

# HA HA HA

TRANSLATING KOREAN HUMOUR

## INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to *Korean Film Nights* 2016, a programme of bi-weekly free film screenings at the Korean Cultural Centre UK. Ever since its humble beginnings in 2008, our *Korean Film Nights* has showcased a wide spectrum of films from Korea and provided a platform for both established and emerging filmmakers to reach new audiences in the UK. Working alongside the annual London Korean Film Festival which marked its 10th anniversary last year, this programme extends the opportunities for audiences to enjoy Korean cinema all year-round. For 2016 we have curated a programme entitled *Ha Ha Ha: Translating Korean Humour*. As Korean film fans will have already sensed, the title references Hong Sang-soo's charming 2010 film *Hahaha* which will be presented later this year.

Various approaches to understanding humour in general have been put forth by philosophers and social scientists over the years. The superiority theory, one of the most established theories, was discussed in ancient Greece by Plato and Aristotle; its idea is that we laugh about the misfortunes of others because it affirms our sense of superiority. Another classical theory of humour is the incongruity theory which evolves from realising the discrepancy between what is expected and what is actually the case. So, is 'Korean humour' and, by extension, what Koreans find humorous shaped by the ubiquitous elements and mechanisms of humour?

*Ha Ha Ha: Translating Korean Humour* is based on the idea that, though some humour works universally, humour is more often than not local, playing frequently with culturally specific and linguistic nuances - whether referencing a specific misfortune or playing on words or jokes. Though open for a debate, British humour for example is widely known for its distinctiveness with sarcasm and self-ridicule, often with a deadpan delivery. Our programme therefore features a diverse array of Korean films which aim to foster an

# JANUARY

28 January, 7pm // KCCUK



## In Another Country

South Korea, 2011

Director: Hong Sang-soo

Cast: Isabelle Huppert, Yu Jun-sang, Jung Yu-mi, Yoon Yeo-jeong, Moon Sung-keun  
89 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

A young film student and her mother run away from the seaside town of *Mohang* to escape their mounting debt and the young woman begins writing a script for a short film in order to calm her nerves.

Three women named Anne appear, and each one consecutively visits *Mohang*, the first Anne is a successful film director, the second Anne is a married woman secretly having an affair with a Korean man and the third Anne is a divorcee whose husband left her for a Korean woman. A young woman tends to the small hotel on the *Mohang* foreshore owned by her parents and a certain lifeguard can always be seen wandering up and down the beach that lies nearby. Each Anne stays at this small hotel, receives some assistance from the owner's daughter, and ventures onto the beach where they meet the lifeguard.

engaging dialogue about the 'Korean sense of humour', and what makes that distinct.

We start with Hong Sang-soo's *In Another Country* which portrays a number of awkward encounters between a french woman (Isabelle Huppert) and several different Korean men in a small beach village called *Mohang*. Proceeding from this, February presents both the popular and critically acclaimed *A Hard Day* and *The Pirates*, the latter of which was the second highest grossing Korean film of 2014. In March, we present E J-Yong's mockumentary-style film starring six high-profile actresses and Lee Doo-yong's 1986 film *Mulberry* based on the story by Na Do-hyang; both films feature the ever-alluring actress Lee Mi-sook. In April *Sunny* takes us to the dynamic world of teenage girls in 80s Korea followed by Bong Joon-ho's first feature *Barking Dogs Never Bite* revolving around a typical 90s apartment complex where director Bong himself actually once lived. We will then present the 2015 film *Granny's Got Talent* featuring a granny (Kim Soo-mi) who has an exceptional talent for cursing; this is followed by the warm drama *C'est Si Bon* based on a legendary, real-life 70's acoustic music lounge in Seoul.

Continuing from last year, *Korean Film Nights Amplified* will enrich our screenings by offering a series of mini-lectures to guide audiences through the world of Korean cinema as well as Korean culture at large. *Korean Cinema Echoes* will also continue by taking films beyond the Korean Cultural Centre UK with tours to the Royal College of Art (Battersea) and Sheffield Hallam University.

Although this year's programme is entitled *Ha Ha Ha*, it doesn't simply present straight comedies, nor do we promise 90 minutes of belly laughs at each screening. What we do promise however is a dynamic mix of films that will explore what it is that makes us laugh. We encourage you all to come along to as many of the screenings as you can, laugh with us, and suggest new translations for Korean humour!

