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2004

Low Life

A FILM BY IM KWON-TAEK

DIRECTOR IM KWON-TAEK SCREENPLAY IM KWON-TAEK CAST CHO SEUNG-WOO KIM MIN-SUN KIM HAK-JOON YOO HA-JOON DP JUNG IL-SUNG
LIGHTING KIM DONG-HO MUSIC SHIN JOONG-HYUN ART DIRECTOR JU BYUNG-DO PROPS MASTER KIM HO-KIL EDITOR PARK SOON-DUK SOUND CHOI DAE-LIM
WARDROBE DESIGN HONG SUNG-WAN MAKE-UP WOO YOUNG-JAE MARTIAL ARTS DIRECTOR KWON SUNG-HWAN SPECIAL EFFECTS JUNG DO-AN
PRODUCER LEE TAE-WON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KANG WOO-SUK KIM JUNG-SANG PRESENTED BY CINEMA SERVICE CO., LTD

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LOW LIFE

(HA-RYU-IN-SAENG)

A FILM BY **IM KWON-TAEK**

Legendary Korean director Im Kwon-Taek ("**Chihwaseon**", "**Chunhyang**") returns with his 99th feature, a vibrant and incendiary gangster epic set against the turbulent backdrop of Korea in the late 20th century.

Spanning thirty years of Korean history - from the final days of President Rhee-Seung-man's Liberal Party regime, through the bloody Student Revolution and coup d'etat of the 1960s, to the chaotic and corrupt 1980s - "**Low Life**" portrays of the rise and fall of Choi Tae-woong. At first an honourable young man, he embarks on a career of crime in order to survive the turbulent and violent society in which he lives, a society ruled by rival underworld gangs, oppressive and authoritarian government regimes, and the links between them.

When sweeping political changes result in a crackdown on mob activity, Tae-woong switches allegiances and attempts to go straight, yet finds himself caught up in an equally ruthless, equally corrupt, equally deadly world.

Indifferent to the momentous times through which he is living, he sacrifices both honour and the love of his devoted wife Hae-ok in the relentless pursuit of money and power that will destroy him.

In a triumphant return to the gangster genre, Im Kwon-taek orchestrates the explosive action set pieces and beautifully reconstructed period setting with the hand of a master, recounting not only the story of his doomed protagonist, but also that of an entire nation in crisis.

CAST

CHO Seung-woo AS CHOI TAE-WOONG

KIM Min-sun AS PARK HAE-OK

KIM Hak-joon AS OH SANG-PIL

YOO Ha-joon AS PARK SEUNG-MOON

CREW

DIRECTOR **IM Kwon-taek**

SCREENPLAY **IM Kwon-taek**

DP **JUNG Il-sung**

LIGHTING **KIM Dong-ho**

MUSIC **SHIN Joong-hyun**

ART DIRECTOR **JU Byoung-do**

PROPS MASTER **KIM Ho-kil**

EDITOR **PARK Soon-duk**

SOUND **CHOI Dae-lim**

WARDROBE DESIGN **HONG Sung-wan**

MAKE-UP **WOO Young-jae**

MARTIAL ARTS DIRECTOR **KWON Sung-hwan**

SPECIAL EFFECTS **JUNG Do-an**

PRODUCER **LEE Tae-won**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **KANG Woo-suk / KIM Jung-sang**

PRESENTED BY **CINEMA SERVICE CO., LTD.**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Beginning in the late 1950s, "**Low Life**" follows the path of a gangster, through the 60s and into the 70s. I want this film to be a mirror, reflecting our own lives through the deterioration and collapse of a man's character and life, as he fights for survival through the chaotic period of the failing Liberal Party regime and the rise of military power that followed the Student Revolt of April 1960 and the Revolution of May 1961.

Reviving a specific era of our history is not merely a case of simply showing what it was like to live during that era. Rather it is about revealing the vivid reality of that time, experiencing it again and conveying that experience. I hope the deeds of the film's protagonist - a man who did what he did in order to survive a tumultuous and difficult period in the history of my country - will have resonances for 21st century audiences worldwide.

