



The Main Feature

Season 41 – Issue 2 - Screening 23 September 2021

Parasite (Gisaengchung)

South Korea, 2019
132 minutes Certificate 15

Director Bong Joon Ho
Screenplay Bong Joon Ho and Jin-won Han,
from a story by Bong Joon Ho
Producers Min Heoi Heo, Bong Joon Ho, Sin-
as Kwak, Miky Lee, Moon Yang
Kwon
Cinematography Kyung-pyo Hong

Cast

Kang-ho Song	Ki Taek
Sun-kyun Lee	Dong Ik
Yeo-jeong Cho	Yeon Kyo
Woo-sik Choi	Ki Woo
So-dam Park	Ki Jung
LeeJeong-eun	Moon Gwang
Jang Hye-jin	Chung Sook
Park Myeong-hoon	Geun Se



Our last film, *Nomadland*, won three Oscars in 2021. Tonight's, *Parasite*, had even greater success in 2020, winning four Oscars: Best Picture (the first foreign language film to do so); Best Director; Best Original Screenplay; and Best Foreign Film as well as two BAFTAs and the Palme d'Or at Cannes (the first Korean film to do so). Quite a haul. And quite a success for Korean cinema. But are you like me: unfamiliar (to put it mildly) with what Korea offers? I looked up a list of the 20 classics of modern Korean cinema, compiled by the Guardian film critic, Peter Bradshaw. The only one I had heard of was *Parasite*, though four on the list were by Bong Joon Ho, its director. So perhaps looking at his films is a good place to start since his output has been both prolific and varied.

Memories of a Murder (2003): Based on the real case of a Zodiac-style Korean serial killer who murdered 10 women in Hwaeseong between 1986 and 1991 without being captured, Bong's film renewed interest in the case. The killer was finally identified and charged in 2019 after arrest on another crime, but could not be prosecuted for the Hwaeseong murders because the statute of limitations had expired. Bong's longtime leading man Song Kang-ho plays the chaotic detective in charge.

The Host (2006): The film features a monster, created by emptying bottles of formaldehyde into a river, who kidnaps a man's daughter, and the dysfunctional family's attempts to rescue her. According to the director, his inspiration came from a local article about a deformed fish with an S-shaped spine caught in the Han river

Mother (2009): A psychological suspense thriller, with a lively and satirical sense of how forensics – that supposedly exact science – can go terribly wrong. But this is also a hypnotically strange and gripping study of a middle-aged woman who sets out to get her learning-disabled son off a murder charge.

Snowpiercer (2013): A cult futuristic drama with Chris Evans and Tilda Swinton, about a train with a microcosmic class-based society aboard, hundreds of years into a new Ice Age, cutting through the snow and ice.

Okja (2017): An action-adventure film, made for Netflix, about a young girl who raised a genetically modified "super pig" (the titular Okja) and, after it is taken to the United States, goes on a mission to rescue it from mistreatment at the hands of the meat industry.



That wide range of genres makes you wonder what the director turned to in *Parasite*. In fact, it's a comedy-drama story of the poor Kim family (headed by Song Kang-ho), with echoes of the Japanese family in *Shoplifters* which we saw last season. It begins as the son, Ki-woo (Choi Woo-sik), gets a job tutoring English to the daughter of a

wealthy tech CEO, Park Dong-ik (Lee Sun-kyun). Soon enough, others in the Kim family, via less-than-legitimate means, find gainful employment in the Park's luxury household. I'll say no more, because Bong asked reviewers to reveal no more than the basic set-up.

Bong himself tutored for a rich family when he was in college (he studied sociology at Yonsei University in Seoul). 'The sequence that depicts when he enters the house was pretty similar to what I experienced - I grew up in a middle-class family that's in between the poor and the rich family in this film, but despite that, when I first entered, I had this very eerie and unfamiliar sense of this house. Actually, they had a sauna on their second floor – at the time it was quite shocking to me!'

Bong Joon Ho was interviewed in the Guardian in 2020, after *Parasite* had won at Cannes, but before the Oscars. He was asked:

Q: Although your films are well-loved for their dark humour, they can also be cynical in their outlook. Would you describe yourself as a pessimist?

A: I don't think I'm pessimistic at every point, but I want to be honest in the face of the reality that stands in front of us. With *Parasite*, my thinking was that mankind's achieved such great development — like the mobile devices we see in front of us but if we think about the past 30 years, has the gap between rich and poor dissipated? Not really. I have a son myself, do I think things are going to improve in his generation? I don't really think that either. That is the source of a lot of fear, actually. So I wanted to be honest with that fear and sadness and really deliver that.



Michael Hipkins

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/feb/13/classics-of-modern-south-korean-cinema-ranked>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/jan/31/parasite-director-bong-joon-ho-korea-seems-glamorous-but-the-young-are-in-despair>

Adieu Bébel - Jean-Paul Belmondo's battered face, laconic style and roguish smile captured the imagination of French 1960s youth.

Belmondo, who has died at his Paris home aged 88, was the cool rebel of the new wave of French cinema typified in Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 film classic, *A Bout de Souffle* (*Breathless*). His moody performance as a doomed thief and Humphrey Bogart fan struck a chord and saw him dubbed the Gallic James Dean. Later, he forsook arts cinema to become a highly bankable commercial actor, as at home in comedy as in drama.

