

On WFF #5: Lighten up, Korea

Decider previews the Wisconsin Film Festival



By Cameron Connors March 25, 2009

Comedy isn't the first genre that comes to mind when people think of Korean cinema. Most people get exposed to the nation's films through the stylized violence of Park Chan-Wook's *Vengeance Trilogy* or of the oft-brutal offerings of the Sundance Channel's excellent *Asia Extreme* series, which features movies like *R-Point* and *Bad Guy*. Young-Seok Noh's *Daytime Drinking* (April 5, [Wisconsin Union Theater](#), 3:15 p.m.) provides a more whimsical alternative to such morbid, eye-gouging fare—at times erring on the side of slowness.

The film opens with a young man, Hyuk-Jin, and three friends getting completely trashed and planning a trip from Seoul to the countryside of Jeongseon, where they hope to cheer Hyuk-Jin up after he suffers a recent breakup. The action then cuts to a lone Hyuk-Jin waking up at the bus station in Jeongseon without his friends, who are too hung-over to join him. The rest of the film follows the bored and out-of-place Hyuk-Jin, who unsuccessfully attempts to find passage back to Seoul while eating Cup Noodles and indulging in South Korea's tradition of heavy drinking. His sometimes-hilarious string of bad luck compounds itself as he meanders about the area seeking love, housing, and transportation from opportunistic townies. Despite repeated failure, Hyuk-Jin's just as willing to try again as he is to break open another bottle of soju—hangover be damned.

Actually, *Daytime Drinking* does have something in common with one Korean death-fest: *The Host*. One's a comedy and one's a monster flick, but they share a similar upbeat humor that is intertwined with a quiet moroseness. Not to mention a few moments of sick humor: The mild sexual assault Hyuk-Jin endures turns out to be as sweetly comedic as anything else in the film.

Making his feature debut, Noh maintains a remarkably slow and easy pace for someone pulling duties as everything from writer and director to composer and production designer. The dialogue (when not horribly translated) feels natural for characters mostly limited to drunkenly shooting the shit. The only major flaw is a sometimes-overpowering waft of quirkiness from the locals Hyuk-Jin encounters. It's an inauspicious debut and, like its fresh-out-of-college and ennui-filled protagonist, it doesn't aspire to much. *Daytime Drinking* comes equipped to simply win over audiences with an easygoing demeanor and resigned determination until a welcome, if somewhat expected, end.

For more Wisconsin Film Festival previews, please see the [On WFF archive](#).

POST A REVIEW

0 Comments