

JUNE-OCTOBER

KOREAN FILMS NIGHTS 2016

# HA HA HA

TRANSLATING KOREAN HUMOUR

KOREAN CULTURAL CENTRE UK

## INTRODUCTION

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Exploring the theme of the 'Korean sense of humour' which we began in January this year, *Korean Film Nights* will continue to present a series of exciting titles throughout the remaining half of 2016. We have selected 10 more films which both articulate a particular aspect of the Korean sense of humour as well as represent different approaches to creating comedic films. For those who are new to the film programmes organised by the Korean Cultural Centre UK (KCCUK), *Korean Film Nights* is our fortnightly free film screening event, which takes place on alternate Thursday evenings at the KCCUK. Ever since its modest beginning in 2008 our *Korean Film Nights*, working with both established and emerging filmmakers has showcased a wide spectrum of Korean films - from new blockbusters to well-known classics and everything in between. This in-house programme takes audiences on a cinematic journey throughout the year as we run up to the annual *London Korean Film Festival* which returns with its 11th edition this November.

This year's programme, entitled *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 cultural and linguistic nuances - whether referencing a specific socio-political situation, or making use of word-play or jokes. Though open to debate, British humour, for example, is widely associated with sarcasm and self-ridicule through a deadpan delivery. So what makes Korean humour distinct?

**In June**, we begin with the film *Hahaha* from which this year's programme of screenings has affectionately taken its title. Darcy Pacquet, writing on this film in *Screen* noted that "Hong Sang-soo's biting humour and complex, idiosyncratic style is as well-formed as ever in his 10th feature". If *Hahaha* is a good-humoured comedy

reflecting three male creatives' attempts to balance their careers and relationships, then the next film *Singles* captures the concerns about sex, work and life from the perspective of two female protagonists wonderfully acted by Uhm Jung-hwa and the late Jang Jin-young.

**In July**, we present two films set in educational establishments. *My Teacher, Mr. Kim* takes place in a rural primary school. The film finds humour rather than bitterness in its depiction of the flawed character of a jaded school teacher, whose actions stand in stark contrast to the innocent school children he teaches. Next up, *The King of Jokgu*, officially selected and invited to debut at the 18th Busan International Film Festival (2013), depicts the contemporary reality of university life in Korea. *Jokgu*, a fusion of football and volleyball, is a popular sport among young males at university, whose academic career bookends their compulsory military service.

**In August**, we take a look at the darker side of Korean comedy. *Save the Green Planet*, by director Jang Joon-hwan, is one of the most impressive original debut features to come out of Korea, a seamless mixture of slapstick, black comedy, suspense, science fiction and horror. Our subsequent screening, *No.3* is another much-spoken-about film that succeeds in creating in great detail a rich portrayal of the grim life of small-time gangsters, eliciting sympathy and laughter in equal measure.

**In September**, we introduce you to the two very strong Korean female leads. *Saving My Hubby* provides a light-hearted portrayal of the life of a young housewife, convincingly portrayed by Bae Doo-na (*Cloud Atlas*, *The Host*). Bae embodies a typical tough Korean *a-joom-ma* (married or marriage-aged woman), although in a sweet, cute manner rather than the stereotypical stubborn, combative one. *Scandal Maker* also presents a strong female character who is both honest and blunt, not daunted by the social stigma imposed upon her by being a single mother. The conflict and contrast between her and her pathetic 'dad' is key to the audience's amusement.

**In October**, we present two films that play with the theatricality of our reality. *Cyrano Agency* borrows its motif from the french film *Cyrano de Bergerac* and wittily reveals some of the conventional tactics of romantic relationships which almost everyone is aware of - whether

one has experienced it first-hand or indirectly from romantic movies and literature. The film offers a wry meta-commentary on both contemporary romance itself, and how it is represented in film and theatre. Our series concludes with *Fasten Your Seatbelt*, the first feature directed by the talented actor Ha Jung-woo. Reminiscent of Pedro Almodóvar's 2013 film *I'm So Excited*, for the entire duration we are inside the business class cabin flying from Tokyo to Seoul. The exaggerated personality and coarse language of the film's central *hallyu* star, as well as the behaviour of his fans and even the flight attendants will make one chuckle throughout the film.

