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Director Cuts: Bong Joon Ho

Rich Johnson

South Korean Cinema boasts some of the finest films and filmmakers of the 21st century with critically acclaimed Bong Joon-ho one of several Eastern directors who has not only caught the eye of the West but also broken down any perceived boundaries of world cinema. Not only does he carry the dissident hallmarks and jarring tonal shifts we have come to expect from the films of his region, Joon-ho reestablishes what genre filmmaking is capable of. As well as his short films, this course will also look at how his techniques and themes have evolved throughout his feature filmography from his 2000 debut *Barking Dogs Never Bite* to monster movie *The Host*, Oscar-winner *Parasite* to his most recent film *Mickey-17*.

Main films:

Barking Dogs Never Bite (2000)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): CJ Entertainment / Cinema Service / Uno Film

Memories of Murder (2003)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): CJ Entertainment / Sidus Pictures

The Host (2006)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Chunggeorahm Film

Mother (2009)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): CJ Entertainment / Barunson

Snowpiercer (2013)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): CJ Entertainment / Moho Film / Opus Pictures / Stillking Films

Okja (2017)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Plan B Entertainment / Lewis Pictures / Kate Street Picture Company

Parasite (2019)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Barunson E&A



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Mickey 17 (2025)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Warner Bros. Pictures / Plan B Entertainment / Offscreen / Kate Street Picture Company

References to:

“Looking for Paradise” (1992)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): N/A

“White Man” (1994)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Korean Academy of Film Arts

“Incoherence” (1994)

Director(s): Bong Joon Ho

Studio(s): Korean Academy of Film Arts

Twentidentity (2003)

Director(s): Various

Studio(s): Korean Academy of Film Arts

Digital Short Films by Three Directors (2004)

Director(s): Various

Studio(s): Jeonju International Film Festival

Tokyo! (2008)

Director(s): Various

Studio(s): Comme des Cinémas

The Neighbor's Wife and Mine (1931)

Director(s): Heinosuke Gosho

Studio(s): Shochiku

The Songstress, Red Peony (1931)

Director(s): Shichuan Zhang

Studio(s): Mingxing Film Company

Viva Freedom! (1946)

Director(s): Choi In-kyu

Studio(s): Koryo Film

Shiri (1999)

Director(s): Kang Je-gyu

Studio(s): Frontier Works Comic / Kang Je-Kyu Film Co. Ltd. / Samsung Entertainment



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Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring (2003)

Director(s): Kim Ki-duk

Studio(s): LJ Film / Pandora Film

A Bittersweet Life (2005)

Director(s): Kim Jee-woon

Studio(s): B.O.M. Film Productions Co. / CJ Venture Investment / Centurion Technology Investment

The Tiger (2015)

Director(s): Park Hoon-jung

Studio(s): Sanai Pictures

I Saw the Devil (2011)

Director(s): Kim Jee-woon

Studio(s): Peppermint & Company

The Admiral: Roaring Currents (2016)

Director(s): Kim Han-mim

Studio(s): Big Stone Pictures

Train to Busan (2016)

Director(s): Yeon Sang-ho

Studio(s): Next Entertainment World / RedPeter Film

The Villainess (2017)

Director(s): Jung Byung-gil

Studio(s): Independent Filmmakers / Group BFG

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953)

Director(s): Eugène Lourié

Studio(s): Jack Dietz Productions

Godzilla (1954)

Director(s): Ishirō Honda

Studio(s): Toho

Spoorloos (aka *The Vanishing*, 1988)

Director(s): George Sluizer

Studio(s): Golden Egg Films / Ingrid Productions / MGS Film

Cure (1997)

Director(s): Kiyoshi Kurosawa

Studio(s): Daiei Film



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Notes:

“There is a lot of extreme emotion in Korean film. It’s because there are a lot of extremes in Korean society.” — Bong Joon Ho

INTRODUCTION: FAR EAST ON FILM

Let us begin by painting a picture of Far Eastern Cinema and South Korea. You know where it is at on the map...

