

Interview: Chicago's Asian Pop-up Cinema Continues with 'The Pension' on April 16, 2019

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CHICAGO Two weeks to go in Season Eight of Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema (APUC), and this week (April 16-17, 2019) is Korea week. Director Jeonghuh Deok-Jae will appear on behalf of the film "The Pension" – a anthology film set at the title hotel in South Korea – at AMC River East 21 in Chicago on April 16th, 2019. For more details and tickets, [click here](#). [23]

"The Pension" is four short films in one, and each one of the four are directed by a different person. Segment One deals with mourning parents (their daughter has died in an accident) and the negativity in the desire for revenge. Segment Two is a couple who are trying to revive a dying marriage, but there a secret in the woods. Segment Three is a mystery ... why do two different people have interest in the same room? And finally Segment Four, written and directed by Jeonghuh Deok-Jae, is a farcical comedy piece about love and con men. The whole film is set in one "Pension" hotel, and the stories do come together, even as they are different.



Segment Four of 'The Pension,' Directed by Jeonghuh Deok-Jae

Photo credit: [AsianPopUpCinema.org](#)

This Chicago Premiere is part of the program-packed Season Eight of APUC, as their new format (multiple films per week) will spotlight a

different Asian country or theme every week. APUC is facilitated by founder and veteran film programmer Sophia Wong Bocchio, and Season Eight has an amazing line up of films from Japan, Mongolia, Singapore, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Indonesia and South Korea. Films mainly screen at Chicago's AMC River East 21, with various other locations throughout the season (click link below at the end of the article for more details).

On the day before the screening of "The Pension," Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com interviewed director Jeonghuh Deok-Jae (below, through an interpreter) about the structure of the film, his first-time director duties and his many influences in the journey.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since this is your first major directorial debut, what is the origin of your involvement with the project, and did you write the story first or did you write after you got the director assignment?

Jeonghuh Deok-Jae: All of the other directors in the films were friends of mine, we helped each other on various projects. As we were preparing our next move, one of my friends suggested that we work together. After some stops and starts, it was suggested instead of trying to collaborate on one film, let's all write a short segment based on the same theme ... in this case, a 'pension' [Korean term for hotel resort].

HollywoodChicago.com: When you have a comedy piece like you did, what was the audition process like to find the right people for the characters?

Deok-Jae: The time we had to make the film was very short, so the audition process was not elaborate. The production company brought in a bunch of actors who they thought would work, and we selected from there. Luckily for me in my segment, they were are veteran performers, and well known.

HollywoodChicago.com: What does your segment in 'The Pension' say about man and women relationships currently in South Korea?

Deok-Jae: It's remarkable that all the segments seem to be about relationships, because when we started the project the theme was still the pension. It turned out to be a coincidence that the stories were all about men and women, but that wasn't necessarily the intention. In my segment especially, it really was about audience fun, and I focus on events rather than the relationships.

HollywoodChicago.com: What did you find most interesting about directing this film, and what did you find most challenging?

Deok-Jae: Immediately I think about the challenge, which was the limited time we had to shoot our segments. We had little time to prepare, and then it seemed even a shorter time to produce. The most interesting part that even in that time challenge, the set was fun and loose, both on the production and actor side.

HollywoodChicago.com: South Korea has been getting a bigger and better reputation for their film industry. How has that helped you as a developing filmmaker?



Filmmakers Kim Eun Kyoung & Jeonghuh Deok-Jae

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Deok-Jae: You're right, the industry is getting more prominent. To be honest, though, they don't support a smaller production like ours when there are bigger films to be made. When we started the film, we didn't know if we'd finish it or if anyone would want to screen it. But when it all came together, we did create some hope for other small productions to get to a larger audience.

The film was funded by the Korean Film Council, our scenario won out over other applicants. So it's also true that the government is committing to smaller films.

HollywoodChicago.com: Which filmmaker do you watch when you need inspiration or a creative refreshment when you're blocked in a story?

Deok-Jae: I'm asked this question frequently. When I was younger, the answer was fairly clear, I knew who I liked and who I'd turn to. But as time goes by, my experience with film has changed, and I don't really have a specific go-to film place. For example, even though my segment is a comedy, I got some ideas from different genres, like a sad documentary. In the end, it's all connected for my creative inspiration.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the best advice you've ever received about being a filmmaker and how do you honor that advice in your segment in 'The Pension'?

Deok-Jae: One of my inspirations is Ryu Jang Ha, who actually directed the second segment of the 'The Pension.' When he debuted as a director, it was my debut as a screenwriter. We've worked together for twenty years, and he always had good advice for me. For 'The Pension,' he kept my focus on the big picture of my story, and the big picture of the film's theme.

For specific film comprehension, I do also turn to my girlfriend Kim Eun Kyoung, who is also a filmmaker. She was great at breaking down the scenes and finding the 'small moment' to focus on in each bigger scene. Of course, I don't always agree with her, because the genre she works in is horror, and this was a comedy. [laughs]

Season Eight of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema continues with "The Pension" on Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 (7pm), at the AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago. Director Jeonghuh Deok-Jae will make an appearance on behalf of the film. For a complete overview on Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema Season Eight, [click here](#). [24]



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