*Korean Film Nights* will continue to be 'amplified' by a series of mini-lectures organised before each screening. We have invited many brilliant academics and critics to offer enriching guides to the world of Korean cinema, as well as Korean culture at large. *Korean Cinema Echoes* continues as well; this is a series of monthly screening events taking place outside the KCCUK and beyond London for university students and various local communities. During the last two years, we have toured to School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Royal College of Art and Sheffield Hallam University; and from this summer we are delighted to announce that Deptford Cinema will join the project.

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 mix of Korean films that present rich shades of humour and laughter, and to provide an insight into what makes Korean humour so distinct.

Returning visitors who have been away from the Korean Film Nights for a while will discover our new screening venue in the KCCUK Library, with individual seating and a new sound system. So please do come along to as many of the screenings as you can, laugh along and share your interpretations of Korean humour with us.

16 June, 7pm // KCCUK



## Hahaha

## 하하하

South Korea, 2010

Director: Hong Sang-soo

Cast: Kim Sang-kyung, Moon So-ri, Yu Jun-sang, Yea Ji-won, Kim Kang-woo

115 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

Filmmaker Cho Moon-kyung (Kim Sang-kyung) plans to leave Seoul to live in Canada. Some days before his departure, he meets with his close friend Bang Jung-shik (Yu Jun-sang) at a nearby mountain to drink *makgeolli* (a Korean traditional alcoholic beverage made from rice). After a few rounds, they discover that they both recently have been to the small seaside town of *Tongyeong*; as the drinks flow they agree to reveal their stories from their trips on the condition that they only speak about "good" memories. Not realising that they were in the same place, at the same time, with the same people, without ever running into each other Moon-kyung and Jung-shik's reminiscence of the hot summer in *Tongyeong* unfolds... This idiosyncratic, humourous 10th feature by Hong Sang-soo won the *Prix Un Certain Regard* in 2010 Cannes Film Festival.

30 June, 7pm // KCCUK



## Singles

## 싱글즈

South Korea, 2003

Director: Kwon Chil-in

Cast: Jang Jin-young, Lee Beom-soo, Uhm Jung-hwa, Kim Joo-hyuck

110 mins / Cert. 15 / Eng Subs

One of the highest-grossing films from the early 2000s, this film *Singles*, based on the Japanese novel *Christmas at Twenty-nine*, is a delightful comedy drama revolving around two young single women's friendship. Na-nan (Jang Jin-young), soon to turn 30, is at a crossroads in her life. She has been dumped by her boyfriend, and then got relocated to a restaurant division from the design department of her work. With her best friend Dong-mi (Uhm Jung-hwa)'s support, Na-nan manages to adjust to her new dull job and single life. Dong-mi is a successful working woman with liberal ideas about life and sex. Dong-mi, despite her tough persona faces a series of complicated life and relationship decisions, decisions that mean her friendship with Na-nan will become more crucial...

14 July, 7pm // KCCUK



## My Teacher, Mr. Kim

선생 김봉두

South Korea, 2003  
 Director: Jang Kyu-sung  
 Cast: Cha Seung-won, Byun Hee-bong, Sung Ji-ru  
 117 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

A primary school teacher Kim Bong-du (Cha Seung-won) working in Seoul is perhaps not the most devoted and honest teacher; Kim is late for meetings, looks for a bribe from students' parents, and neglects his teaching duties, often assigning students to study by themselves or to clean up the classroom. One day he is transferred to a primary school located in an extremely rural and impoverished village in Kangwon province, with five students in total. Residents in this area, the parents of the school children, are so innocent and "unsophisticated" that they offer him not a money envelope, but all kinds of fruit and vegetables. Even more, old man Choe (Byun Hee-bong) asks Kim to teach him how to read and write Korean; in return Choe offers him a few packs of cigarettes. Teacher Kim Bong-du kills time hoping to return back to the city soon. To achieve this aim, Kim plans to persuade all the students and their parents to move to another school... Will he succeed in this ambitious plan?

