. *The Meryl Streep Project* is both a travel story and the independence story of a young woman expanding her viewpoint and stepping forward into the world.

Son Si-nae



THE MERYL STREEP PROJECT

메릴 스트립 프로젝트

THU 6 NOV, 18:30
ICA

DIRECTOR: PARK HYU-SUN
WRITER: PARK HYU-SUN
PRODUCER: PARK HYU-SUN, JANG EUN-JIN, JUNG KYUNG-HEE
CAST: PARK HYU-SUN
PRODUCTION COMPANY: PRODUCTION TAT
DOCUMENTARY / 2024 / 103 MIN / CERT. TBC

Creator Park Hyo-sun is both a long-time fan of American actress Meryl Streep as well as a young female film director in the Korean movie industry. As the title might suggest, this documentary—which was eight years in the making—chronicles a fan's longing to meet the actress she looks up to but is also a collection of stories about the anxieties and uncertainties faced by women in Korean society. "Why do I like you so much, and why is it that I get such comfort from your films?" These questions, which are asked sometimes in jest and sometimes more seriously, necessarily encourage viewers to think about their own place and the world through which they are walking in life. Not as a fangirl but as a feminist, the director invites conversation with other feminists who are endlessly giving inspiration and asking thought-provoking questions. The film cultivates portraits of women, including the director, who are completing the same difficult journey together.

Son Si-nae



SAVE 생명의 은인

SUN 9 NOV, 19:00
ICA

DIRECTOR: BANG MI-RI
WRITER: BANG MI-RI
PRODUCER: OH YOUNG-JOO
CAST: KIM PU-REUM, SONG SEON-MI, HEO JUNG-DO, LEE YE-JIN
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KOREA NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS
SALES: SMC
DRAMA / 2025 / 113 MIN / CERT. 12

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
For; Rest (2022, short)

After being raised in an orphanage, Se-jeong is facing both her high school graduation as well as her release from the facility. As she works in a salon and tries to prepare for her future, suddenly a woman, Eun-sook, comes looking for her. Eun-sook, the woman who might have saved Se-jeong's life from a fire at the single mothers' care facility where she used to live, so long ago that she no longer remembers it. Eun-sook also claims to have been diagnosed with a terminal illness and asks Se-jeong for a loan of 5 million Won, which is the exact amount of Se-jeong's support grant from her orphanage. Although she has suspicions that Eun-sook may be trying to scam her, Se-jeong is moved to help. For an impoverished and lonely young woman who has only just started out on her own in an unkind world, Eun-sook, armed with her eccentricity and unusual lifestyle, becomes an unexpectedly excellent guardian. *SAVE* is a film that looks closely at women who find their own ways through the world rather than seeking the world's compassion and understanding.

Son Si-nae



RED NAILS 홍이

TUE 11 NOV, 18:20
BFI SOUTHBANK

DIRECTOR: HWANG SEUL-GI
WRITER: HWANG SEUL-GI
PRODUCER: KIM SE-HUN, BAEK KYUNG-WON
CAST: JANG SUN, BYUN CHUNG-HEE, LEE YU-KYUNG, GIYOON
PRODUCTION COMPANY: SEMOSI
SALES: EMU FILMS
DRAMA / 2025 / 86 MIN / CERT. 12

The film begins in the middle of a difficult situation faced by the protagonist, Hong. Although she does her best to get by, the world isn't kind to her. She works at a private academy and also has a part-time job at a construction site, but Hong still finds it difficult to even take proper care of herself, let alone to see a path toward repaying all the money she's borrowed from different sources. In the midst of these struggles, Hong's mother, Seo-hee, moves into Hong's house from the care facility where she had been living. However, the two women have little affection for each other, and find it difficult to form a relationship where they can give each other hope and comfort. To both mother and daughter, the notion of 'family' is hardly something they can rely on for support-and yet, the money in Seo-hee's bank account seems to have a way of fixing Hong's problems, even if only for a time. *Red Nails* is a film that explores the issues between a young generation and an aging population, but rather than focus on dramatic events, it puts its attention on the more delicate emotions of shame, embarrassment, remorse, and anxiety, providing a careful look at the common questions of today.