The South Korean flag showcasing some familiar yin and yang symbolism. The flag is known as the Taegukgi and is filled with meaning, representing the harmony and balance of the universe. The white background symbolizes peace and purity, while the central Taeguk represents the duality and interconnectedness of all things, like yin and yang. The four trigrams surrounding the Taeguk symbolize the four classical elements and their relationships to the four seasons, cardinal directions, and other concepts like heaven and earth.

South Korea is known for their car manufacture, most notably Hyundai.

There is also the (rather irritating) “Baby Shark” song made popular in 2016. It was produced by Pinkfong, an education brand owned by South Korean entertainment company SmartStudy.

Then there is obviously the immensely popular K-Pop music. The most famous of which are BTS. This is another example of how South Korea have managed to break down boundaries through popular culture.

The South Korean New Wave, also known as the New Korean Cinema.

As ever, we can begin with Thomas Edison, film and cinema being a western invention with the Kinetoscope was first demonstrated in 1891 and went public in 1893.

As with Edison’s use of patenting his inventions, the influence of the Kinetoscope abroad was magnified by his decision not to seek international patents on the device and therefore profited on exporting, instead facilitating imitations and improvements of the technology.

Meanwhile, in the East...

Only between 10 to 30% of silent cinema and prototype filmmaking exists today due to disposability and burning in warehouse fires due to a combination of bad storage, heat and igniting of the silver nitrate. Most of Japan’s silent films were destroyed during the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923.

Most Eastern early examples of film were simple recordings of theatre pieces. In the case of Japan, kabuki theatre. A kowairo was responsible for dubbing the voices of onscreen actors. This began with filmed kabuki theatre, with them standing at the side of the screen and acting out the dialogue of the kabuki actors.



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During the 1920s, younger filmmakers began to rebel against the presentation of Japanese filmmaking, wanting film to stand on its own and pull away from the theatrical, without the interpretation of a narrator.

As with any new medium and direction, there was resistance; specifically from the kowairo and the benshi artists, who saw these rebels as a threat to their craft and livelihood. The kowairo, in particular, began to disappear around this time paving the way for the introduction of Japanese film directors.

The Japanese film industry was not entirely replaced by talkies until 1935, one theatre, the Inohanakan in Chiba, near Tokyo, not converted until 1939. This allowed the benshi to continue in their art and remaining the leading tradition in the world of Japanese cinema for almost two decades.

First Japanese talkie: Heinosuke Gosho's *The Neighbor's Wife and Mine* (1931) is Japan's first talkie. Comedy about a playwright working to a strict deadline and getting distracted by his family and a noisy next-door jazz band.

On the subject of Japan and how it connects with Korean history: Japanese occupation of Korea (from 1910 to 1945) has had a lasting impact on the region, especially when it comes to colonisation and how these aspects feed into their stories. Photos show troops arriving, and old man taunted by Japanese soldiers and "Comfort Women." Korean "Comfort Women" under the Japanese Empire. While Japan claimed these women volunteered their services to the Empire, many of the former prostitutes later testified that they were coerced, deceived, or kidnapped from their homes, and forced into the industry. Once recruited, the women were posted in "comfort stations" throughout the Japanese-occupied territories, where they were frequently raped and beaten by Japanese soldiers.

Due to the occupation (1910-1945) studios were owned by the Japanese.

There is some contention in deciphering the first Korean film. *Ulha ui Mengse* (1923) is often referred to, while other sources refer to Yun Baek-nam's *Ulha ui Mengse* (*Plighted Love Under the Moon*).

The picture in the presentation shows the American soldiers lowering the Japanese flag after their defeat.

It is not uncommon to see the Japanese demonized or shown as adversaries in South Korean films. This can be seen in films such as *The Tiger* (2015) and *The Wailing* (2016).

Further Eastern cinema context: The first Chinese film was *Dingjun Mountain* (1905). As with a lot of films around this time it relied on theatre and the transition from that medium as a narrative form. In this case, Peking opera superstar Tan Xinpei.

The Songstress, Red Peony (1931) is heralded as China's "first all-talking and singing sound picture."