28 July, 7pm // KCCUK



## The King of Jokgu

족구왕

South Korea, 2013  
 Director: Woo Moon-gi  
 Cast: An Jae-hong, Hwang Seung-eon, Jeong U-sik, Gang Bong-seong  
 104 mins / Cert. 15 / Eng Subs

Man-seob (An Jae-hong) used to be the "king of Jokgu" (a fusion of football and volleyball). He was infamous for his unstoppable foot spike whilst serving in the army. He returns to school after completing his military service only to find that the Jokgu court has been removed. He desperately tries to find a way to reconstruct the court by speaking to the university chancellor and collecting petition signatures but discovers that no one cares. Everyone is too preoccupied with finding a job to worry about the missing Jokgu court, all sense of romantic or fun notions has vanished. Man-seob meets Anna (Hwang Seung-eon), the school queen, with whom he falls in love with at first sight. To win her heart, he relies on what he does best, thus looks to organise a Jokgu championship...

11 August, 7pm // KCCUK



## Save the Green Planet

## 지구를 지켜라

South Korea, 2003

Director: Jang Joon-hwan

Cast: Shin Ha-kyun, Baek Yoon-sik, Hwang Jeong-min, Lee Jae-yong

117 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

The feature debut by director Jang Joon-hwan mixes elements of multiple genres such as comedy, science fiction, thriller and horror. The main character, Lee Byeong-gu (Shin Ha-kyun) is a beekeeper and mannequin maker, somewhat an ordinary young man. He, however, firmly believes that all of Earth's social ills are the evil doings of aliens; unless he can meet the prince from *Andromeda* before the next total lunar eclipse by acquiring the "royal genetic code", the planet will be in great danger. Byeong-gu suspects that Kang Man-shik (Baek Yoon-sik), the CEO of Yoojae Chemical Company, is an alien who has come to destroy the planet and has the code. So with his girlfriend Sun-i (Hwang Jeong-min), Byeong-gu kidnaps Man-shik and forces him to reveal the information using extreme interrogation techniques, and yet Man-shik doesn't give up so easily... Can Byeong-gu save the green planet?

25 August, 7pm // KCCUK



## No. 3

## 넘버 쓰리

South Korea, 1997

Director: Song Neung-han

Cast: Han Seok-kyu, Lee Mi-youn, Choi Min-sik, Park Sang-myeon

104 mins / Cert. 18 / Eng Subs

One of the earliest "*Jo-pok* comedy" films, *jo-pok* refers to Korean gangsters, this film takes a light-hearted look at Korea's underworld whilst offering a critique of 1990s Korea during its period of rapid economic growth. Lower-class people feel left behind by Korea's newly found prosperity, where only the privileged can succeed, and with this backdrop we meet a series of characters on the edge of society, each with their own ambitions and dreams for success.

Tae-ju (Han Seok-kyu) a small-time wandering gangster of the *Do-Gang Family* rises to become the No.3 in the family organisation. 5 years later, No.3 Tae-ju and No.2 Jae-chul (Park Sang-myeon) are assigned with the important task of acquiring the Peace Hotel, a duty which turns them into rivals. All the while, renowned prosecutor Ma Dong-tak (Choi Min-sik) is increasingly becoming an obstacle to Tae-ju and his associates. Whilst taking on the law, Tae-ju not only finds out about his wife's infidelity but also has to deal with a rival gang's brutal attack

15 September, 7pm // KCCUK



## Saving My Hubby

## 굳세어라 금순아

South Korea, 2002  
 Director: Hyeon Nam-seop  
 Cast: Bae Doo-na, Kim Tae-woo  
 92 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

Geum-soon (Bae Doo-na), once a top-ranked volleyball player, is now a housewife with a six-month-old daughter and a trouble-making husband. When her husband goes to work, Geum-soon sometimes visits the volleyball stadium where she meets many of her old colleagues and starts to reminisce her old life as a professional sportswoman. One night Geum-soon receives a phone call from a gang in a club who are holding her husband over a massive unpaid drinks bill. Geum-soon rushes out into the night streets, carrying her baby on her back. Her once nationally-acclaimed technique of overhand spikes shocks the gang who didn't quite expect that this young mother, looking for her hopeless husband, could be as uncontrollable as this

29 September, 7pm // KCCUK



## Scandal Makers

## 과속 스캔들

South Korea, 2008  
 Director: Kang Hyung-chul  
 Cast: Cha Tae-hyun, Park Bo-young, Wang Suk-hyun, Hwang-woo Seul-hye  
 108 mins / Cert.12 / Eng Subs