Son Si-nae



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DRAMAS OF RESISTANCE

On August 15, 1945, the light of liberation arrived in an instant—but the time it took for that moment of liberation to be possible was by no means short. It was also the cumulation of countless bodies, languages, silences, and actions. Liberation is not a single event, but rather a continuum of resistance that has been rewritten and expanded across generations. Even to this day, that continuum continues in the form of memories, which have been interpreted by Korean films again and again across the eras.

The special strand 'Dramas of Resistance: The 80th Anniversary of Liberation' explores this movement for remembrance as translated into the language of film. Film is a medium of emotion that defies recording, an art that causes the viewer to re-experience the traces of action. In this programme, liberation is presented not as a chronology or a single declarative event, but as a collective experience leading to emotion and to action.

The five films in this programme pass through different eras and different grammars of genre, repeatedly composing themes and variations on the image of 'resistance.' In the process, viewers are shown that 'freedom' is not just a slogan, but also an emotional energy that is newly experienced and proclaimed by each generation. Viewers are able to explore the way that Korean films have recalled the memory of liberation and expanded upon it through contemporary senses.

Lee Man-hee's *Break Up the Chain* (1971) reconstructs the landscape of colonial Manchuria into a maze of morality. The pursuits and betrayals of the three main characters, all centred on a single golden Buddha statue, transform into a metaphor for liberation, revealing human choices, ethics,

and the possibility of self-actualisation, all contained within the outer form of an adventure story. The work sits at the intersection of genre and history, reality and satire, using the grammar of a 'Manchurian Western' to show an aspect of narrative imagination in filmmaking that has its foundations in a post-liberation Korea.

Kim Jee-woon's *The Good, the Bad, the Weird* (2008) takes a more modern look at the genealogy of liberation, taking over the same space but with a completely different energy. Often referred to as a modern Korean Western, the film reconstructs Sergio Leone's spectacular style using Korean humour and rhythm, converting chaos into a sense of freedom. Its invitation to the non-competitive section of the 2008 Cannes Film Festival also proves the value of this dynamic created by the combination of history and genre.

Kim Hyun-seok's *YMCA Baseball Team* (2002) turns back the clock to illuminate the beginnings of Korean modernity in Gyeongseong, the capital city of Korea under Japanese colonial rule. As the son of a scholar accepts the new, foreign idea of baseball and begins to learn the rhythm and language of a new world, the origin of liberation is presented not as a revolution, but as a sense of self-determination. *YMCA Baseball Team* is a warm, thoughtful testament to the idea that freedom is an attitude of life that surpasses any institution or system.

Lee Joon-ik's *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet* (2016) condenses the narrative of resistance into an extremely sparse aesthetic. On a black-and-white screen, Yoon Dong-ju and Song Mong-gyu are young men walking the boundary between language, silence, poetry,

and belief. In this film, 'action' takes the form not of violence but of writing, and the act of writing poetry in a time when words are forbidden is shown as an exceptionally serene and decisive form of resistance.

Lastly, Youn JK's *Hero* (2022) reconstructs the myth of independence activist Ahn Jung-geun through a screen adaptation based on a domestic musical. Through spectacular visuals, the film weaves the final year of Ahn's life into a tapestry that incorporates the language of music, gestures, and beliefs, expanding the narrative of sacrifice into a collective chorus.

These five films are not straight narratives that each represent an era but rather are polyphonic landscapes of liberation created by the tension and conflict between different aesthetics and emotions. Through this programme, viewers experience resistance as both an action and an emotion, and liberation as both a memory and a sense of the present. 'Dramas of Resistance: The 80th Anniversary of Liberation' asks: Can liberation ever be complete, or is it ever ongoing? So long as that question remains, the narrative of liberation will continue in film.