Liberation and *Freedom!*



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Viva Freedom! (1946): First film made in the country after achieving independence from Japan. One of the most significant films from this era is director Choi In-gyu's *Viva Freedom!* (1946), which is notable for depicting the Korean independence movement.

For more insight into South Korean cinema you can read my piece [“V for Vengeance: The Impact of South Korean Cinema.”](#)

Defining a new century of cinema...

South Korean cinema exploded onto the screen with the action-packed *Shiri* in 1999.

Another notable film is *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) is a South Korean film directed by Kim Ki-duk, who also plays the adult Monk. Barely any dialogue – minimalistic – perfect example of ‘show not tell’. Set around a floating ministry on a lake. Each season representing the part in the life of a Buddhist monk.

It tells the story of a young Buddhist apprentice mentored by an aging monk at a secluded monastery in the Korean wilderness. When he is a teenager, the apprentice encounters a girl who arrives at the monastery seeking assistance with her health. He falls in love with her, tempted away from his spiritual existence, unprepared for the modern ways of life. A serene and tranquil film. Every shot counts and paints the perfect picture of the seasons changing.

Kim Jee-woon's *A Bittersweet Life* is a tale of revenge – vengeance themed movies a hugely popular subgenre in South Korean Cinema.

A personal favourite. Park Hoon-jung's *The Tiger* (Also known as *The Tiger: An Old Hunter's Tale*, 2015) is as epic as they come. Not only a deeply personal tale but also a snapshot of colonial history; the last tiger becoming a strong metaphor of Korean history and tradition. Deeply powerful and incredibly moving; this is one of Choi Min-sik's best performances and shows off his versatility as an actor. It is a film set very much in the traditions (and scale) of David Lean.

Director Park Hoon-jung Dropped out of mandatory military service. Worked for a gaming and started up his own gaming company but the business failed. Shortly after entered the movie business. His breakthrough was writing the screenplay for Kim Jee-woon's brutal serial killer movie, *I Saw the Devil* (2010), also starring Choi Min-sik.

I Saw the Devil is another vengeance-based movie, this time a film centred on the trail of a brutal serial killer. The film is a sadistic and unfiltered viewing experience.

Actor Choi Min-sik, who is, arguably, South Korean cinema's most well-known star, began his career as a theatre actor.

Most well known for his lead role in *Oldboy* (2003) in which he won numerous national awards. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis and told that he could not be cured, claiming to have regained his health by a month-long stay in the mountains. His English-language debut was Luc Besson's *Lucy* (2014). Also starred in *Roaring Currents* (2016).



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Based on the historical Battle of Myeongnyang (1597) in which the Korean Joseon Kingdom's navy, led by Admiral Yi Sun-sin, fought the Japanese navy in the Myeongnyang Strait, near Jindo Island, off the southwest corner of the Korean peninsula. With only 13 ships remaining from a previous battle, Admiral Yi held a 'last stand' against the Japanese navy, who were sailing to support their land army's advance towards the Joseon capital of Hanyang (modern-day Seoul).

Choi Min-sik as the Korean naval commander Yi Sun-sin

At the time the highest opening day box office in South Korea and became the all-time most-watched film in South Korea, breaking the previous record held by Hollywood blockbuster *Avatar*.

Other popular films include the zombie horror thrill ride *Train to Busan* (2016) and the incredible action thriller *The Villainess* (2017). A film that was a huge influence on *John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum* (2019).

PART ONE: MEMORIES OF LIFE

Young Michael

Bong Joon Ho was born on September 14, 1969, in Bongheok-dong [ko], Daegu, South Korea. He has three older siblings. His mother, Park So-young, was a housewife; his father, Bong Sang-gyun [ko], was a graphic designer, industrial designer, professor of art at Yeungnam University, and head of the art department at the National Film Institute.

This creative heritage is also linked to his maternal grandfather, Park Taewon, was an esteemed author during the Japanese colonial period, best known for his work *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist* (1938) and his defection to North Korea in 1950.

In 1988, Bong enrolled in Yonsei University, majoring in sociology. He also studied the English language while in college, and he credits Spike Lee's films with teaching him English profanity.