- Im Kwon-taek

IM KWON-TAEK FILMOGRAPHY

- 2002 **CHIHWASEON**
(DIRECTOR'S AWARD, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL)
- 2000 **CHUNHYANG**
(OFFICIAL SELECTION, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1996 **CH'UKJE**
(OFFICIAL SELECTION, NANTES FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1994 **TAEBAK SANMAEK**
(OFFICIAL SELECTION, BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1993 **SOPYONJIE**
(BEST FILM & BEST ACTRESS AWARDS,
SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1992 **KAE BYOK**
CHANG-GUN UI ADEUL III
- 1991 **CHANG-GUN UI ADEUL II**
- 1990 **CHANG-GUN UI ADEUL**
- 1989 **AJA BARA AJE**
(BEST ACTRESS AWARD, MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1987 **YONSAN ILGI**
ADADA
(BEST ACTRESS AWARD, MONTREAL FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1986 **TOCKET**
SIBAJI
(BEST ACTRESS AWARD, VENICE FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1985 **GILSOTTUM**
(OFFICIAL SELECTION, BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1984 **HURUNUN GANGMOOL-UL**
OCHI MARGURYA
- 1983 **PUL-UI-TAL**
- 1982 **OYOMDOENJASHIK-DUL**
NABIPUM-ESO ULEOSSDA
ANGAE MAUL
ABENKO GONGSU GUNDAN
- 1981 **MANDALA**
(OFFICIAL SELECTION, BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL)
- 1980 **USANG UI NUNMUL**
TCHAK KO
POKBUIN
- 1979 **SHINGUNG**
NAEIL NO NAEIL
KIPPAROMNEUN GISU
- 1978 **SANGNOK SU**
KAKKAKODO MONGIL
CHOPKO
CHEO PADOWIE EOMMA EOLGUL-I
- 1977 **OKYE KI**
IMJINRANG-GWAKYE WEOLHYANG
- 1976 **MAENBAL UI NUNGIL**
ANAE
- 1975 **EOJE, ONEUL KEURIGO NAEIL**
WANG SIBNI
NAKDONG-GANG EUL EUNEUKA
- 1974 **YEONHWA**
ANAEDUL UI HAENGJIN
WAE GEULAESS-TEUNGA
- 1973 **JUNG EON**
JABCHO
GISAENG OBAEKHWA
DAE CHU-GYEK
- 1972 **SAMGUK DAE HYEOP**
MYONDONG CHANHOKSA
DORA-ON JAWA DDONA HAL JA
- 1971 **YOGEOM**
WEONHAN UI TU Kkobchu
WEONHAN UI KORU E NUN-I NAERINDA
TULIJAE OMONI
NAREUL DEO ISANG GOREOPIJIMARA
MYONDONG SAMKUKCHI
30 NYEON MAN UI TAEGYOL
- 1970 **WEOLHA UI GEOM**
SNOKNUNSEOB-I KIN YEOGA
KE YEOJA REUL JJOCHALA
ISEULMAJEUN BAEKIL HONG
BINAREUN BAEKIL HONG
BINAREUN BAEKIL HONG
BIGEOM
BANCHA-RO ON SANAI
AEKUNU MR PARK
- 1969 **SIBO YA**
SHINSE JOM JIJAUYO
SHANSHAE TALCHUL
SANAI SAMDAE
ROE GOM
HWANGYA UI TOKSURI
BI NAERINEUN GOMORYEONG
- 1968 **YOHWA JAG HUIBIN**
TOLA-ON OENSONJABI
MONGNYEO
BARAMGATEUN SANAI
- 1967 **PENGUNUI GOMGAEK**
MANGHIANG CHEOLLI
CHONGSEA CHOLONG
- 1966 **CHEONGJAENG-GWA NYEOGYOSA**
BEOPCHANG-EUL ULLIN OK-I
- 1965 **WANG-GWA SANGNO**
BISOG E JIDA
NILLIRI
NANEUM WANG-IDA
- 1964 **MANG BU SEOK**
YONGMANG UI KYEULSAM
YONGHWA MAMA
SIPJAMAE SOENSAENG
DANJANG IOK
DANGOL JIKASAENG
- 1963 **SHINMUNGO**
NAMJA-NEOM PALYEO
- 1962 **DUMANG-A JAL IKKOR**
CHEONG JAENG-GWA NOIN

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

CHO SEUNG-WOO AS CHOI TAE-WOONG

Born in 1980, Cho made his feature film debut in Im Kwon-taek's "**Chunhyang**" in 2000, and has established himself as an actor of great versatility and dramatic power. Stand-out roles include the incestuous lover in Kim Yong-gyun's "**Wani & Junha**" (2001) and the hyper-intelligent serial killer in Lee Jong-hyuk's "**H**" (2002). Equally adept as a romantic hero (as seen in Kwak Jae-yong's "**Classic**", 2003) and as a stage performer in musicals, In his second collaboration with Im Kwon-taek, Cho delivers a performance of awesome emotional and physical power.

KIM MIN-SUN AS PARK HAE-OK

Cast by director Im for her energy, intelligence and quicksilver dramatic range, Kim - who was first seen in "**Memento Mori**" (Kim Tae-yong and Min Kyu-dong, 1999) - has also appeared in "**My Beautiful Days**" (Im Jong-jae, 2002), and "**Afrika**" (Shin Seung-soo, 2002).