Park Se-ho



HERO

영웅

THU 6 NOV, 18:15
CINÉ LUMIÈRE

DIRECTOR: YOUN JK
WRITER: HAN A-RUM, YOUN JK
PRODUCER: JEON MIN
CAST: CHUNG SUNG-HWA, KIM GO-EUN, NA MOON-HEE,
CHO CHAE-YUN, BAE JUNG-NAM, LEE HYUN-WOO, PARK JIN-JOO
PRODUCTION COMPANY: JK FILM
SALES: CJ ENM
DRAMA, ACTION / 2022 / 120 MIN / CERT. 12

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
Ode to My Father (2014)
Haeundae (2009)
Miracle on 1st Street (2007)
Crazy Assassins (2003)
Sex is Zero (2002)
My Boss, My Hero (2001)

In 1909, revolutionary Ahn Jung-geun (Chung Sung-hwa) formed the 'Danji Alliance' with his comrades and headed for Harbin. One of their members, information broker Seol-hee (Kim Go-eun), infiltrates deep into the enemy camp and identifies the movements of Itō Hirobumi, Prime Minister of Japan and the mastermind behind Japanese annexation of Korea. Finally, gunshots ring at Harbin Station on 26 October 1909. After his arrest, Ahn Jung-geun is indicted and tried as a criminal under Japanese law rather than a prisoner of war, and his visits with his mother Cho Maria (Na Moon-hee) and the convictions he and his comrades hold are demonstrated through various musical numbers and scenes.

Hero is the screen adaptation of the stage musical of the same name. Rather than exaggerating the mythology of a heroic figure, the film uses music, lyrics, and images to weave a picture of the determination and solidarity of the last year of Ahn Jung-geun's life. It was Korea's first original musical film, and it uses the emotional influence of the musical genre to rearrange the narrative of liberation, opening a different path towards understanding historical memory.

Park Se-ho



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE WEIRD

좋은 놈, 나쁜 놈, 이상한 놈

FRI 7 NOV, 20:45
ICA

DIRECTOR: KIM JEE-WOON
WRITER: KIM JEE-WOON, KIM MIN-SUK
PRODUCER: CHOI JAE-WON, KIM JEE-WOON
CAST: SONG KANG-HO, LEE BYUNG-HUN, JUNG WOO-SUNG
PRODUCTION COMPANY: BARUNSON, GRIMM PICTURES
DISTRIBUTOR: ARROW FILMS
WESTERN, ACTION / 2008 / 130 MIN / CERT. 15

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
COBWEB (2022)
The Age of Shadows (2016)
A Bittersweet Life (2005)
A Tale of Two Sisters (2003)
The Foul King (2000)
The Quiet Family (1998)

The Manchurian fields of the 1930s. Bounty hunter Park Do-won (Jung Woo-sung), brutal villain Park Chang-yi (Lee Byung-hun), and quirky but persistent thief Yoon Tae-goo (Song Kang-ho) are in hot pursuit of an ancient treasure whose secrets lie in a hidden map. The finale is a huge shootout in the desert between the Japanese military, Manchurian bandits, and the three protagonists of the film, a dramatic conflict that blends the chaotic landscape of colonialism and resistance with the pleasure of entertainment.

This genre experiment, which is often referred to as a 'Manchurian Western,' is a modern combination of the 'Spaghetti Western' with the existing genre of Korean film that explores themes of liberation in Manchuria. In the year of its release, *The Good, the Bad, the Weird* was invited to the non-competing section of the Cannes Film Festival, and it was a box-office success that attracted 6.7 million domestic viewers. It is a film that clearly illustrates what becomes possible when large-scale dramatic spectacle merges with the Korean historical stage, and even when revisited 80 years after Korean liberation, its light does not fade a bit.

