

Programme Announced for the 15th London Korean Film Festival 29 October-12 November 2020



Pawn (European Premiere, 2019)

The **London Korean Film Festival** (LKFF) is proud to be returning in 2020 for its milestone 15th edition. Taking place from **29 October – 12 November** the festival will be going digital for the first time, with 30+ films available online to audiences across the UK, prerecorded interviews, live Q&As and other virtual events, along with a selection of special cinema screenings taking place in London. Despite this year's many uncertainties, the LKFF is pleased to be back, sharing its annual celebration of Korean cinema with fans all over the UK.

We are all living in a post-***Parasite*** world... director Bong Joon Ho's film garnered multiple accolades at film festivals around the world, earning Korea its first Palme d'Or and culminating with it becoming the first non-English language film to win Best Picture at the Academy Awards. The global spotlight is now on Korean cinema like never before. With a piqued interest among a wide audience of moviegoers hungry to delve further into the country's cinematic output, the LKFF will showcase a typically eclectic programme featuring the year's biggest box-office hits, independent cinema, retrospective screenings of Korean classics, animation, documentary, award winning shorts, Women's Voices (championing women filmmakers) and more.

In a special treat for both committed cinephiles familiar with Bong Joon Ho's feature film work and newcomers eager to discover more after the razor-sharp thrills of *Parasite*, the festival will be screening two shorts from the great director featuring his now trademark blackly comic social satire, available online and throughout the UK for the very first time. ***Incoherence*** (1994) marked the rapid rise of Bong Joon Ho within the Korean film industry. Made during his studies at the KAFA (Korean Academy of Film Arts), the film was selected for both the Vancouver and Hong Kong international festivals. A superb example of the darkly comic style, which pervades his later work, Bong's film shows the hypocritical, lofty and immoral stupidity of important people. ***Influenza*** (2004) is an innovative 30-minute work filmed entirely in front of real CCTV cameras throughout Seoul. The film follows the downward spiral of a man who gradually turns to ever more violent crime over the space of five years, commissioned by the Jeonju International Film Festival. Also included is a rare on-screen performance from Bong, acting in Kang Dae-hee's moving short ***Some Light?*** (2009).

For the **Opening Gala** on 29 October the LKFF is proud to present the European Premiere of comedy-inflected tear-jerker ***Pawn*** (2019), which revolves around a familial bond that forms from the most unlikely of relationships. Sung Dong-il (*Metamorphosis*) and Kim Hiewon (*The Merciless*) star as a pair of tough loan sharks who take a nine-year-old girl from her illegal immigrant mother as collateral over an unpaid debt. *Pawn* is directed by Kang Dae Kyu (*Harmony*) and edited by Yang Jin-mo who received an Academy Award nomination for his work on *Parasite*. The **Closing Gala**, playing on 12 November, will be the UK Premiere of Kim Jinyu's ***Bori*** (2018), which also focuses on familial bonds, this time exploring the themes of disability and difference through the eyes of an eleven-year-old girl. As the only hearing member of a deaf family, young Bori notices the joyful signed communication between her parents and her younger brother. Struggling with feeling left out, Bori wishes that she too was deaf, and tries to achieve her goal with the help of her best friend, with sweet, humorous and moving results.

In addition the festival will feature a **Special Focus: Friends and Family** strand programmed by Seoul-based film critic, programmer, and translator of *Parasite*, Darcy Paquet. While in the UK and across the globe we're still dealing with the pandemic that has uprooted our lives, the LKFF has reflected on the way that lockdowns and quarantines have caused us to reassess the relationships we have with those people closest to us. This Special Focus aims to celebrate the friendships and families in our lives while also casting an honest, critical eye over the ties that bind us with five carefully selected titles from the past decade.