**Korean Cinema Echoes** 26 January, 6.30pm // Royal College of Art (Battersea)

11 February, 7pm // KCCUK



## A Hard Day

South Korea, 2013

Director: Kim Seung-hun

Cast: Lee Sun-kyun, Jo Jin-woong, Shin Jeong-geun, Jung Man-sik, Shin Dong-mi

111 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

On the way back from his mother's funeral, special crimes detective Gun-su has a car accident, killing a man instantly. In order to cover up his crime, he hides the body inside his mother's coffin, with her inside. A few days later, Gun-su's crime pops up on the police database and his partner is heading up the case. Gun-su feels increasingly uneasy as his partner slowly uncovers more and more details of the incident. To make things worse, a potential witness to the accident approaches Gun-su...

25 February, 7pm // KCCUK



## The Pirates

South Korea, 2014

Director: Lee Seok Hoon

Cast: Kim Nam-gil, Son Ye-jin, Yoo Hae-jin, Kim Won-hae, Park Chul-min

130 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

Just 15 days after the founding of the Kingdom of Joseon, an ambassadorial ship is carrying the Great Seal of Joseon given by the emperor of Ming Dynasty. The Great Seal is the stamp that symbolises the authority of the King of Joseon, used to seal documents that determine the legitimacy of the state. Unfortunately the ship is attacked by a ghost-whale in the Yellow Sea and the Great Seal is swallowed by the whale. This crisis puts the new nation's authority under strain. Hearing of the crisis, the national army, bandits and pirates join forces to create a 'ghost-whale hunting project' so that they may retrieve the Great Seal before any others do.

17 March, 7pm // KCCUK



## The Actresses

South Korea, 2009

Director: E J-yong

Cast: Yoon Yeo-jeong, Lee Mi-sook, Ko Hyun-jeong, Choi Ji-woo, Kim Min-hee

104 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

In 2009 Director E created yet another first for Korean cinema with his satirical mockumentary piece *The Actresses*. The casting includes six of Korea's leading actresses who were also each credited as scriptwriters. Inspired by the off-camera personalities of the female leads that he had worked with over the years, E asked the six women to simply play themselves. Set in Seoul on Christmas Eve, the six actresses prepare for a photo shoot. The piece is a film of improvisation and personal stories that took two weeks to shoot. What ensues is an exploration of their lives and the public and private challenges that fame brings in modern Korea.

**Korean Cinema Echoes** 16 March, 6.30pm // Sheffield Hallam University

31 March, 7pm // KCCUK



## Mulberry

South Korea, 1986

Director: Yoon Sam-yook

Cast: Lee Mi-sook, Lee Dae-keun, Lee Moo-jung, Ra Jeong-ok, Han Tae-il

114 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

It is mid 1920s Korea, and basic provisions are scarce. In a rural village called *Yong-dam* lives An-hyup, a woman of unsurpassed beauty.

Selfish and self-centred, her husband Sambo is a renowned gambler who wanders from town to town looking for places to waste his time and lose his money. Only returning home every few months Sambo neither brings home any money nor takes care of his family. An-hyup's situation is dire and she is left with little choice but to sell her body to local men so that she may put food on the table. However, there is just one villager with whom she wouldn't sleep with, Samdol. Samdol is driven to distraction by An-hyup's rejection of him, resorting to sometimes threatening and even begging her to comply with his carnal wishes but all to no avail. Angry and resentful Samdol decides to inform An-hyup's husband of the illicit work that has been going on behind his back. Samdol tells Sambo that whilst he has been away his wife has been known to the men of the village, but the response Samdol gets is not what he had been hoping for.

14 April, 7pm // KCCUK



## Sunny

South Korea, 2011

Director: Kang Hyoung-chul

Cast: Yoo Ho-jeong, Jin Hee-kyung, Ko Soo hee, Hong Jin-hui, Lee Yeon-gyeong

124 mins / Cert. 15 / Eng Subs

Na-mi is a typical middle-class housewife with a teenage daughter and brusque husband. While visiting her mother in hospital, she is reunited with her high school friend, Chun-hwa. The two happily reminisce, Na-mi was a transfer student and Chun-hwa welcomed the new girl into her clique. The clique was called *Sunny*, comprising of 7 girls who always hung out together. Chun-hwa who is now terminally ill, asks Na-mi to get the old members of *Sunny* together for the last time before it's too late. What follows is an ordinary housewife's journey and a great deal of trouble as she tries to track down her former high school classmates.

