



Presents

# OLDBOY

A Film by PARK Chan-wook

**Press Contact:**

Sophie Gluck/Emma Griffiths  
Sophie Guck & Associates  
225 Central Park West  
New York, NY 10024  
212.595.2432-ph.  
212.595.4295-fx

**Distributor contact:**

Bob Myerson  
Tartan Films  
8322 Beverly Blvd., Suite 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90048  
323.655.9300 – ph  
323.655.9301 – fx

**Presented by SHOW EAST**

A SHOWEAST production

Starring CHOI Min-sik, YOO Ji-tae, GANG Hye-jung

Director PARK Chanwook

Producer KIM Dong-joo

Executive Producer KIM Jang-wook

Associate Producer JI Young-joon

Co-producer LIM Syd

Line-producer HAN Jae-duk

Original story TSUCHIYA Garon & MINEGISHI Nobuaki

Screenplay HWANG Jo-yun, LIM Joon-hyung, PARK Chanwook

Director of Photography JUNG Jung-hoon

Lighting PARK Hyun-won

Production design YOO Seong-hee

Music CHO Young-wuk

Score SHIM Hyun-jung, LEE Ji-soo

Sound supervisor LEE Seong-chui

Production sound manager LEE Sang-wook

Editing KIM Sang-bum

Make-up SON Chong-hee

Wardrobe CHO Sang-kyung

Special effects LEE Jung-soo

## CAST

OH Dae-su

CHOI Min-sik

LEE Woo-jin

YOO Ji-tae

Mido

GANG Hye-jung

NO Joo-hwan

CHI Dae-han

PARK Cheol-woong

OH Dai-su

Chief Guard (Mr. Han)

KIM Byoung-ok

YOO Hyung-ja

LEE Seung-shin

LEE Soo-ah

YOON Jin-seo

Beggar

LEE Dae-yun

Suicide Man

OH Gwang-rok

YOUNG Dae-su

OH Tae-gyung

YOUNG Woo-jin

AHN Yeon-suk

YOUNG Joo-hwan

OO Il-han

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS:**

OH Dae-su (CHOI Min-sik) is an ordinary Seoul businessman with a wife and little daughter who, after a drunken night on the town, is locked up in a strange, private “prison” for 15 years. No one will tell him why he is there and whom his jailer is, but he is kept in reasonably comfortable quarters and has a TV to keep him company. While watching TV, he discovers that he has been framed for his wife’s murder and realizes that, during one of the occasions in which he was knocked out with gas, someone has drawn blood from him and left it at the scene of the crime. The imprisonment lasts for fifteen years until Dae-su finds himself unexpectedly deposited on a grass-covered high-rise rooftop.

OH Dae-su is determined to discover who his mysterious enemy is. He gets his first clue when a homeless man hands him a cell phone and a wallet full of cash. Later, while Dae-su is eating in a Japanese restaurant, the phone rings and a voice challenges him to find the reason for his imprisonment.

Dae-su blacks out only to awaken in the apartment of the restaurant’s pretty, young waitress, Mido (GANG Hye-jung). Mido helps him search for his hidden prison, but one night, Dae-su finds Mido exchanging emails with a mysterious stranger who seems to know all about him. Convinced Mido has betrayed him, he continues the search on his own.

Dae-su locates his former prison and beats up the gangsters who served as his captors. A tape offers clues as to his enemy’s motives, but not his identity. Dae-su blacks out on the street and after being helped into a cab by his mysterious, but still unnamed foe, he ends up back at Mido’s. An old friend who owns a cyber café helps Dae-su discover that Mido’s emailer, “Evergreen”, is indeed the man who had him locked up. Dae-su is enraged by Mido’s apparent betrayal, but a face-to-face confrontation with his smooth-talking adversary ends with Dae-su’s conviction that she is innocent. The man gives Dae-su five days to discover who he is and why he imprisoned him. He is told that if he succeeds, the man will kill himself; if he does not, he will kill Mido.

Final clues lead Dae-su back to his old high school, where he discovers that his enemy is fellow graduate LEE Woo-jin (YOO Ji-tae), whose sister, Soo-ah (YOON Jin-seo), committed suicide years before. Dae-su confronts Lee in his ultra-modern penthouse apartment, only to discover that his enemy’s tortures are just beginning.