Park Se-ho



YMCA BASEBALL TEAM

YMCA 야구단

FRI 14 NOV, 20:45
ICA

DIRECTOR: KIM HYUN-SEOK
WRITER: KIM HYUN-SEOK
PRODUCER: LEE WOO-JUNG, JAMIE SHIM
CAST: SONG KANG-HO, KIM HYE-SOO, KIM JOO-HYUK,
HWANG JUNG-MIN, CHO SEUNG-WOO
PRODUCTION COMPANY: CJ ENTERTAINMENT, MYUNG FILMS
SALES: MYUNG FILMS
DRAMA, COMEDY / 2002 / 104 MIN / CERT. U

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
I Can Speak (2017)
C'est Si Bon (2014)
Cyrano Agency (2010)
When Romance Meets Destiny (2005)
Joint Security Area (2000, screenwriter)

Set in the final years of the Empire of Korea, Lee Ho-chang (Song Kang-ho), the son of a scholar, first picks up the modern game of baseball on a YMCA field. He then goes on to form Joseon's first-ever baseball team with the help of Western-educated female coach Min Jung-rim (Kim Hye-soo), Japanese Confucian scholar Oh Dae-hyun (Kim Joo-hyuk), and pro-Japanese bureaucrat's son Ryu Kwang-tae (Hwang Jung-min). The team's ultimate game against a Japanese military team goes beyond a simple sporting match, instead transforming into a stage that symbolises the tension between a nation's crumbling sovereignty and the late arrival of modernity.

This work is the feature film debut of director Kim Hyun-seok and is a comedic reinterpretation of the true story of the Hwangseong YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) baseball team. As a sports movie with the texture of a romantic comedy, the film cheerfully draws out the aspirations, despondencies, and solidarity of young people trying to absorb the unfamiliar rhythm of 'modernity' in their own ways. When rewatched on the 80th anniversary of Korean independence, *YMCA Baseball Team* is a film that clearly shows how the seeds of autonomy and freedom can begin to sprout even before true 'liberation' arrives.



DONGJU: THE PORTRAIT OF A POET

동주

SAT 15 NOV, 11:45
BFI SOUTHBANK

DIRECTOR: LEE JOON-IK
WRITER: SHIN YEON-SHICK
PRODUCER: KIM JI-HYOUNG
CAST: KANG HA-NEUL, PARK JEONG-MIN
PRODUCTION COMPANY: LUZ Y SONIDOS
SALES: PLUS M ENTERTAINMENT
DRAMA / 2016 / 110 MIN / CERT. 12

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
The Book of Fish (2019)
Anarchist from the Colony (2017)
The Throne (2014)
Radio Star (2006)
King and the Clown (2005)

WITH DESCRIPTIVE SUBTITLES

This understated black-and-white film uses creative cross-editing to contrast the youths of poet Yoon Dong-ju (Kang Ha-neul) and his cousin and comrade Song Mong-gyu (Park Jeong-min). The two young men, whose relationship crossed literature and belief, friendship and frustration, were arrested and imprisoned in a Fukuoka prison during the Japanese occupation. Yoon Dong-ju died on 16 February 1945, and Song Mong-gyu died only 20 days later on 7 March 1945. Rather than a huge historical drama, the film examines the tragedy of the times through the quiet lens of everyday silence and language.

Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet chooses the blank margin rather than exaggeration. It captures the ethics and fears of youth through poetry, dialogue, and small gestures, and asks a question that is still valid today: Through what is liberation possible? It relies on a background of historical events but also uses the poetic density of mise-en-scène to draw out the inner lives of the characters and remains a paragon of how Korean films deal with the idea of 'memory.'

