

LONDON KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL 2017

**Korean Noir, Illuminating the Dark Side of Society
includes Korean Box Office break through hit:
The Outlaws with Director Kang Yun-Sung Q&A**



The Outlaws

London Friday 13 October 2017:

The London Korean Film Festival (LKFF) running 26 October – 19 November has a special focus on **Korean Noir** this year with key films whose 'noirness' has generated critical debate. In addition to showcasing **13 films** including two classic masterpieces, ***Black Hair*** by **Lee Man-hee** and Berlin acclaimed ***The Last Witness*** with **Director Lee Doo-yong Q&A**, plus a forum with prominent noir scholars and filmmakers including Lee Doo-yong and **Oh Seung-uk (*Kilimanjaro*)** and masterclasses with Director Lee Doo-yong and Cinematographer **Kim Hyungkoo (*The Day After*)**.

LKFF is delighted to announce Director **Kang Yun-Sung** will be present with a Q&A following the action comedy, **The Outlaws** (aka *Crime City*, screening in the Cinema Now programme), which topped the local Korean box office on Monday, outperforming the U.S. top box office seller *Kingsman: The Golden Circle* and the Korean historical drama *The Fortress*. Based on the notorious criminal ring Heuksapa from Harbin, China, which took over Garibong-dong in Guro-gu, southwestern Seoul in 2004, it stars popular actors **Don Lee** and **Yoon Kye-sang**.

This trend in Noir follows on from the two (out of five) Korean hits to grace Cannes this year were crime action thrillers illuminating the dark side of society: **The Villainess** (which screened as a special preview at LKFF press launch 11 Sept) and **The Merciless** (2017, Studiocanal), the latest feature from **Byun Sung-hyun**, a Tarantino-esque moody neo-noir thriller following double-crossing gangsters, premiering at LKFF 3 November Regent Street Cinema, 6.30pm. "South Korea has such a turbulent modern history ridden with violence and political, social upheavals... I think that may be why we are good at making thriller movies like this," said **Jung Byung-Gil**, director of *The Villainess*" (Daily Mail). In 21st-century Korean noir, restraint barely figures: extreme violence, dwelt on with relish, is de rigueur; prolonged scenes of torture are frequent; extensive combat sequences involving multiple assailants wielding assorted weapons, accompanied by copious bloodshed, are extended beyond all plausibility; blatant and endemic corruption is almost a given element.

Delving into this phenomenon further, LKFF presents a special **Film Noir Forum** consisting of two panels, the first of which brings together two exciting guests: **Eddie Muller** (Founder of Film Noir Foundation), will first sketch out the history and key elements of film noir while renowned film critic and programmer **Huh Moonyung** will present a number of key Korean films whose 'noirness' has generated critical debate; curator, critic and filmmaker **Ehsan Khoshbakht** will moderate the discussion, interrogating the relationship between film noir and 'Korean noir'. In the second panel we will hear more from two Korean film directors whose work was included in the special noir programme this year: **Lee Doo-yong** and **Oh Seung-uk** moderated by film critic Huh Moonyung. Lee will talk us through his understanding of how Korea's complex history relates to Korean noir film-making. We look forward to deepening our knowledge of Korean noir through sharing a conversation with two directors who have lived through different eras of Korean cinema.

Often, Korean noirs pivot on matters of loyalty and betrayal. A protagonist may be a member of a criminal hierarchy who fails to exhibit total loyalty to the boss. Sun-woo, protagonist of **Kim Jee-woon's A Bittersweet Life**, offers a case in point. Hotel manager and enforcer for the hotel's crime-lord owner, he allows one brief humane impulse to divert him from orders. Retribution follows at once: he's humiliated, beaten up, tortured and finally buried alive. A similar plot with an all-female slant fuels **Han Jun-hee's Coin Locker Girl** (2015), whose heroine is a street orphan raised by her adoptive mother, a Fagin-like Incheon gang boss, to do her dirty work. Like Sun-woo, she succumbs to a moment of pity for one of her designated victims, which runs her into serious trouble with 'Mom'.