Affectionately known to his French fans as Bébel, Jean-Paul Belmondo was born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a suburb of Paris on 9 Apr 1933, the grandson of an Italian workman from Piedmont who had emigrated to French Algeria. His father, Paul Belmondo, was a leading academic sculptor and professor at the École Supérieure des Beaux Arts whose statues grace many a Parisian park. His mother, Sarah, was a painter. The intensely Bohemian atmosphere of his upbringing had a formative effect on him. He failed at school and became an amateur boxer. In his short-lived career, he won 15 of his 23 bouts before giving up to concentrate on acting. His trademark bumpy nose, however, was a result of a fight in the school playground rather than the ring.



Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in *A bout de souffle* (*Breathless*) 1960

After performing on stage in provincial theatres, his movie break came with the role of Laszlo in Marcel Carné's 1958 film *Les Tricheurs*. On the strength of his forceful portrayal, he was given his first starring role in *A Bout de Souffle*. One critic described him as 'a bewitchingly ugly

man.' His cult image carried him through several action films such as *Les Distractions* and *La Novice*.

Determined not to be stereotyped, Belmondo also accepted more demanding roles such as the idealistic intellectual of Vittorio de Sica's *La Ciociara* in 1961, and as the young country priest in Philippe de Broca's swashbuckling *Cartouche* the following year. He also enjoyed comic roles, in Godard's *Une Femme est une Femme*, and, particularly, in De Broca's *L'Homme de Rio*, in which he played a suave, unflappable secret agent. By the mid-60s, he had switched completely to the commercial mainstream and formed his own production company, Cerito.

He even performed his own stunts in such films as *Les Tribulations d'Un Chinois en Chine* in 1965, though he gave this practice up after an accident in the 1985 film *Hold-up*. He brightened many an all-star cast in international productions such as *Is Paris Burning?* (1966), the James Bond spoof *Casino Royale* (1967) and with Alain Delon in the gangster movie *Borsalino* (1970). He moved away from action movies claiming that 'I don't want to be a flying grandpa of the French cinema.'

In 1987 Belmondo returned to the stage for the first time for nearly 30 years and divided his work between theatre and film for the rest of his career. Two years later he won a Cesar, the French equivalent of an Oscar, for his performance in *Itinéraire d'un Enfant Gâté*. He branched out creatively as part of the ensemble in Varda's homage to international cinema *Les Cent et une Nuits de Samon Cinema* in 1995 and as the Jean Valjean figure in Claude Lelouch's re-working of *Les Misérables* in the same year.

Jean-Paul Belmondo was divorced from his first wife Elodie in 1965. His second marriage to Constantin also failed. He later had long relationships with actresses Ursula Andress and Laura Antonelli. Cinema audiences at home and abroad were drawn to his charm and seeming disregard for whatever absurdities were taking place on screen.

The French state paid tribute to Belmondo at a ceremony at Les Invalides on 9 September, with President Macron giving the eulogy in front of the actor's family and representatives of the cultural life of France.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11811293>

Comments and reactions to: **Nomadland**

No of reaction slips received = 24

Average score = 7.13

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	~	2	5	7	8	2	~

What happened to the mighty USA?

Lovely scenery.

That Frances McDormand gets all the glamorous jobs!

Amazing insight into a way of life inconceivable to live.

Perhaps better as a TV half-hour documentary. Frances McDormand excellent.

Towering central performance. Sad portrait of loneliness, with excellent photography – but can't help feeling it is over-rated!

Splendid performance by Frances McDormand with insights into a little-known aspect of life in the US.

I found this film to be both uplifting and depressing at the same time.

An eye opener to the American dream – very enjoyable.

Certainly a film of our time but rather depressing, like the world at this time. Scenery spectacular.

Good to be back on the road!

A true village hall experience – the problem with the sound.

Very moving; thought-provoking; beautifully shot; lovely music. An eye-opener.

Position	Film	Average score
1	Nomadland	7.13

Forthcoming attraction: 14 October 2021 – **Baby Driver**

Edgar Wright puts pedal to the metal for wildly enjoyable heist caper. This high-revving thrill ride about a music-obsessed teenage getaway driver is a terrifically stylish piece of work with a banging soundtrack. The Guardian

An awe-inspiring piece of filmmaking from Edgar Wright that plays out as a musical through the lens of an action thriller. Sweet, funny and utterly original — you won't see a film like it this year. Empire



A film about illegal abortions in 1960s France has won the top prize at the Venice Film Festival.

Audrey Diwan's *Happening* (*L'Événement*), based on an autobiographical novel by Annie Ernaux, is about a woman seeking a termination to continue studying despite the risk of prison or death. 'I did this movie with anger, with desire, with my belly, my guts, my heart and my head,' Diwan said as she accepted the award. The film comes after controversial new laws banning abortion after six weeks were introduced in Texas. The award was selected by a jury led by Parasite director Bong Joon-Ho.

The second prize, the Silver Lion, was presented to Italian director Paolo Sorrentino for *The Hand of God*, a film about his youth in the southern city of Naples. Other women filmmakers were also honoured during Saturday's ceremony, with New Zealand's Jane Campion picking up the best director award for *The Power of the Dog*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch. Maggie Gyllenhaal, meanwhile, was awarded the best screenplay prize for *The Lost Daughter*, which features Olivia Colman.

Penelope Cruz won the award for best actress for her role in *Parallel Mothers*, directed by Spanish director Pedro Almodovar. Best Actor went to Filipino actor John Arcilla for his role in crime thriller *On the Job: The Missing 8*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-58533531>