This is a feature debut of Kang Hyung-chul, the director of Sunny (2011) and Tazza: The Hidden Card (2014). Nam Hyun-soo (Cha Tae-hyun) was once one of the most popular music stars amongst teens and young women. Although he is in his mid-thirties now, he's still a sought-after celebrity hosting a popular radio show. One day a very young single mum named Jung-nam (Park Bo-young) sends her story to the radio show that Hyun-soo hosts. Her life as a single mum and her longing to meet her own birth father whom she's never known moves many listeners and catapults the ratings to make it the most popular radio programme. But to his surprise, Hyun-soo later confronts none other than Jung-nam, and her seven-year-old boy, Gi-dong (Wang Suk-hyun). Jung-nam walk into Hyun-soo's home, claiming that Hyun-soo is, in fact, her real father. Hyun-soo, however, does everything he can to get rid of Jung-nam and to salvage his celebrity image...

13 October, 7pm // KCCUK



## Cyrano Agency

## 시라노 연애조작단

South Korea, 2010

Director: Kim Hyun-seok

Cast: Uhm Tae-woong, Lee Min-jung, Choi Daniel, Park Shin-hye, Park Chul-min

121 mins / Cert.12 / Eng Subs

Named after the well-known French drama *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand, *Cyrano Agency* is a special consultancy for people who lack dating skills. Staff members of the agency create real-life backdrops and situations to help their "clients" win the love of their dreams. The agency prospers with clients who just don't have a clue or the necessary skills to win someone's heart whilst always staying true to their motto, in the shadows, out of the spotlight. Sang-yong (Choi Daniel) a very successful fund manager, perfect in every way but a flop at relationships, becomes their new client. But when Byung-hun (Uhm Tae-woong), head of the agency, learns who his new client's "target" is, he finds himself facing a complicated personal dilemma.

27 October, 7pm // KCCUK



## Fasten Your Seatbelt

## 롤러코스터

South Korea, 2013

Director: Ha Jung-woo

Cast: Jeong Gyeong-ho, Kim Ki-cheon, Kim Byung-oc, Choi Kyu-hwan

92 mins / Cert. 12 / Eng Subs

Actor Ha Jung-woo's debut feature as a film director, *Fasten Your Seatbelt* is set inside the business class cabin on a *Bobby Airlines* flight from Tokyo to Seoul. This plane is full of absurd character, both crew members and passengers such as a businessman, a monk and a paparazzo. The main character Ma Jun-kyu (Jeong Gyeong-ho) is a huge *hallyu* star having starred in the film *Mr. Profanity* and hurriedly caught this flight after his scandal with a Japanese pop group member had made tabloid headlines. Everyone boarding the flight including the flight attendants recognise Ma Jun-kyu and interacted with him in an over-the-top, unreasonable manner. After the plane fails twice to land and is detoured due to stormy weather, panic begins to set in. To make matters worse, Ma Jun-kyu himself faces a psychological breakdown of lifetime on board. Will he survive this trip and safely land to see another day?



## Attending Korean Film Nights

Admission is free, but booking is required for each screening. To reserve your place, please visit [www.kccuk.org.uk](http://www.kccuk.org.uk). Click on the Korean Film Nights section, select the 'Reserve' icon on the right side of the page; then, type your name and email address first, and click 'Send Verification Code'. You will then receive a six-digit code in your inbox, which can be 'applied' to the same window. Now your booking is completed!

For the Korean Cinema Echoes screenings taking place outside the KCCUK, please check our facebook and twitter pages for the most up-to-date information. The programme and venue may be subject to change, please confirm at the time of booking.

[twitter.com/koreanfilmfest](https://twitter.com/koreanfilmfest) // Facebook: #theLKFF

## Finding us

Korean Cultural Centre UK  
Grand Buildings, 1-3 Strand  
(Entrance on Northumberland Ave)  
London WC2N 5BW

## Credits

Director: Hoseong Yong  
Project coordinated by: Hyun Jin Cho  
Text written by: Hyun Jin Cho & Paul Wadey  
Graphic design: [www.designbyroshana.com](http://www.designbyroshana.com)

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