Park Se-ho



BREAK UP THE CHAIN

쇠사슬을 끊어라

SUN 16 NOV, 15:15
BFI SOUTHBANK

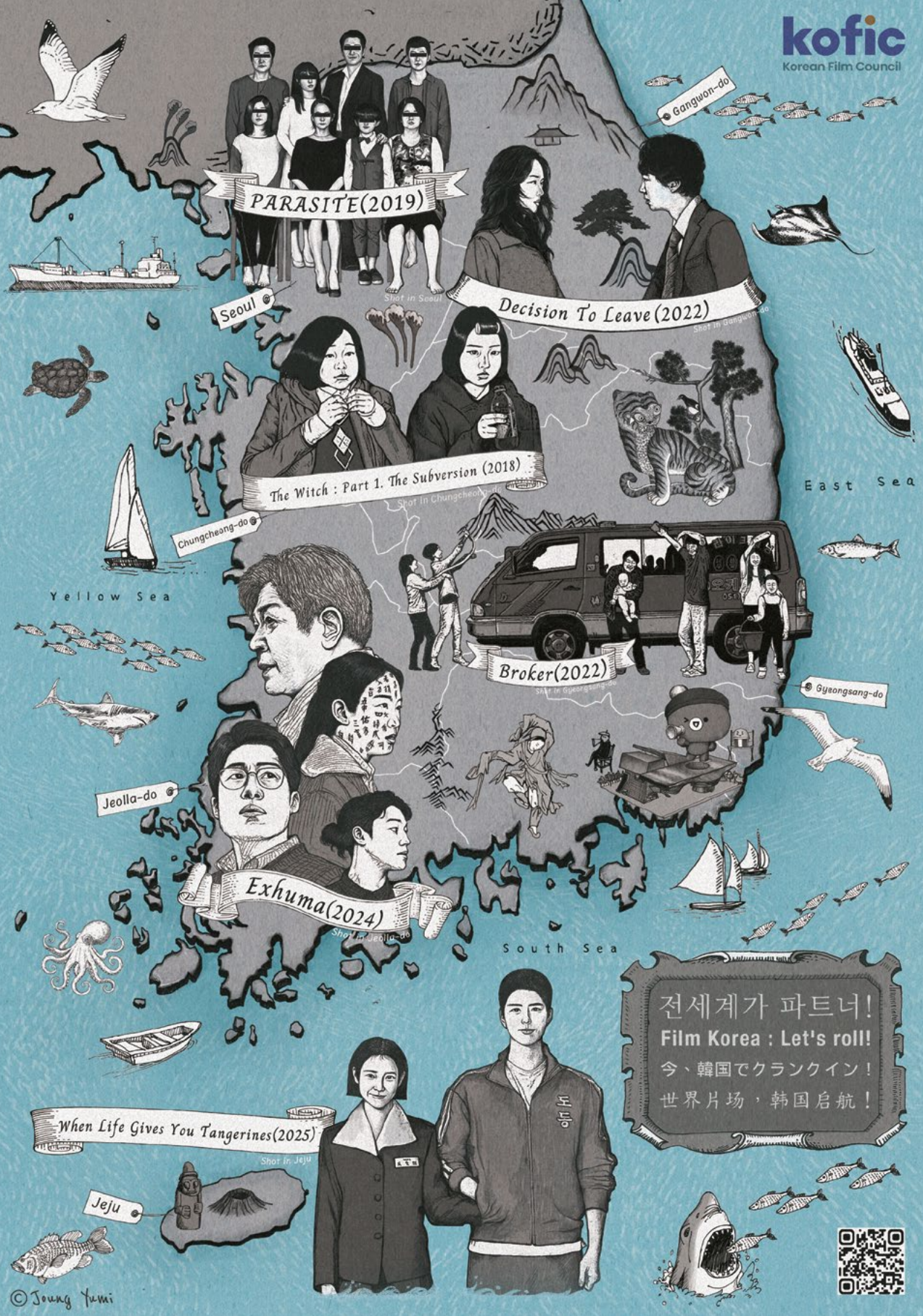
DIRECTOR: LEE MAN-HEE
WRITER: KIM WON-TAE
CAST: JANG DONG-HWI, NAMKOONG WON, HUH JANG-GANG
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KOREAN FILM COMPANY
DRAMA / 1971 / 95 MIN / CERT. 18