## LONG SYNOPSIS:

On his infant daughter's birthday, an ordinary businessman OH Dae-su (CHOI Min-sik) is making himself such a drunken nuisance at a police station that only the arrival of his friend Joo-hwan (CHI Dae-han) saves him from a night in jail. Dae-su however, has only been saved for another imprisonment, as he learns when he wakes up inside a relatively comfortable, but ironclad cell in an unknown prison for unknown reasons.

Dae-su whiles away months watching TV on a set provided by his jailers until, one day, to his shock, he sees on the news that he has been accused of the murder of his wife. A minute examination of his body reveals a pin-prick-sized cut, tell-tale evidence that incriminating blood had been extracted from his arm one night when he was gassed into unconsciousness. But that isn't all he sees; in an ominous sign of impending madness, he also watches as an ant burrows beneath his skin. Knowing he needs some sort of activity to keep both his mind and body in shape, Dae-su supplements his TV watching with boxing practice -- basically punching the walls -- and writing down in a notebook all the potential enemies who might be responsible for his plight.

So fifteen long years pass. Following a murkily recalled nighttime visit from a hypnotist, Dae-Su awakes one morning on the grass-covered roof of a Seoul apartment tower. Obsessed with telling his story, he corrals a man about to commit suicide and unburdens his story on the stranger; but when the hapless man tries to tell his story, Dae-Su merely gets up and leaves him. Back on the street, he's set upon by a group of street thugs, an early opportunity to test his refined boxing. Fresh from his brawling triumph, Dae-su is staring listlessly at a store window when a homeless man approaches him and gives him a cell phone and a wallet filled with cash. Confused but in need of the money, Dae-su dashes into a Japanese restaurant where he orders "something alive" to eat. The cell phone rings, interrupting his conversation with the pretty, young waitress, Mido (GANG Hye-jung); on the other end, a taunting voice challenges Dae-Su to figure out the cause of his plight and to reap vengeance on his nemesis. When Dae-Su hangs up, he busies himself with scarfing down a live octopus, but passes out before he can finish it, flailing tentacles dripping from his mouth. A concerned Mido (GANG Hye-jung) brings Dae-su to her home to recover.

Once at home, Mido listens sympathetically to Dae-su's strange story. She lets him stay the night, though she warns him not to come onto her. The next day, Dae-su persuades Mido into pretending she's a reporter so that she can ask questions about the whereabouts of Dae-su's daughter at a shop in Dae-su's old neighborhood. When she discovers that Dae-su's daughter was long ago adopted by a Swedish couple, the news brings Dae-Su to tears. But, as determined as ever, he keeps investigating. For years he's held onto a scrap of a menu that he had found in his dinner one day in prison, a scrap with the name "Blue Dragon" on it. Dae-su begins visiting every "Blue Dragon" restaurant in the Seoul phone book, but without success. One night, he discovers Mido trading emails with a mysterious correspondent who is asking questions about Dae-su. Enraged and paranoid, Dae-su accuses Mido of betraying him and leaves her apartment

with no intention of returning. Back on the street, he catches a break by waiting outside yet another “Blue Dragon” restaurant and following its delivery boy. The boy enters a dingy high rise and, once in the elevator, pushes the seventh and eighth floor buttons simultaneously. There, on the seventh-and-a-half floor, Dae-su finally discovers the private prison where he had been held.

He confronts and tortures the boss, PARK Cheol-woong (OH Dai-su), and attacks his gang. More importantly, he also grabs a copy of an audiotape of a conversation between PARK and the man who paid to have Dae-su locked up. But Dae-su learns only that he was imprisoned because as the stranger puts it: “Dae-su, you see, talks too much.” Wounded during the fights, Dae-su struggles onto the street with a knife wound in his back, and after staggering a block or two, collapses on the street. A concerned stranger helps him into a cab but just before it drives away, he leans into the window and with a wicked grin says, “Farewell, Dae-su.” It is his mysterious enemy.

Dae-su passes out in the cab and when he awakes he finds himself once more in Mido’s apartment. Touched by the care she’s taken in dressing his wound, Dae-su reconciles with her. Taking note of the cyber name used by Mido’s strange internet correspondent, Dae-su heads for a cyber café run by his old friend Joo-hwan (CHI Dae-han). The two have a tearful reunion and begin tracking down Mido’s emailer, Evergreen. Once they contact him, he reveals that he’s Dae-su’s enemy. Once more convinced that Mido has betrayed him, he returns to her apartment and ties her up in a rage. But Joo-hwan calls with the information that Evergreen’s computer is located right across the street from Mido’s building. Dae-su runs there and finally comes face to face with his enemy (YOO Ji-tae), a handsome and well-dressed young man.