The **Special Focus: Friends and Family** strand will feature the UK Premiere of director Yoon Dan-bi's coming-of-age drama ***Moving On*** (2019), which finds a teenage girl moving into the home of her elderly grandfather along with her younger brother, cash-strapped father and soon-to-be-divorced aunt. Exploring the complex, changing relationships with wit and warmth. The film received awards at the Busan International Film Festival and the New York Asian Film Festival. Director Lee Jae-kyoo gathers together a top cast of acting talent including Cho Jin-woong (*The Handmaiden*), Yum Jung-ah (*A Tale of Two Sisters*) and Yoo Hae-jin (*1987: When the Day Comes*) for the UK Premiere of tense ensemble drama ***Intimate Strangers*** (2018) which sees friendships and marriages come put at risk when a game played over dinner threatens to reveal intimate secrets; Kang Yikwan's award-winning tale of teenage crime ***Juvenile Offender*** (2012) sees a boy back in the custody of a mother he believed dead on his release from juvenile reformatory; friendship is at the heart of Lee Joon-ik's comedy-drama ***The Happy Life*** (2007) as four band members find a way to reunite after the death of their singer over 20-years later, and Kim Tae-yong's much-loved ***Family Ties*** (2006) questions traditional notions of 'family' as it follows lives and relationships of a small group of people across the years, played by an impressive cast including Moon So-ri (*Oasis*), Kong Hyo-jin (*Missing Woman*) and Jung Yu-mi (*Train to Busan*).

The **Cinema Now** strand is a showcase for the best contemporary titles to have been released in the past year, featuring an eclectic mix of genres and styles, from blockbusting entertainment to intimate indie works. From Korea's leading auteur Hong Sangsoo, ***The Woman Who Ran*** (English Premiere, 2019) finds Hong's now regular star Kim Min-hee (*The Handmaiden*) playing a wife who, after being left to her own devices when her husband takes a business trip, leads us through a typically breezy, conversation-led set of encounters with three old female friends. *The Woman Who Ran* earned the already highly decorated director the prestigious Silver Bear Award at this year's Berlin International Film Festival. Director Kim Cho-hee draws on her own experience as Hong Sangsoo's longtime producer for her debut work ***Lucky Chan-sil*** (UK Premiere, 2019), as we follow the producer of a celebrated indie director after the director's sudden soju-induced death. The directorial debut of actor, and star of *The Happy Life*, Jung Jinyoung is the enigmatic genre-bending mystery ***Me & Me*** (European Premiere, 2019), which recently picked up two Jury Special Mentions at the Fantasia International Film Festival. The film finds a woman (Cha Soo-yeon, *Love Call*) becoming a different person each night and a cop (Cho Jin-woong, *The Handmaiden*) who's life is changed as he gets drawn further into the case. Jeon Gye-soo's ***Vertigo*** (UK Premiere, 2018) is a delicate portrayal of the

stresses faced by a thirty-something office worker whose secret relationship with her boss acts as a constant threat to her unstable position within the company. The sudden onset of vertigo and the attentions of a window cleaner soon bring buried feelings to the surface. Epic action is on the cards in explosive blockbuster **Ashfall** (2019) from directing duo Lee Hae Jun and Kim Byung Seo. Ha Jung Woo (*The Handmaiden*) leads the cast as a bomb disposal expert tasked with the dangerous mission of heading into North Korea to rescue an imprisoned double agent, played by superstar Lee Byung Hun (*I Saw the Devil*), and blow up a volcano in order to prevent a subterranean explosion that threatens the whole country, while *Train to Busan* tough-guy Ma Dong Seok controls the action back at base. Finally, period action-comedy is on show in Kim Joo-ho's **Jesters: The Game Changers** (UK Premiere, 2019), in which a small band of racketeers tour the country tricking the public through a variety of theatrical illusions, but when they become involved in a lucrative job to help restore the reputation of the king, they find the tables have turned.

Women's Voices celebrates the work of women filmmakers and gives a platform to challenging, thought-provoking works that bring timely issues to the fore. This year is no exception, as two films are presented which are centred on sexual assault and the troubling societal reactions when the women victims try and bring the horrendous crimes perpetrated against them to light. Kim Mi-jo's **Gull** (UK Premiere, 2020) finds a market vendor, Obok, drunkenly assaulted by a fellow vendor who wields a position of power as chairman of the market's redevelopment project. Unable to move on from her ordeal and with her anger rising, Obok reports the crime, only to find fellow vendors and even family members turn against her. In Lim Sun-ae's searing drama **An Old Lady** (UK Premiere, 2019) an elderly woman is raped by a young male nurse, and similarly disbelieved by the police and those around her, with the handsome young aide claiming the relationship was consensual.