**Korean Cinema Echoes** 13 April, 6.30pm // Sheffield Hallam University

28 April, 7pm // KCCUK



## Barking Dogs Never Bite

South Korea, 2000

Director: Bong Joon-ho

Cast: Lee Sung-jae, Bae Doo-na, Kim Ho-jung, Byun Hee-bong, Ko Soo hee

106 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

In a peaceful middle-class apartment, part-time lecturer Yoon-ju is becoming hyper-sensitive to a dog's barking coming from somewhere nearby. In an attempt to find the source, he puts his ear to the floor or listens carefully to the sounds from the ceiling. Then one day, returning from his recycling ritual, he discovers a puppy standing in front of his neighbour's door. Convinced that it is the culprit that has been bothering him, he kidnaps the puppy and imprisons it in the basement. Meanwhile, the apartment custodian Hyun-nam searches for the puppy with its young owner. Satisfied of being rid of the dog, Yoon-ju returns to his apartment only to hear the barking again. He rushes to the basement, but the puppy is nowhere to be found...

**Korean Cinema Echoes** 12 April, 6.30pm // Royal College of Art (Battersea)

12 May, 7pm // KCCUK



## Granny's Got Talent

South Korea, 2014

Director: Shin Han-sol

Cast: Kim Soo-mi, Jung Man-sik, Kim Jeong-tae, Park Jun-geum, Lee Tae-ran

108 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

The TV programme *Cursing Battle* is the nation's most popular programme and people from across the nation audition for it in the hope of becoming the 'Cursing King'. However, the contestants' redundant and uninspiring use of cuss words cause the programme's viewer-ratings to drop dramatically. The producer decides to revive the show by introducing an ordinary-looking grandma (veteran actress Kim Soo-mi) with an extraordinary talent for creative swearing. Everyone believes that she will have no problem taking first place. But, questions soon start to arise about the granny's mysterious past...

26 May, 7pm // KCCUK



## C'est Si Bon

South Korea, 2014

Director: Kim Hyun-seok

Cast: Jeong Woo, Kim Yoon-seok, Han Hyo-ju, Kim Hee-ae, Jang Hyun-sung

122 mins / Cert. 15 / Eng Subs

Inspired by real events and set in the late 1960s, *C'est Si Bon* is the music bar where every acoustic band's dream lies, and where Korea's leading folk songs are born. It is where Geun-tae, the naive country boy met the young musical prodigies Hyung-joo and Chang-sik, and formed the band named after it, the *C'est Si Bon Trio*. As the three young artists bicker over their music, beautiful socialite Ja-young enters the picture and becomes their muse, and a series of moving love songs come from it. Geun-tae's pure-heartedness wins Ja-young over but when she accepts a once-in-lifetime opportunity for a shot at an acting career, they part ways. After 20 years, the untold story of their love, song, and youth at *C'est Si Bon* is finally brought to light.

## The London Korean Film Festival: Teaser Screening

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A newly initiated film programme to extend the work of the annual film festival. The teaser screenings will take the best of Korea's recent films and screen them at local cinemas in London. Taking place every two months, these special screenings will run from April.

18 April, 7.30pm // Regent Street Cinema



### The Throne

South Korea, 2015 / Director: Lee Joon-ik / Cast: Song Kang-ho, Yoo Ah-in, Moon Geun-young / 125 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

Throughout his reign (1724-1776), King Youngjo (21st king of the Joseon Dynasty) was constantly plagued by questions about his right to throne. Although the son of a King, his mother had only been a lowly-born concubine, furthermore his path to power had been accelerated by the sudden death of his half-brother King Kyoung-jong. In order to overcome such niggling doubts, Youngjo dedicated himself in all matters to becoming an infallible king.

When his heir, the Crown Prince is born late in Youngjo's life, he wishes for the prince to become a king who is fully accepted by everyone without comment. Having gained an understanding of his father's deep-rooted sense of duty, the Crown Prince endeavours to become the perfect prince that his father desires. However, the Crown Prince soon discovers that perfection isn't always within one's grasp, leaving the viewer to ask 'can their father-son relationship ever be recovered?'

### Credits

Director: Kabsoo Kim  
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## Attending Korean Film Nights

Booking is required for each screening. To reserve your place, please visit [www.kccuk.org.uk](http://www.kccuk.org.uk). Click on the Film Nights section and select the booking icon on the film you wish to see.

For the special screenings taking place away from the KCCUK, please visit [www.koreanfilm.co.uk](http://www.koreanfilm.co.uk), Twitter or Facebook pages for more information.

The programme and venue may be subject to change, please confirm at the time of booking.

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