

Interview: Director Lee Ho-Jae at the Asian Pop-Up Cinema

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 27, 2016 - 9:36am

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CHICAGO – The 2016 Fall Season of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema of Chicago kicked off on September 17th, with the South Korean film “Sori: Voice of the Heart.” The director behind this purposeful man-and-machine relationship movie is Lee Ho-Jae. The unusual story combined our modern tech world with a satellite turned robot who is sick of it all.

“Sori: Voice of the Heart” is a science fiction film, as a grief stricken father (Lee Sung-Min) uses the help of an artificial intelligent-loaded communications satellite – he finds it washed up on the beach – to find his missing and presumed dead daughter. The road picture also features NASA and South Korean officials looking for the downed satellite, and a grieving father finding some closure through the journey. This is the second feature from director Lee Ho-Jae, who through this film has an amazing eye for how humanity lives, amidst our tech madness and destructive nature.



‘Sori: Voices of the Heart,’ Directed by Lee Ho-Jae, at Chicago’s Asian Pop-Up Cinema

Photo credit: [AsianPopUpCinema.org](#)

The next presentation for the 2016 Asian Pop-Up Cinema series is a free presentation of “Won Ka Yan,” a film from Hong Kong by director Benny Lau on Friday, September 30th. The film will screen at the Joffrey Tower at 10 East Randolph Street in Chicago. For details, [click here](#). [19] The film series was founded by Chicago film program veteran Sophia Wong Boccio, and is a revolving showcase of diverse Asian films, highlighting Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Filipino and Korean offerings with English subtitles. Screenings occur at the AMC River East 21 in downtown Chicago and at the Wilmette Theater in Wilmette, Illinois.

HollywoodChicago.com talked to director Lee Ho-Jae the morning after his film opened the Fall season of the Pop-Up film festival.

HollywoodChicago.com: You were challenged with many complex scenes and special effects in this film. Which of these set pieces proved to be the most difficult for you?

Lee Ho-Jae: The climatic scene, that takes place on a shipping yard crane, was most difficult in post production, and terms of who I worked with on the CGI, because of the atmosphere of the lighting.

HollywoodChicago.com: Even though a machine is front and center in the film's story, there is a humanity and spiritual element within it. Do you think humans are losing some of their spirituality through their connection with electronic devices such as phones and computers?

Ho-Jae: Definitely. This film isn't so much about artificial intelligence, as much as the conscience we have lost. Even as the robot develops a conscience, what has happened to us? That is the question I wanted to raise in the film.

HollywoodChicago.com: The South Korean film industry has done more challenging and bold storytelling in the last ten years, how does the day-to-day society in the country influence this evolution?

Ho-Jae: South Koreans adapt new technology quite fast, and because of this, it is both a dynamic embracing of the future and a loss of a tracking system in our lives from time to time. For me, the South Korean film industry is moving more toward a Hollywood model, more industrial and commercial, than what we were embracing ten years ago.

HollywoodChicago.com: Your lead actor, Lee Sung-Min, had an extraordinary performance. In your story, does he, as the father, have a typical estranged relationship with his daughter, as far as how South Korean family relationships are?

Ho-Jae: That relationship was vital to the film. It's very natural to me that a relationship between any father and teenage daughter can become distant. It's a common thread of life. The important thing is how they patch up the relationship as the daughter ages, even as it feels awkward when they become closer together as she is in her twenties.



Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com with Director Lee Ho-Jae

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

HollywoodChicago.com: Because your robot Sori has such important intelligence within her database, she is chased by both American and South Korean authorities throughout the film. What did you and your screenwriter want to say about spying and data gathering about us through this story?

Ho-Jae: In general, I believe we give up our personal information too readily. Not just to the government, but also to corporations. We become categorized politically and economically when this occurs, just like a product, and again lose a part of our humanity.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since the larger nature of the special effects felt like an American film, which of our films influenced you the most?

Ho-Jae: Definitely Brad Bird's 'The Iron Giant,' because of the relationship of the boy and the technological force he teams up with, and of course 'E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial.' A lot of people were comparing the robot to R2D2 from 'Star Wars,' but that was unintentional. I was trying to get a look of a satellite upside down. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the subject of the next film you are working on?

Ho-Jae: It is a treasure hunt, similar to David O. Russell’s ‘Three Kings.’ It will be set in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, a kind of no-man’s-land between the two countries, and all that means in the context of the story.

The next presentation of the 2016 Asian Pop-Up Cinema is “Wong Ka Yan,” and will screen on Friday, September 30th, 2016, at 7:30pm, at the Joffrey Towers Studio A, 10 East Randolph Street in Chicago. For the complete Fall Schedule, [click here](#). [20]



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 20 2024 - 12:40am):
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