Social issues that Bong Joon Ho's films address:

Class inequality:

Movies like *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* delve into the gap between the rich and the poor, highlighting how social systems can perpetuate disadvantage.

Environmental concerns:

Works like *The Host* and *Okja* raise awareness about ecological issues, including pollution, GMOs, and the impact of human activities on the natural world.

The human condition:

Bong Joon Ho explores themes of family, memory, and the complexities of human relationships in films like *Mother* and *Memories of Murder*.



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In light of these themes, while Bong was at University, college campuses such as Yonsei's were then hotbeds for the South Korean democracy movement; Bong was an active participant of student demonstrations, frequently subjected to tear gas early in his college years. Right: Student protester Lee Han-yeol is fatally injured after a tear gas shell penetrates his skull during the June Democratic Uprising in Seoul. June 9, 1987.

He served a two-year term in the military in accordance with South Korea's compulsory military service before returning to college in 1992. Draft resisters still go to prison.

Join the club

The “Yellow Door” film club was founded by colleague Choi Jong-tae (later going onto direct), who became disillusioned with film school theory. Bong Joon Ho was a member of the club and managed its video library.

The *Netflix* documentary *Yellow Door: '90s Lo-fi Film Club* (2023) explores the film club and its impact on Bong Joon Ho's career.

Short films

As a member of the club, Bong made his first films, including a stop motion short titled “Looking for Paradise” and “White Man.”

A 20-part anthology film by alumni of the Korean Academy of Film Arts. Directed the segment “Sink & Rise.”

Digital Short Films by Three Directors – segment “Influenza.” This is a 30-minute work acted out entirely in front of real CCTV cameras stationed throughout Seoul. The film, which charts a desperate man's turn to violent crime over the space of five years, was commissioned by the Jeonju International Film Festival, together with works by Japanese director Sogo Ishii and Hong Kong-based Yu Lik-wai segment “Shaking Tokyo.”

2011's *3.11 A Sense of Home* includes Bong's segment “Iki.”

Showcase

From March 23rd, 2025 to January 10th, 2027 *Director's Inspiration: Bong Joon Ho* is exhibited at The Academy Museum in Los Angeles. It is the first exhibition dedicated to the internationally acclaimed Oscar-winning film director.

Bong Joon Ho: Power and Paradox was also a recent BFI retrospective of his work.

“Bong Joon Ho is one of a rare handful of auteurs whose filmography is nearly impossible to rank.” — *Bong Joon Ho: Dissident Cinema* by Karen Han is also worth reading if you would like a clear overview of his filmography.



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Let's take a look at his personal taste in film...

Five Favourite films:

Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, 1958)

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

The Housemaid (Kim Ki-young, 1960)

Raging Bull (Martin Scorsese, 1980)

Cure (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 1997)

He often lists movies for publications and labels including *Criterion* and [IndieWire](#). A more comprehensive list includes:

The Fabelmans (2022)

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)

Vertigo (1958)

No Country For Old Men (2007)

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

Children of Men (2006)

Dead Ringers (1988)

The Square (2017)

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (2017)

Downsizing (2017)

Those Who Make Revolution Halfway Only Dig Their Own Graves (2016)

There Will Be Blood (2007)

Mother! (2017)

A Star Is Born (2018)

Seven Samurai (1954)

The Rider (2017)

The Beguiled (2017)

Inception (2010)

Tenet (2020)

Blade Runner (1982)

Amores Perros (2001)

Dogtooth (2010)

Dogville (2004)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

Duel (1971)

Jaws (1975)

Under the Skin (2014)

A Prophet (2010)

Dunkirk (2017)

There is even a language centred around his films. “Bongtails”: A portmanteau of “Bong” and “Details.”

“It’s Bong Joon Ho’s Dystopia. We Just Live in It.” [The New York Times](#).

The “Bong-Hive” is Bong Joon Ho’s dedicated fanbase.

His super fans used stan culture to promote best picture Oscar-winner *Parasite* – and non-English-language films in general. [Reference](#).