KIM HAK-JOON AS OH SANG-PIL

A veteran of musicals such as "**Line 1**", "**Myung Sung Hwang Whu**" and "**Singing in the Rain**", his powerful performance in "**Low Life**" marks renowned stage actor Kim Hak-joon's feature-film debut.

YOO HA-JOON AS PARK SEUNG-MOON

"**Low Life**" is Yoo Ha-joon's big-screen debut.

ACTION

Im's "**The General's Son**" and its sequels set all-time Korean box-office records. After ten years, he has returned to his 'field of expertise', the action film. Unimpressed by the lack of realism in contemporary fight choreography, the director resolved to show a more human, more visceral style of combat. Actor Cho Seung-woo performed his own stunts throughout the shoot, while co-star Kim Min-sun willingly submitted to sequences of considerable personal danger. Drawing on the talents of a top notch fight choreographer and martial arts team, "**Low Life**" truly turns a new page for Korean action cinema.

SOCIETY

"**Low Life**" offers a reflection of contemporary life by recounting "*a tragedy about gangsters and authorities who live their lives while unaware of their low-life selves*". The film is an epic that uses an extravagant style, relentless narrative and magnificent scale to depict the topography of Korean society - the political scene, the construction industry, the movie business, and the gang world - providing a profound and unique perspective on a country, a society, a history and the lives of its citizens which nonetheless possess a far wider international resonance.

CASTING

Park Sang-min, Shin Hyun-joon, Kim Seung-woo, Song Chae-hwan, Oh Jeong-hae and Cho Seung-woo: all major acting talents in contemporary Korean cinema, all discovered by the team of director Im Kwon-taek, DP Jung Il-sung and producer Lee Tae-won. These three great masters, the first Korean filmmakers to be invited to Cannes Film Festival's competitive category and to receive the Best Director Award, have been steadily training and developing new talents.

Prior to the start of production on "**Low Life**", a major scale open audition was held through theatrical companies and every college theatrical studies department in Korea. This innovative and daring casting approach proved vital for taking the film's energy to unprecedented levels.

ART DIRECTION

Having created the extraordinary sets for Im Kwon-taek's "**Chihwaseon**", art director Ju Byoung-do turned his hand to the thriving Myungdong streets of 1960s Korea for "**Low Life**".

Ju studied Im's framing style, calculating expected camera positions and angles and designing his magnificent and fully functional set accordingly. The set flawlessly captures the essence of the era, drawing the viewer into the Korea of the 50s, 60s and 70s. Numerous high rise buildings were constructed, with over 260 individually designed and hand-crafted billboards and neon signs. The smallest details – even down to the appropriate concrete and tiles – were exhaustively researched and implemented. Preparation began soon after the completion of "**Chihwaseon**", and the gargantuan set was completed one year and seven months later, in November 2003.

HISTORY

"**Low Life**" covers the late 50s to the early 70s, the most controversial period of modern Korean history. Although the Korean people succeeded in liberating themselves on August 15, 1945 after 35 years of Japanese occupation, they failed to clean up completely those who had held power under the Japanese regime and conformed to it. As the United States and the Soviet Union intervened in Korean affairs, the country was divided into North and South, thus creating two half-countries on the Korean peninsula. In the summer of 1949, Kim Gu, a well-respected political activist who desired the reunification of Korea, was assassinated.

Vehement animosity between the left and the right worsened, and the Korean War broke out in 1950.

The post-war period witnessed both political and economical upheaval and increasing ideological aggression between North and South Korea. During these times, the Rhee Seung-man administration, which was reliant on U.S. government support, took an anti-communist line, but its corruption brought great misery to the people. The April 19th Revolution brought down Rhee's government through popular consensus, but fell short of automatically generating an alternative power and failed to bear fruit. Power was given first to Heo Jeong's interim government, then to Jang Myeon's Democratic Party cabinet, which did little but display inefficiency by punishing anti-democratic protestors and barely escaping an economic crisis.

Finally, the May 16th Military Coup ended the era of politics led by the people. The leader of the coup was Park Chung-hee, who proclaimed through a public pledge that he would hand over power to the civilians and return to the army after resolving the nation's problems. However, he broke the pledge, maintaining his hold on power for 18 years. Under the cloak of rapid economic development, he suppressed civil rights and freedoms. With his introduction of a Constitution for Revitalizing Reform in

October 1972, Park Chung-hee's oppressive politics were growing more severe, until he was assassinated in 1979.

"**Low Life**" captures the history of the late 50s, when the Freedom Party was losing its power and creating a state of confusion, up until the early 70s when the military government initiated its oppressive Constitution. The film's hero lives his own life regardless of the political and social turmoil surrounding him, and concentrates on amassing a fortune by feeding off the military government's power. Conversely, we see those in power using our hero and those like him in order to maintain their position of dominance.

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