



## NEW RELEASES

# Sleep

### Sleep (Jam)

Director: Jason Yu

Production Company: Lewis Pictures

Presented by: Solaire Partners LLC,  
Lotte Entertainment, BY4MStudio

Producers: Lewis Tae-wan Kim, Kim Hee-kyoung

Co-producer: Choi Moon-seok

Screenplay: Jason Yu

Director of Photography: Kim Tae-soo

Editor: Han Mee-yeon

Production Design: Shin Yu-jin

Music: Chang Hyuk-jin, Chang Yong-jin

Cast:

Jung Yu-mi (*Soo-jin*)

Lee Sun-kyun (*Hyun-su*)

South Korea 2023

95 mins

Digital

A Curzon release

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'Someone's inside.' *Sleep* begins with an ominous phrase muttered by Hyun-su, Soo-jin's husband, when he wakes up one night. This phrase sets in motion a series of events that completely overturn the everyday life of the once happy couple. Soo-jin, an expectant mother eagerly awaiting the birth of their child, diligently juggles her job, while her considerate husband Hyun-su, an actor who is waiting for his breakout role, crafts a bright future within Soo-jin's faith. Despite being entangled in a nightmare-like situation, they don't flee from each other; instead, they confront the circumstances head-on. The horror and mystery of *Sleep* unfold with an unpredictable narrative.

Breaking away from the conventional notion in horror films where supernatural entities like ghosts and spirits are the sources of fear, *Sleep* takes an unprecedented approach. The setup involves the eerie transformation of a person who sleeps beside you every night, behaving as if they've become someone else. This unique premise leads to a first-person horror experience that neither occult nor traditional horror can deliver. As the couple earnestly follows the treatment strategy of the sleep clinic and Hyun-su's symptoms worsen over time, the depth of fear intensifies. The mystery deepens, as the elusive nature of the truth leaves room for even greater curiosity.

Alongside the inherent enjoyment and suspense of the mystery genre, *Sleep* unfolds a narrative that evokes doubt about whether the person sleeping beside you is truly the person you once knew. Director Bong Joon-ho didn't hold back in his praise, stating, 'the most unique horror film and the smartest debut film I've seen in ten years. The film unravels an unpredictable drama of a couple within the most ordinary everyday setting. I hope the audience faces this film without any prior information.'

In the process of bringing the transformation from the happy everyday life of a couple to the nightly terror that keeps them awake onto the screen, one of the most crucial elements was capturing both intimacy and fear within the shared spaces of the film. Director Jason Yu emphasised the importance of conveying the psychological states of Soo-jin and Hyun-su through the camerawork. He stated, 'The camerawork had to best represent the psyches of Soo-jin and Hyun-su. The camera's position had to adhere to the physical possibilities of the two characters' environment.' This approach aimed to provide audiences with a sense of palpable horror and intense immersion that could easily take place in our surroundings. Yu expressed his commitment to imbuing his distinct directorial style to offer viewers a sense of fear and engagement.

Elaborate camerawork, dynamic shots, and cinematic techniques such as through-the-wall movement, typical of the horror and thriller genres, were not permitted within the directing style of Yu and cinematographer Kim Tae-soo. The paramount principle was that the audience must fully experience the fear Soo-jin faces as her beloved husband Hyun-su turns into a terrifying presence within the supposedly secure space they believed in. The same held true for Hyun-su. The fear of unknowingly harming his loved ones during sleep and the notion that he might transform into a completely different person were essential aspects to be conveyed through the camera's focus on Soo-jin. For both characters, capturing the gradual shifts in their psychological states onscreen through camerawork was imperative.

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Yu noted, 'While the first half of the film deals with Soo-jin's fear, the second half deals with Hyun-su's.' This illustrates the director's intention to depict the evolving relationship between the subjects and objects of fear, as viewed through the perspectives of the two characters. Therefore, Yu's meticulous camera direction plays a pivotal role in immersing the audience into the characters' experiences, allowing them to gradually become a part of the narrative. As everyone lies asleep in the depth of the night, if one follows the sound emanating from an empty bedside or outside the door, they will inevitably confront moments of insurmountable fear, ensuring that the audience remains sleepless throughout the film.

The time and space that constitute sleep hold significance beyond mere physicality. The bedroom where Soo-jin and Hyun-su appear to sleep, and the house that embodies their everyday life, are more than just physical spaces; they represent the intimate yet invaluable worlds that make *Sleep* a unique horror experience. Yu was deeply concerned about how to design the house where the two characters live together. To ensure that the characters' inner thoughts could be accentuated and to minimise constraints on the actors' movement, he designed a large, rectangular stage-like living room that deviated from the conventional house structure. This unique space, transcending reality and unreality much like the depiction of Hyun-su exhibiting abnormal behaviour during sleep, precisely captured the director's vision thanks to the collaborative effort of the production design department.

The depiction of space also underwent changes in accordance with the film's progression. The initially warm and realistic space of the two characters gives way to a chilling transformation in the middle, reflecting the characters' descent into irrationality and crisis. Jung Yu-mi, who portrayed Soo-jin, pointed out that 'One of the most remarkable aspects of *Sleep* is the latter part of the production.' She emphasised not to miss the latter part of the film, where the characters strive to uncover the horrifying secret that befalls them. Just as the characters' inner selves change with each passing moment, the production design of *Sleep* that skilfully portrayed the characters with meticulous attention will captivate the audience's attention, much like the escalating sense of fear throughout the film.

Production notes