PART TWO: THE FEATURES

“Is that your dog ... Then we can eat it together.” — Shadow Man

Bong Joon Ho’s debut feature was *Barking Dogs Never Bite* from 2000. Synopsis: Frustrated with loud barking, an academic (Lee Sung-jae) wages war against dogs in his apartment building.

Trigger warning! The film may not harm animals... but you would struggle to see how they didn’t at least cause the animals’ stress.

This is an urban tale (or tail) that makes use of Bong’s eccentricities and exploration on class through urban spaces.

The film, from the offset, sets the tone and circumstances of the narrative; a slow building story that shows despicable and almost irredeemable characters wallowing in their misery.

Bong’s shots of tower blocks are somewhat Hitchcockian in their compositions, reminding u of those voyeuristic shots from the likes of *Read Window*. The class sof the characters is very much displayed through the spaces they inhabit from the working class on the surface in the high rise right down to the “animals” who dwell in the basements committing awful acts. If I’m honest, it’s not a good movie. Mostly down to the subject matter and the company we are forced to keep.

“Chief, I may know nothing else, but my eyes can read people.” — Detective Park Doo-Man

His second feature (and one of his best) is *Memories of Murder* from 2003. Synopsis: South Korea, 1986. While the country is still under the military’s reign, two local, unreliable detectives are joined by an experienced one from Seoul to investigate a series of mysterious murder cases.

Impeccably shot, Bong plays with the tonal shifts we come to expect from his work.

It is a police procedural but full of character quirks – a black comedy wrapped up inside a riveting thriller.

It deals with toxic masculinity and underlying insecurities with female characters often dismissed throughout, who may know more about the case than the men.

Characters are beaten and ridiculed throughout often highlighting the corruption of the era in which it is set when militant powers governed South Korea during the 1980s.



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Framing and devices are used throughout and we are reminded of other cinematic influences such as George Sluizer's *Spoorloos* (1988), aka *The Vanishing*.

More explicitly, a major influence of the film is Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure* (1997) that Bong has often stated being the greatest film of all time. It's certainly one of the best serial killer movies, that's for sure.

Troubled faces that stare back at us and question. Right up to it's unforgettable ending.

Feel free to watch my video essay for *Cinema Force* [“These Things Left Unanswered A MEMORIES OF MURDER Retrospective.”](#)

“In a word... her birth was an accident, and so was her death.” — Park Hie-bong

Bong Joon Ho's monster movie *The Host* from 2006 is his first step towards science fiction and horror. Synopsis: After careless American military personnel dump chemicals into South Korea's Han River a creature emerges from the tainted waters several years later attacking local residents. When the creature abducts their daughter, a vendor and his bickering family decide that they must put their differences aside and save her.

Even though *The Host* is a monster movie, inspired by Bong's love of Kaiju movies,

it is predominantly a film about family and the wider implications of society when it is “poisoned,” which we will get to.

This is a film that makes the most of its monster and although has classic moments of dread as characters evade the creature, Bong is never afraid to show it in full daylight.

First, let us remind ourselves of Kaiju – the most famous of them all...

Directed by Ishirō Honda (1911-1993), he made 44 feature films spanning almost 60 years. He also served in WWII. He also managed a ‘comfort station’. Euphemism for brothel, eventually ending up as a Chinese POW. His film career began with Toho making propaganda, then documentaries. He worked with Kurosawa on *Stray Dog* (1949)

Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka saw the film on a business flight back to Japan. Ironically wasn't released in Japan until a few weeks after *Godzilla*. During his flight, Tanaka wrote an outline with the working title *The Giant Monster from 20,000 Miles Beneath the Sea* in which the effects were created by Ray Harryhausen.

Designed by Teizō Toshimitsu and Akira Watanabe.

The film has been released by the *BFI* and a *Criterion* set of all the movies. It also became a Saturday morning cartoon.



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Press release concerning the 2000 water dumping:

“Nowadays the U.S army’s toxic fluid dumping to Han-river is main issue in Korea. On February 9th, in the US Eighth Army Mortuary Building, 480 bottles of formaldehyde, used for embalming were dumped in a drain without any detoxification. It has been confirmed that the US Army has been releasing Formaldehyde for long periods of time into the Han-River.”