The LKFF is once again proud to champion women filmmakers in the **Documentary** strand, which this year comprises a trio of enlightening films that give voices to women from different cross-sections of Korean society. Following the festival's screenings of films by the Seoul Film Collective in 2019, the festival presents **Even Little Grass Has Its Own Name** (1990) from director Kim Soyung. Divided into two sections, the film was originally shot on 16mm and explores the struggles married female office workers face balancing both professional and private work, while highlighting the positive changes female employees make in their lives by joining a labour union. Byun Young-joo's moving **My Own Breathing** (1999) delves into a dark period of history when, during World War II, many women were forced into sexual slavery. Many years later as they attempt to lead normal lives, a group of women tell their stories and attempt to reconcile their traumatic past. **Itaewon** (2016), from director Kangyu Garam, examines the lives of women in the Itaewon district as they face the transformation of their neighbourhood following the relocation of the US Army base 70km outside Seoul.

With this year's **Classics** strand Korean cinema expert Dr Mark Morris has brought together three stunning retrospective titles to shine a light on **Mudang: Korean Shamans on Screen**. Korea's traditional shaman, "Mudang", acts as an intermediary between the human world and the spiritual world. They have been a frequent subject of Korean films throughout a wide range of genres, as well as spawning a sub-genre called "Musok (shamanism) film". Focusing on films from 1979-1983, two of these films are directed by one of the country's most celebrated filmmakers, the great Im Kwon-taek (*Mandala*, *Chihwaseon*) who received Korea's first Best Director award at Cannes and France's Order of the Legion of Honour for his contribution to the field of visual arts. Im Kwon-taek's **Divine Bow** (1979) finds the local shaman on strike as flashbacks reveal the tragic source of her grievances, and **Daughter of Fire** (1983), also by Im Kwon-taek, finds a man haunted by memories of his shaman mother which lead him on a journey to Jindo Island and its shaman ceremonies. **Eul-hwa** (1979), directed by Byun Jang-ho, sees a woman train to become a Mudang after visiting the village shaman when her son is sick. Ultimately, as the year's pass, a rivalry between student and teacher develops along with further conflict between the woman and her son when he returns to the village with newly acquired Christian beliefs.

This year's **Animation** strand includes a moving feature film and a series of extraordinary award-winning shorts that challenge our expectations of the medium, playing with form and narrative and offering insightful reflections on the nature of modern life. **Underdog** (Lee Choon-baek, Oh Sung-yoon, 2018) is an animated feature from the creators of previous Korean hit *Leafie, a Hen into the Wild*, and mixes 3D characters with 2D backgrounds to tell the story of a pack of abandoned dogs as they navigate the perils imposed by humans in a journey to a fabled people-free haven. Evoking British classic *Watership Down*, the film is filled with humour, heart and excitement, tempered with tragedy and an eco-friendly message. Selected to play at Cannes Director's Fortnight this year Jeong Dahee's **Movements** (2019) is a reflection on speed, time, perception and relativity told through a series of witty vignettes; **Mascot** (Kim Leeha, 2019) follows a cartoon fox in an all too recognisable world as he tries to pass the gruelling training to become a city mascot while working long hours at a dead end job; in dark moral fable **The Levers** (Kim Boyoung, 2018) a frustrated, unemployed man is given a job pulling levers in a featureless factory, but how will he react when he discovers the true nature of the work? **The End of the Universe** (Han Byung-a, 2020) follows a woman who leaves the doctor's office and returns to her daily life after the weighty revelation of a terminal condition. The everyday encounters on her usual walking route now take on new meaning in this sweet, humorous, pastel-washed tale.