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:
The Road to Sampo (1975)
Assassin (1969)
A Day Off (1968)
Full Autumn (1966)
The Marines Who Never Returned (1963)

Three very different men are chasing the same golden Tibetan Buddha statue, each driven by their own selfish motives. Cheol-soo (Namkoong Won) is a professional thief commissioned by the resistance movement; Tae-ho (Jang Dong-hwi) is a gangster motivated solely by profit; and Dal-geon (Huh Jang-gang) is a spy connected to the Japanese military. The three men pursue, betray, and form temporary alliances with one another, eventually uncovering a revelation: the Buddha statue not only holds monetary value but also bears a list of operatives working for the resistance. Realising this, they join forces to return the statue to the movement before setting off again on their separate paths.

This late-career film by Lee Man-hee is a seminal work in Korea's 'Manchurian Western' genre. It transplants the cinematic grammar of Sergio Leone's 'Spaghetti Western' into the colonial landscape of Manchuria, infusing irony and satire into the rhythm of dramatic shootouts and train, wagon, and motorcycle chases. Now, on the 80th anniversary of Korean independence, the film reminds us how the pleasures of genre cinema can inspire a collective imagination of liberation.

Park Se-ho



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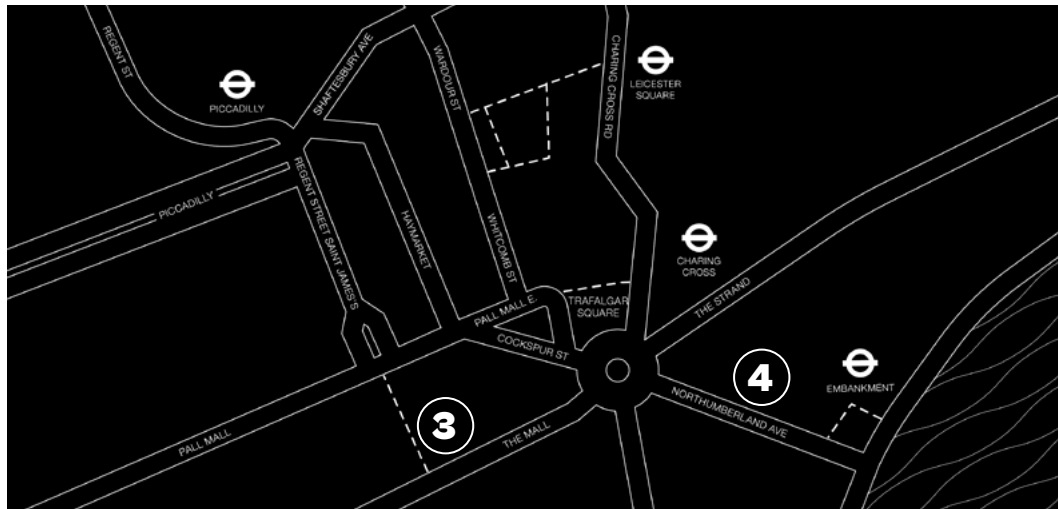
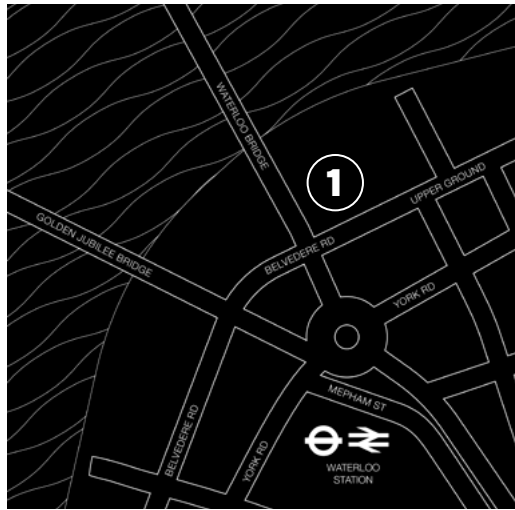
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