Two classic masterpieces, ***Black Hair*** by **Lee Man-hee** with **Huh Moonyong** introduction and ***The Last Witness*** directed by **Lee Doo-yong** (screening with director Q&A) were not described as noir upon release. Lee's film world is imbued with violence and darkness in many ways, and features lonely characters who experience alienation. The psychological and historical state of the characters is noteworthy. With the help of the lawyer Kim Jung-yeop, private detective Oh (Hah Myung-joong) investigates the case of Yang Dal-soo, and the more he learns the more he falls into a huge and unknowable labyrinth. It is none other than a path to misfortune.

Introduced by Film Critic **Roger Clarke**, ***Green Fish***'s protagonist Mak-dong (Han Suk-kyu) is an archetype of Korean noir, and the film itself is also draped in noir's dark shadow. ***Green Fish*** is social noir, taking its mood from a sense of reflection on humanity and society; this meant that in ***Green Fish*** alone there was a place for that typical figure of film noir, the femme fatale. ***New World*** gives the impression of a commitment to continue the development of the Korean noir of the 1990s. The film's appropriation of Hong Kong noir (especially the ***Infernal Affairs*** series) is notable. ***Die Bad*** with an introduction by **Victor Fan**, is a gritty but immensely gripping film about the challenges faced by youth and the deadly spiral many find themselves in. ***Kilimanjaro*** with Director **Oh Seung-uk** Q&A, has a cult following and is one of the most unique films of Korean noir. In contrast, **Yoo Ha's *A Dirty Carnival*** is somewhat loosely constructed, though there are elements that recall **Lee Chang-dong's *Green Fish***. Both directors started their careers as socially conscious writers, Lee Chang-dong as a novelist and Yoo Ha as a poet. In particular, captures the rivalry between organised gangs involved in Korea's development policies behind the scenes, coupled with the story of one man's corruption and subsequent fall.

Nowhere to Hide, with introduction by **Dr. Kate Taylor-Jones**, features a detective who investigates the murder of a drug boss in this highly stylised violent actioner that saw director **Lee Myung-se**, marketed as Seoul's answer to Hong Kong's John Woo. It has been cited as an influence on ***The Matrix***. ***The Rules of the Game*** shows that Korean noir has a fundamental connection to the genre of male melodrama at its core. Here, the young third-rate gangster Yong-dae (Park Joong-hoon) leads a lowly life in the city. A violent, male-centred homosocial desire or nostalgic utopia, joined with the mood and tone of noir and tragic fate. ***Dead End*** + masterclass with **Kim Hyungkoo** shows Do-cheol (**Kim Gi-ho**) who has been caring for his sick wife witnesses a murder in a neighbouring alley through a hospital window. He is seen by the killer and a chase ensues taking him through a maze of back streets, but the disorientating experience ultimately puts him back in the place where the first crime was committed, only this time he is no longer just a witness. With touches of wit and dark humour, one is never sure what lies around the corner. Korean noir has, in recent years, established characteristics and conventions of its own within the international noir (or neo-noir) world.

Other guests confirmed for this year's festival include:

- Director **Kim Dae-hwan** of ***The First Lap***
- Director **Bae Chang-ho** of ***People in the Slum, Whale Hunting, The Dream***
- Director **Chung Yoon-chul** of ***Warriors of the Dawn***

- Director **Jung Yoon-suk** of *Non-Fiction Diary*, *Bamseom Pirates Seoul Inferno*, *Whale Hunting*, *The Dream*
- Creative Director **Lee Hyuk-sang** of *Two Doors* and Co-Director of *The Remnant*
- Director **Lee Wanmin** & Actress **Kim Saebuk** of *Jamsil*

London venues include: Picturehouse Central, Regent Street Cinema, ICA, Phoenix, Close-up, LUX, Birkbeck's Institute of Moving Image, SOAS, Kingston University, National Film & Television School, British Museum and KCCUK

The festival tours to: Glasgow Film Theatre, Manchester HOME, Sheffield Showroom, Nottingham Broadway Cinema, Belfast Queen's Film Theatre until 19 November 2017.

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To apply for Press Accreditation and for any interview requests and stills please contact: Elizabeth Benjamin Publicist, emebenjamin@yahoo.com

Notes to Editors

About London Korean Film Festival:

The London Korean Film Festival will return to celebrate its twelfth year running 26 October - 19 November 2017, running for two weeks in London before embarking on an ambitious tour 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, committed cinephiles, children, and everyone in between.

The 12th 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.