Highlighting award-winning works discovered at Korea's prestigious **Mise-en-scène Short Film Festival** (MSFF), the **Shorts** strand offers an exciting overview of some of the best up-and-coming directors with a selection of fresh, creative and endlessly inventive works. Presided over by internationally recognised filmmaking talent including Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon Ho, who sit on the committee, and this year's Festival Director Lee Kyoung-mi, director of past LKFF favourites *The Truth Beneath* and *Crush and Blush*, the MSFF has a proven track record of discovering Korea's future filmmaking talent with previous winners of its awards including director Lee and Jang Jae-hyun (*The Priests*, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*). This year the festival received a record number of entries of which the winners of its eight awards categories are presented here for UK audiences to experience; **The Thread** (Lee Na-yeon, Cho Min-jae, 2020); **Before The Summer Passes** (Kim So-hyoung, 2020); **God's Daughter Dances** (Byun Sung-bin, 2020); **The Long Night** (Kim Jung-min, 2020); **Suspicion** (Park Woo-geon, 2020); **Us, Day and Night** (Kim So-hyoung, 2020); **Hide and Seek** (Kim Do-yeon, 2020); **Roof-Top star** (Lee Kun-hwi, 2019).

Presented in partnership with LUX, the UK agency supporting artists' moving image, the **Artist Video** strand is comprised of two distinct Artist in Focus programmes, each one shining a spotlight on the body of work of an artist whose subtle, intricate and ambiguous work rallies against the status quo. The **Moojin Brothers** comprise of three siblings, Jung Mujin, Jung Hyoyoung, Jung Youngdon, whose sensitive engagement with the contemporary moment culminates in constellations of moving image, installation, community project and publication. To comprehend the genesis of socio-political malaise felt in today's South Korea, the artists create dreamlike parables and surreal imageries to portray the current working generation and how their lives are weighed down by the current socio-economic climate. Where the Moojin Brothers' work looks to the world around them, **Seo Young Chang** looks inward to echo how the power of a structure can shape one's experience, working with installations of moving image and sculpture to focus on the (in)visibility of corporeal existence and the physical pain that collapses the network of time and space of a body, generating an unproductive entity. The selected videos will guide audiences through different states of existence and trouble the conceptual and physical definition of a living body, exploring the fragile and precarious nature of human beings and how invisible conditions can determine human agency.

The London Korean Film Festival 2020 runs from 29 October - 12 November with cinema screenings in London and online screenings available to audiences across the UK

For further information and announcements: koreanfilm.co.uk

Facebook: @theLKFF

Twitter: @koreanfilm

Instagram: @london_korean_film_festival

Guests available for interview:

- **Darcy Paquet** - Seoul based film critic, lecturer, and author (*New Korean Cinema, 2010*), awarded the Korea Film Reporters Association Award
- **Dr. Mark Morris** - East-Asian cinema expert, LKFF advisor and programmer and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge
- **Dr. Anton Bitel** - Freelance film critic and genre specialist, a regular contributor to Sight & Sound and Little White Lies, a member of the Online Film Critics Society and the London Film Critics' Circle
- **Filmmakers potentially available on request**

Confirmed London venues: Picturehouse Central, Genesis Cinema and Rio Cinema

Tickets available early October

For any press requests please contact festival publicist Christopher O'Keeffe: chris@witchfinder.co (+44 7413 157 011)

Notes to Editors

About London Korean Film Festival:

The London Korean Film Festival will return to celebrate its 15th year from 29 October - 12 November 2020, featuring cinema screenings in London and an online platform available to audiences around the UK.

The London Korean Film Festival has grown from humble beginnings to become one of the longest running and most respected festivals dedicated to Korean cinema in the world. We've built a name upon presenting lineups consisting of everything from the country's most successful blockbusters to thought-provoking independents from its finest auteurs. Across a variety of finely curated strands we aim to cater for general audiences to committed cinephiles, and everyone in between.

The 15th London Korean Film Festival is organised by the Korean Cultural Centre UK with the support of the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Korean Film Council and Korean Film Archive.

More about the KCCUK:

Since being opened by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in January 2008, under the jurisdiction of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, the KCCUK has gone from strength to strength in its role of enhancing friendship, amity and understanding between Korea and the UK through cultural and educational activities.

As well as presenting a diverse range of ongoing monthly events focused on Korean film, drama, education and literature, the KCCUK regularly welcomes Korean luminaries from many cultural fields to discuss their work, organises the annual film festival as well as traditional and contemporary musical performances and holding a number of exhibitions throughout the year, allowing artists to showcase their talent. From the KCCUK's central London location (just off Trafalgar Square), the institution's dedicated cultural team work to further develop established cultural projects, introduce new opportunities to expand Korean programmes in the UK and to encourage ongoing cultural exchange.