The Host was (in part) inspired by an incident in 2000, in which a Korean mortician working for the U.S. military in Seoul reported that he was ordered to dump a large amount of formaldehyde down the drain.

This incident all started when the so called environmental group Green Korea released reports over the internet about the dumping of formaldehyde on Yongsan followed by leading protests against USFK (United States Forces Korea)

Concept art online shows the meticulous detail and development of the creature, along with a “Making of...” that can be found on the disc extras and via YouTube.

Bong Joon Ho uses genre conventions through:

Genre blending:

He often combines genres, like the thriller with the social commentary in *Memories of Murder* or the monster movie with the family drama in *The Host*.

Satire and humour:

He uses satire and black humor to criticise societal problems and make his points in a thought-provoking way.

Surprise twists and turns:

His films are known for their unexpected plot twists and developments that keep audiences engaged and thinking.

“You know him, he couldn’t even hurt a water bug.” — Mother

His 2009 film *Mother* returns to *Memories* territory and provides the perfect Bong double bill of crime. Synopsis: When a mother learns that her mentally challenged son is accused of the brutal murder of a young girl, she conducts an independent investigation to prove his innocence.

It is a hyper-focused film in terms of character study with Bong bringing a female figure to the forefront. As mentioned, the film is closest in tone to *Memories of Murder* as the story takes audiences on an observational journey through the eyes of an unnamed matriarch.



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There are many moments we are so close to the character we are practically in her head.

The film is beautifully shot, often contrasting quiet moments with moments of impact. Looking closely at chosen frames from the film the Bongtails really stand out in terms of framing and cinematography.

Beautifully composed you can see the both the rural elements and use of architecture Bong uses so well in his films.

Tonally, the film also makes use of colour... or lack thereof. Mood and atmosphere prevail.

“Order is the barrier that holds back the flood of death.” — Mason

Bong’s first English language movie is 2013’s *Snowpiercer*. Synopsis: In a post-apocalyptic ice age, only a few survivors of the human race are left on board a train travelling the globe. Curtis (played by Chris Evans) leads a group of people wanting to control the engine and the future.

““Order is the barrier that holds back the flood of death. We must all of us on this train of life remain in our allotted station.” — Jacques Lob and Jean-Marc Rochette, *Snowpiercer*, 1982

Based on the first volume of the 1982 French graphic novel series by the original creators: writer Jacques Lob and illustrator Jean-Marc Rochette.

Although Bong had already played with horror in *The Host*, now he embraced dystopian sci-fi. The story is perfect for Bong’s obsession with social themes as it takes an totalitarian model and transposes it to the confines of a train.

Instead of the traditional high rise spaces we see – a vertical hierarchy – we see a horizontal one hurtling towards an inevitable doom with the workers relocated towards the back while the elite and an unseen presence live at the front. It results in a shocking and sickening ending.

The design of the world is fully realised with some incredible high octane shots as the train hurtles through its ice-cold environment.

Despite Bong not so comfortable with Chris Evans in the lead (due to his physique), he still manages to play against type after his success as Captain America. Here he is a rough, tough anti-hero with a dark secret.

Unfortunately, the film went through distribution hell, despite being critically acclaimed, Bong clashing with producer Harvey Weinstein, who frequently interfered in order to demand “his” version of the film. In light of this, it had barely scraped a run in American cinemas and wasn't released in the UK at all.

“Translations are sacred.” — Jay



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Okja is another eco tale from Bong. Synopsis: For 10 idyllic years, young Mija has been caretaker and constant companion to Okja - a massive animal and an even bigger friend - at her home in the mountains of South Korea. But that changes when family-owned, multinational conglomerate Mirando Corporation takes Okja for themselves and transports her to New York, where an image-obsessed and self-promoting CEO has big plans for Mija's dearest friend, for whom she sets out on a rescue mission for.

Okja's design was based on the face of a manatee and the body of a hippopotamus. The hippopotamus-like design was specifically chosen as a reference to the infamous 1910 "Hippo Bill," which proposed the idea of America importing, breeding and farming hippopotamuses for meat.

