

MASTERS OF CURRENT (AND FUTURE) KOREAN CINEMA: Films from Rookie Na Hong-Jin to The Master Im Kwon-Taek

This Friday Film Series presents nine Korean films directed by current Korean film masters. From Na Hong-Jin, whose debut film smashed Korean box office records in 2008, to Im Kwon-Taek, who has made his hundredth film, and is the master and the living history of contemporary Korean Cinema, this series will show a wide spectrum of current Korean films by various film makers. This program includes recent films by internationally well-known directors, such as Hong Sang-Soo, Kim Ki-Duk, and Park Chan-Wook. It also presents films by significant but less internationally well-known directors, such as Lee Yoon-Ki, Shin Dong-Il, and Kim Dong-Won. Witness the ongoing dynamics and cinematic fruits achieved by these current and future masters of Korean Cinema. This series is presented by Hyun Hee Park, a Ph.D student in the Dept. of East Asian Languages and Civilizations.

January 9: The Chaser (추격자), Na Hong-Jin (나홍진), 2008, 123min.

After a series of call-girls go missing, former cop-turned-pimp Jung-ho discovers and pursues a serial killer. As events unfold, Jung-ho becomes increasingly aware that the killer's latest victim is still alive somewhere, bleeding and bound: and that he is the only person who can rescue her. A feature film debut for director Na Hong-Jin, The Chaser is one of the grittiest, snazziest and gutsiest Korean thrillers of 2008. Supported by an intricate, sharply intelligent screenplay that always remains a half-step ahead of the viewer expectations, Na shows a complete command over the taut but intricately woven narrative, generating a huge amount of good old-fashioned suspense without resorting to any gimmicks.

January 16: Repatriation (송환), Kim Dong-Won (김동원), 2004, 148min.

"The eldest brother of Korean independent films" or "A guardian of the lowly," director Kim Dong-Won's name itself should be recognized as the history of Korean documentary films. Repatriation records twelve years of 'prisoners of conscience (Yangshimsu)' who finally have been repatriated to North Korea after being imprisoned in South Korean jail for 30 years. The film has a serious theme, but manages to be funny and sometimes disturbing, finally touching the audiences' mind. Winner of the Freedom of Expression Award in the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

January 23: Desert Dream (경계), Zhang Lu (장률), 2007, 125min.

"Desert Dream" is set in a small, drought-threatened village on the Chinese-Mongolian border and revolves around a farmer obsessed with tree-planting to stave off desertification. After his neglected wife and child leave him, a North Korean woman refugee and her child, wandering across the desert, stay and settle with him. A wandering soldier also appears on the scene. Though they do not speak the same language, they come to support and rely on each other as the three of them eke out a living in the lonely hinterlands. Korean-Chinese director ZHANG Lu's third feature picked up the top prize at the 9th Osian's Cinefan Festival of Asian & Arab Cinema held annually in New Delhi, India. The Korea-France co-production took home Best Picture in the Asian and Arab section at a July 29th awards ceremony.

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Friday Noon Film Series: Winter Quarter 2009

Free Screenings start at 12:40pm in Judd 302, 5835 S. Kimbark

University of Chicago Center for East Asian Studies

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Patrons who require assistance to fully participate email sarehart@uchicago.edu

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January 30: Breath (숨), Kim Ki-Duk (김기덕), 2007, 84min.

After discovering her husband's infidelity, Yeon heads to a prison to visit an unknown condemned criminal Jin, whose suicide attempts had been featured on TV news. Although the two don't know each other, Yeon continues to visit Jin as the seasons change. They develop a relationship, but Yeon's husband witnesses their intimacy and tries to separate them. Meanwhile, time is running out for Jin.

February 6: My Dear Enemy (멋진 하루), Lee Yoon-Ki (이윤기), 2008, 123min.

Award-winning director Lee Yoon Ki adapts a Azuko Taira novel to deliver a lighthearted romp about a desperate unemployed woman whose quest to reclaim money from her ex-lover turns into a whirlwind day of memory trips and significant trivialities. Unemployed, single, and thoroughly miserable, Hee Soo sets out to recover the money her ex-boyfriend Byoung Woon still owes her. Byoung Woon, it turns out, is equally broke, but a good deal more optimistic about his romantic and financial prospects. Hee Soo ends up spending the entire day bickering up a storm, and following him from one place to another as he tries to borrow money from other women.

February 20: I'm a Cyborg, But That's Okay (사이보그지만 괜찮아), Park Chan-Wook (박찬욱), 2006, 105min.

Park Chan-Wook is one of the most acclaimed and popular filmmakers in Korea. His films are noted for their immaculate framing and brutal subject matter. In "I'm a Cyborg, But That's Okay" Young-goon, mentally deranged and frequently electro-charging herself with a transistor radio, has been admitted into a mental institution. Firmly believing herself to be a cyborg, she refuses to eat any food. Il-soon, another patient, catches the eye of Young-goon and soon becomes a close friend. Il-soon takes on the task of curing Young-goon's mental problem and having her eat real food. I'm a Cyborg, But That's Okay won the Alfred Bauer Award at the 57th Berlin International Film Festival and was selected as the opening film for the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

February 27: Beyond the Years (천년학), Im Kwon-Taek (임권택), 2007, 106min.

In a career spanning almost half a century, legendary director Im Kwon Taek has found worldwide acclaim and iconic status in his native South Korea for his great contributions to Korean cinema. In 2007, the master filmmaker presented his 100th film, Beyond The Years. This landmark film is based on a Lee Cheon Joon novella about a blind pansori singer and her lovelorn brother. Adopted by a nomadic pansori singer, Dong Ho and Song Hwa grow up as brother and sister, bounded by a deep unspoken affection. Through the lyrical beauty of pansori, complex emotions rise beguilingly to the surface, giving voice to the feelings and misgivings left unexpressed. An achingly beautiful portrait of love and yearning, the film delicately captures the changing seasons of life against an unchanging devotion to one's heart.

March 6: My Friend & His Wife (나의 친구, 그의 아내), Shin Dong-il (신동일), 2008, 116min.

Shin Dong-il's sophomore effort examines the bonds of friendship and marriage in a resolutely down-to-earth fashion. After a couple experiences a terrible loss, their relationship undergoes profound changes. Though it rarely resembles a horror movie, this unpredictable psychological thriller illustrates the prickly truth that some friends are far more dangerous than enemies.

March 13: Night and Day (밤과 낮), Hong Sang-Soo (홍상수), 2008, 144min.

Sung-nam is a 40ish, married painter who takes it on the lam to Paris after getting caught smoking pot with some American tourists in Seoul. Hong Sang-soo creates a beautifully observed, characteristically wry chronicle of Sung-nam's attempt to savor his wandering year even if it's come 20 years too late. Not speaking a word of French, Sung-nam joins a floating group of Korean ex-pats and exchange students. When he meets art student Hyun-ju and her roommate Yu-jeong, it could be that love is in the air—or is it just Paris?