

Interview: Lee Min-Jae Brings Zombies to Chicago on Asian Pop-Up Cinema's Opening Night

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CHICAGO – Season Nine of Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema (APUC) opened with an undead celebration as director Lee Min-Jae brought his hilarious horror satire "The Odd Family: Zombie on Sale" to Chicago on September 10th, 2019. The film was part of a South Korea themed week for APUC, as it launched its latest series.

Human Bio, the largest pharmaceutical company in Korea conducts illegal experiments on humans. One test goes wrong, and results in the creation of a twentysomething zombie. The creature escapes, and encounters an odd family named Park in a remote countryside. When their father is bitten, they discover that one of the symptoms is a fountain of youth. This leads to profiting off the zombie's bite, and repercussions for those who take advantage of it. Meanwhile, the youngest Park daughter has a crush on "Jongbie" (as she nicknames him), and is the only one that really protects him.



'The Odd Family: Zombie for Sale' from South Korea

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

The film kicked off a program-packed Season Nine of APUC, as their new format (multiple films per week) highlights a different Asian country or theme every week. Next week, China will be in the spotlight. APUC is facilitated by founder and veteran film programmer Sophia Wong Boccio, and Season Nine features films from South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, the Phillippines, and Hong Kong, among others. The 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).

Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com talked to director Lee Min-Jae and his wife and story/screenplay collaborator Eum Zoo-Young – through an interpreter – of “The Odd Family: Zombie on Sale,” regarding the “rules of Zombies,” the director’s visual style and the nature of family.

HollywoodChicago.com: Cinema history has established certain ‘Zombie Rules’ about those creatures that Zombie movies are expected to follow. What rules did you want to follow, and what rules did you want to break?

Lee Min-Jae: Yes, I know those rules, I wanted to both follow and twist them. For example, we’ve always known that if you’re bitten by a Zombie you turn into a Zombie, but what if that didn’t happen in all cases? I wanted to create irony and comedy in this film, and still stick close to the Zombie legends.

Also I set the film in a rural area, instead of the usual densely populated areas in other Zombie films, mostly because I felt that people who were more remote wouldn’t know what a Zombie is.

HollywoodChicago.com: The character of the pregnant woman acts as zombie like as the creature. What did you want to say about being a zombie in real life as opposed to be a real zombie?

Eum Zoo-Young: First off, the character of the pregnant wife was based on me and my experiences. [laughs] Which was to say I was a Zombie? Her talent was basically killing things that were alive, so it was part of the irony. So to introduce her to the Zombie, an undead creature, was to bring him back to life.

Lee Min-Jae: There had to be somebody who was going to take control, so why not a pregnant mother figure? She became the head of the family.

HollywoodChicago.com: Your visual style is distinctive and very cinematic. When you were first starting out, how did you want to make sure your filmmaker vision was unique?



Eum Zoo-Young & Lee Min Jae in Chicago
Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

Lee Min-Jae: I always start out by thinking ‘what kind of movie do I want to watch?’ In my opinion, in life everyone needs a comedy. So my visual expression, in the usual sense of Zombie and Zombie gore, was to lighten it up cinematically. It made be seen as kitsch, but my cinematographer and art director collaborated to create a different kind of feel for the Zombie movie.

HollywoodChicago.com: You call the family “oddball” in the title of the film, but they seem more real than odd. What were saying about the nature of families in this film?

Lee Min-Jae: I agree about the family being closer to a typical family. The ‘odd’ in the title refers more to the acceptance of the Zombie into their lives, and becoming an even more odd family because of that mix. Also this typical family discovers their love for each other once they step up to the challenge of bringing that Zombie home.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally, what Zombie Power would you like to have, and who would be the first person you would bite?

Lee Min-Jae: [Laughs] Well, I think I’d become isolated because I wouldn’t want to bite anyone, especially my wife.

Eum Zoo-Young: Oh, that’s a convenient excuse to leave! [laughs] If I were to become a Zombie, I’d bite my husband, so we could stay together.

On Page Two, some film highlights upcoming in the Fall Season Nine of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema.

Four upcoming films for Season Nine of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema ...

SWING KIDS (South Korea) – Winner for Best Director at the 2019 Baeksang Arts Award, this swinging musical drama is set during the Korean War, where the soldiers at a POW camp plan a tap show to distract both themselves and the prisoners from the hardships of war. Led by a former Broadway dancer and a rebellious North Korean soldier, the band of prisoners find a new sense of freedom in dancing. Critics rave ... “Swing Kids” is such a dizzying, anachronistic mash-up of genres and cultures — tap-dancing musical, violent war movie, social-justice drama, and slapstick comedy with music from David Bowie, The Beatles and swing king Louis Prima — that it deserves respect.” Free and open to the public. For details and to RSVP, [click here](#). [20] **Saturday, September 14th, 2pm at IIT Tower Auditorium, 10 West 35th Street, Chicago**

THE ENIGMA OF THE ARRIVAL (China) – After many years a group of college friends reunite, having not seen each other since the disappearance of Dongdong, a girl that they all secretly fancied. The circumstances of her disappearance caused the eventual end of their friendships, and much has remained unsaid. Until now. “ ... a subtle examination of media consumption, masculinity, and declining social trust in a rapidly changing China.” For details and tickets, [click here](#). [21] **Thursday, September 19th, 7pm at AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago.**



'Swing Kids' at APUC

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

MELANCHOLIC (Japan) – Kazuhiko isn't enjoying his life, despite earning his degree from a top university. He runs into a high school friend at a bathhouse, and through that connection begins to work there. He eventually discovers that this bathhouse is being used for nefarious after-hours activities, which is bad enough, but then Kazuhiko finds that his colleague Matsumoto is an assassin. “Melancholic” is darkly funny, viscerally thrilling and improbably heartwarming, all without departing far from the stark immediacy of its opening scenes.” For details and tickets, [click here](#). [22] **Wednesday, September 25th, 8pm at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 North State Street, Chicago.**

THE POOL (Thailand) – A couple are stuck in the desolated pool twenty feet (six meters) deep without food/water, a ladder or a way out, and somehow need to survive. To make matters more challenging, an unfriendly amphibian is teetering on the brink of joining them. “The Pool” is Ping Lumpraplerng's (“Loveaholic,” “Dreamaholic”) fourth film, and features Thai superstar Ken Theeradeth Wonpuapan, who returns to big screen for the first time in nine years. Winner of Critic's Prize at Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival 2019. “A deep swimming pool. Two trapped people. One hungry crocodile. No way of escape. The tensest movie I've seen in years...” For details and tickets, [click here](#). [23] **Wednesday, October 2nd, 7pm at AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago.**

Season Nine of Asian Pop-Up Cinema focuses on China next week, beginning with the North American premiere of “Crossing the Border” on

Wednesday, September 18th, 2019 (7pm), at the AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago. Director Huo Meng will make an appearance on behalf of the film, moderated by Dr. Jennifer Dorothy Lee. For details and tickets, [click here](#). [24] For a complete overview on Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema [click here](#). [25]



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