Due to be so severely burned by the distribution of *Snowpiercer*, his first film in English, the thought of one of his films being championed by Netflix - and thereby immediately assuring a built-in audience - was very appealing to him. When it was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, the audience booed when the Netflix logo appeared. However, they did give the film a 4-minute standing ovation when it was over.

The film explores themes of corporate greed, animal rights, and the relationship between humans and animals. It critiques the industrialisation of food production, highlighting the exploitation and inhumane treatment of animals in factory farming and the slaughterhouse. The film also examines the power of corporate influence and the struggle for individual autonomy against large organizations.

Bong and his producer Dooho Choi visited a real slaughterhouse in Colorado to prepare for the scene in the film. The visit temporarily converted the two into vegans.

The film attracted another stellar cast of Western actors including the return of Tilda Swinton from *Snowpiercer*, Jake Gyllenhaal and Paul Dano

"Rich people are naive. No resentments. No creases on them." — Ki-taek

Bong's Oscar-winning *Parasite* elevated his career over night. Synopsis: The struggling Kim family sees an opportunity when the son starts working for the wealthy Park family. Soon, all of them find a way to work within the same household and start living a parasitic life.

There is a graphic novel of the film from 2020 based on Bong's meticulous storyboards.

The film satirizes the vast wealth inequality in South Korea and beyond. It explores the themes of class struggle, social mobility, and the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy, using a darkly comedic and suspenseful narrative. It also delves into the complexities of identity, belonging, and the blurred lines between the rich and the poor.

Scholar's stones or landscape rocks are known as "suseok" in Korean, have a deep history in East Asia. Bong's father collected them when he was younger. The practice of collecting these attractively shaped stones dates back thousands of years, but they became a fixture of Korean society during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1897), when they were commonly displayed on the writing tables of Confucian scholars -- hence their English name: "scholars rocks."



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The Parks' house, said in the film to be designed by a fictional architect named Namgoong Hyeonja, was a set completely built from scratch. The building pulls you into a strict sense of internal and external spaces and perfect framing devices during both night and day. It gives a sense that the family are that spoor just viewing through a window is enough. That there is no need or the high tech. But it is also used to trap and frame characters.

“Mickey Barnes: Our entire life is a punishment.” — Mickey Barnes

His most recent film, *Mickey 17* returns to sci-fi territory. Synopsis: A disposable employee is sent on a human expedition to colonize the ice world Niflheim. After one iteration dies, a new body is regenerated with most of his memories intact.

Based on the novel *Mickey7* (2022) by Edward Ashton. In an interview promoting the film, he was asked why he changed the title in which he responded: “So I could kill him ten more times.”

According to IMDb: While it's well known that Pattinson plays multiple versions of Mickey due to the cloning process, what many don't realise is that director Bong Joon-ho insisted on filming certain key scenes without Pattinson knowing which version of Mickey he was playing until just before shooting. This method was meant to capture the confusion and existential dread of a clone struggling with his own identity, leading to some of the film's most unsettling and raw performances.

The film's creepers were designed by Bong and Jang Hee-chul, who collaborated with Bong to create monster for *The Host*.

The film was divisive often being commended for its strong themes as a “heavy-handed Trump satire”, but messy storytelling.

Themes include space colonisation, near-fascist leadership, corruption, propaganda and censorship, Indigenous resistance, climate change (early in the film we hear that there's a sandstorm smashing earth), and treating citizens (or loyal subjects) as expendable.

The Art and Making of Mickey 17 showcases what was involved with the production. As with most “Making of...” books it covers everything from storyboards to concept art, production design and prototypes.

His next feature will be a deep-sea animated adventure called *The Valley*, due out in 2027 with John Carpenter set to score the film.

“Once you get over the one-inch tall barrier of letters, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films.” — Bong Joon Ho

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Bong Joon Ho has become a major force in breaking down the boundaries between home grown commercial cinema and word cinema. He is, as with most great filmmakers, a student of cinema who, in turn, is already teaching the next generation what genre filmmaking can achieve.