



## The Host Gwaemul

Director: Bong Joon Ho

©: Chunggeorahm Film

Production Company: Chunggeorahm Film

In association with: Happinet Pictures, OCN, Knowledge & Creation Ventures Co. Ltd., IBK Capital Corporation, Cineclick Asia, IMM Venture Capital, SBS, Inc. M-Venture Investment, Tube Pictures, Sego Entertainment Co. Ltd., CJ Venture Investment, Boston Investment Co. Ltd.

Presented by: Showbox, Chunggeorahm Film, Mediaplex

Executive Producers: Choi Yong-bae, Kim Woo-taek

Producer: Choi Yong-bae

Investment: Jung Jin-ki, Jeong Tae-sung

Co-producer: Joh Neung-yeon

Production Manager: Park Bong-soo

Production Accountants: Kim Min-kyung, Sung Eun-jeong

1st Assistant Director: Kim Joon-soo

2nd Assistant Directors: Lee Won-hee, Kim Min-seok, Cho Won-yeol, Kim Kyung-mo, Kang Ji-ee, Kim Sung-ho

Script Supervisor: Hah Joon-won

Screenplay: Bong Joon Ho, Hah Jun-won, Baek Chul-hyun

Director of Photography: Kim Hyung-ku

Lighting: Lee Gang-san, Jung Young-min

B Camera: Sung Seung-taek

C Camera: Kim Byung-seo

Steadicam Operator: Yeo Kyung-bo

Supervising Electrician: Yoo Geun-hee

Key Grip: Choi Woon-jin

Visual Effects Supervisor: Kevin Rafferty

Visual Effects: The Orphanage LLC

Visual Effects Executive Producers:

Marc Sadeghi, Luke O'Byrne

Visual Effects Producer: Arin Finger

Special Effects Supervisor: Kim Byung-kee, Future Vision

Computer Graphics: EON Digital Films

Animation: The Orphanage LLC

Editor: Kim Sun-min

Art Director: Ryu Seung-hee

Set Designer: Yang Hong-sam

Production Design Unit: Oh Jae-young

Set Decorator: Lee Jin-woo

Props Master: Jang Seok-ho

Costumes: Cho Sang-kyoung

Make-up/Hair: Song Jong-hee

Animatronics: John Cox's Creature Workshop

Creature Design: Jang Hee-chul

Special Make-up: Kwak Tae-yong,

Hwang Hyo-kyun, Cell

Creature Animatronics Supervisor: John Cox

Music: Musikdorf

Music Composer/Adaptation: Lee Byung-woo

Sound Designers: Lee In-gyoo, Joh Ye-jin

Sound Supervisor: Choi Tae-young

Sound Recording: Lee Seung-chul

Re-recording Mixers: Choi Tae-young, Park Yong-ki

Creature Sound Design: Sean Garnhart,

Coll Anderson

Sound Effects Editors: Kang Hye-young, Kim Mi-ra

Cast:

Song Kang-ho (Park Gang-du)

Byun Hee-bong (Park Hee-bong)

Park Hae-il (Park Nam-il)

Bae Doo-na (Park Nam-ju)

Goh Ah-sung (Park Hyun-seo)

Oh Dal-soo (creature voice)

Lee Jae-eung (Se-jin)

## Bong Joon Ho: Power and Paradox

# The Host

*The Host* provides a perfect introduction to several of the key facets of Bong Joon Ho's filmmaking that wind their way through his entire oeuvre and make the films feel distinctly his. First is his playful application of genre. *The Host* is loudly and proudly a creature feature, but it's one that blends aspects of the Hollywood blockbuster and Japanese *kaiju* (monster) films with the interpersonal dynamics of a family drama and satirical political landscape. If you throw in the trappings of a kidnap thriller (Bong once argued this, saying that the kidnapper just happened to be a monster), you have an idea of the various genres colliding in this single film and often in a single scene. It makes the film as slippery a prospect as its aquatic antagonist.

Tone is something similarly difficult to pin down in Bong's films, the atmosphere often shifting from tragic to farcical in an instant. In one scene early in *The Host*, a grieving grandfather solemnly swears vengeance on the amphibious beast that took his granddaughter from him. The camera then pans away and observes over his shoulder as a city official in a biohazard suit walking behind him slips over, as if on a banana peel. *The Host's* monster was apparently designed with Steve Buscemi's turn in *Fargo* (1996) in mind, and Bong's film shares the Coens' penchant for careering between bloody violence and broad comedy.

Then there is *The Host's* political satire, which isn't woven subtly through metaphor (though that certainly exists as well) as much as played up front. Bong's films regularly feature protagonists who live at the bottom of the economic pile and who struggle against the overwhelming opposition they face in society. That's the case here too, but *The Host* has also been described as the first major Korean film to overtly criticise the legacy of the US in the country – in the opening scene, an American scientist forces his Korean subordinate to pour formaldehyde into the Han, thus creating the film's monster.

There are various other pointed references to recent Korean history – from the student demonstrations and defence drills of the 1980s to the collapse of the Seongsu Bridge in 1994 – and the film features a Korean-US task force that's laughably ineffectual in responding to the emergency.

Ben Nicholson, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk), 20 January 2020

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away some of the plot.

## A contemporary review

A monster movie more interested in human relationships than spectacle, *The Host* is an offbeat genre piece from South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon Ho. A South Korean and Japanese co-production, it has drawn comparisons with the *Godzilla* series, which Bong has resisted, claiming there's a vast difference in scale between the skyscraper stomping super lizard Godzilla and his smaller (perhaps 30-foot-long) amphibious beast. Such distinctions of scale could also be applied to the films' narratives. The original *Godzilla* (1954) revelled in the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo, playing with post-Hiroshima nuclear anxieties. In comparison, *The Host* is happier shunting its creature to the sidelines. It's less a movie about monsters, than about how ordinary folk cope with them.

Lee Dong-ho (*Se-ju*)  
 Yoon Je-moon (*homeless man*)  
 Yim Pil-sung (*Nam-il's old schoolmate*)  
 Kim Roi-ha (*man in yellow*)  
 Yoo Yeon-soo (*manager CHO*)  
 Park No-shik (*arms broker*)  
 Go Soo-hee (*nurse taken hostage*)  
 Scott Wilson (*Douglas*)  
 Kim Hak-sun (*Mr Kim*)  
 Paul Lazar (*US doctor*)  
 Brian Lee (*young Korean doctor*)  
 David Josep Anselmo (*Sgt Donald*)  
 Shin Seung-ree (*Donald's girlfriend*)  
 South Korea-Japan 2006  
 120 mins  
 Digital

The screening on Thu 24 Apr will be introduced by translator and film critic Darcy Paquet

## Bong Joon Ho: Power and Paradox

**Memories of Murder** Salineui-chueok

Mon 31 Mar 20:30; Tue 8 Apr 20:30;

Sun 20 Apr 18:10

**Barking Dogs Never Bite** Peullandaseuui-gae

Tue 1 Apr 18:15; Sat 19 Apr 20:30 (+ **Incoherence**

Jirimyulnyeol)

**Parasite** Gisaengchung

Thu 3 Apr 20:30; Tue 22 Apr 20:30;

Tue 29 Apr 18:05 (Black & White Version)

**The Host** Gwaemul

Sat 5 Apr 18:00; Thu 24 Apr 20:30 (+ intro by

translator and film critic Darcy Paquet)

**Mother** Madeo

Wed 9 Apr 20:30;

Sat 26 Apr 14:10 (Black & White Version)

**Snowpiercer** Seolguk-yeolcha

Fri 11 Apr 18:05; Sat 26 Apr 20:35

**Okja** Ok-ja

Sat 12 Apr 14:50; Fri 25 Apr 18:00 (+ intro by

production designer Lee Ha-jun)

**The Creative Collaborations of Bong Joon Ho**

Thu 24 Apr 18:10

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That isn't to suggest that *The Host* doesn't have its fair share of creature feature action. As he proved in his breakout sophomore effort, the gripping police procedural drama *Memories of Murder*, Bong understands the conventions of genre cinema well. The opening reel of *The Host* delivers a crowd-pleasing adrenalin burst early on; its gelatinous CGI creature (pitched somewhere between a giant acrobatic tadpole and one of *Alien* conceptual artist H.R. Giger's Xenomorphs) emerges from Korea's Han River into a tranquil picnic spot. Stunned onlookers snap photos with mobile phones, then flee in panic as the beast rampages. It's a masterful sequence, seamlessly blending CGI and live action as citizens are stomped, eaten and batted into the air by the creature's tail.

After this thunderous mayhem, the monster's screen time is limited. Bong instead concentrates on kiosk worker Park Gang-du (Song Kang-ho), a near narcoleptic single father whose daughter Hyun-seo (Goh Ah-sung) has been dragged to the beast's underground lair. The dysfunctional Park family (Gang-du, his siblings and his father) are happier bickering among themselves than actually getting much done. This lets Bong spend the movie's middle section following their capture by the US military and their subsequent escape, recapture and re-escape, while throwing in much of Korea's peculiar brand of slapstick. It also allows him to focus on his main theme: the psychological and emotional devastation the monster's attack has on this family. The allegory of the psychic wounds engendered by Korea's division into North and South is presented through themes of ruptured families and motherhood.

Significantly, Bong is less interested in anti-communist scaremongering than in showing how this family reunites against a very different monster: the uncaring and incompetent authorities. Bearing the brunt of the film's anti-authoritarian satire is the US military, which emerges as more of a threat than the creature itself. American incompetence causes the crisis (as toxic chemicals are dumped into the Han River in the prologue) and the US military fails to contain the unfortunate results. Instead of tracking the monster, the Americans waste valuable time chasing a chimerical virus and threatening the civilian population with the dubiously named anti-viral concoction 'Agent Yellow'. True, *The Host's* anti-authoritarian satire never amounts to very much, but it's intriguingly leftfield.

Jamie Russell, *Sight and Sound*, November 2006