The man tells Dae-su that he has five days to discover who he is and what his motives are. If he succeeds, the stranger will kill himself; but if Dae-su fails, he will kill Mido. The stranger reminds Dae-su that he’s left Mido tied up with her apartment door open. Dae-su runs back there only to discover Park and his men have beaten him to it. Dae-su gets ready to fight them when a messenger – the stranger’s companion – shows up with a suitcase of cash and convinces them to leave.

Meanwhile, Dae-su and Mido head for a motel where all their conflicted emotions are finally unleashed and they make passionate love. But when they wake up with a gruesome package in the room, they realize they have been bugged with surveillance equipment. Dae-su does an internet search for the word “evergreen” and realizes that it refers to the school song of Sangnok High School, which he attended. Dae-su and Mido go to the school library and discover the unknown enemy’s name: LEE Woo-jin. They also discover that LEE had a sister, LEE Soo-ah, who fell into a nearby river and drowned after gossip branded her a “slut.” When Dae-su calls up Joo-hwan to confirm the story, his usually mild-mannered friend uses stark language to describe the sister’s supposedly loose morals. But Joo-hwan doesn’t realize that LEE Woo-jin is sitting at a computer, masquerading as a customer. Infuriated by what he overhears, LEE strangles Joo-hwan.

Dae-su recollects the story of LEE Soo-ah. In flashback, we discover the young Dae-su catching a peek at the brother and sister as they make love. He tells his school buddy Joo-hwan about it and soon the tale has spread throughout the school. It was this gossip that led Soo-ah to kill herself. He tracks down PARK at his new hidden prison and forces him to keep Mido locked up there and presumably safe from LEE. With this newly acquired information, he shows up to confront LEE in his lair. But Lee has not merely waited for Dae-su to track him down after all those years in prison; he has his own vengeance to unleash.

## PARK CHANWOOK AND KOREAN CINEMA:

After a drunken night on the town, an ordinary Seoul businessman, OH Dae-su (CHOI Min-sik) wakes up in the morning to discover he has been locked up, without explanation, in a mysterious prison – his home for the next 15 years. When, suddenly and inexplicably, Dae-su finds himself freed, a voice on a cell phone taunts him into discovering who kept him imprisoned. Dae-su plunges into a world of competing vengeance, his own drive for revenge matched by the equally implacable and considerably more Byzantine scheming of his mysterious nemesis.

The elaborate set-up of **OLDBOY** is the latest film by 41-year-old Korean director PARK Chanwook. Plunging into a world in which taboos are invoked only to be transgressed and unknowing individuals desperately fend off a tyrannical fate, PARK has produced the most outstanding – and perhaps shocking – feature of a striking career that began with his first produced screenplay in 1988 and his directorial debut in 1992.

PARK began directing with *Moon Is...Sun's Dream*, a story of young people on the run, a theme he continued with his second film, 1997's *3 Members*. But his first commercial success was *JSA: Joint Security Area*, a smash hit in 2000. Rather than follow up with another popular venture, Park came up with *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* (2002), a saga of multiple revenge that managed to combine a strangely sweet sense of loss with moments of startling violence. **OLDBOY** picks up many of the themes that were first enunciated in *Mr. Vengeance*, but spins them out into even more baroque patterns.

PARK is a prominent figure in a group of Korean filmmakers who are now in their early 40s. Other leading directors include KIM Ji-Woon, whose *A Tale of Two Sisters* went on to become a runaway hit. Another is the astonishingly prolific 44-year old KIM Ki-Duk, whose 11 films since 1996 include the international art house hit *Spring, Summer Fall...and Spring*, the controversial *Samaria* (a.k.a. *Samaritan Girl*), and the upcoming *3-Iron*.

These filmmakers have divergent backgrounds – PARK graduated from college with a degree in philosophy, while KIM Ki-Duk is a product of the working class – but all came to maturity during one of the harshest and most repressive eras in South Korean history. The chief political figure of the era was CHUN Doo Hwan, a general who came to power in 1979 when he led a military coup and was responsible for the arrest, torture and death of tens of thousands of students, workers, labor leaders and other opponents of the regime.

The greatest outrage of the CHUN era came in May 1980 in the southern city of Kwangju, South Korea. Five hundred demonstrators were brutalized with such barbarity by paratroopers that hundreds of thousands of citizens drove the soldiers from the city. Five days later, with the tacit complicity of the American military commander in South Korea, an entire South Korean Army division entered the city, killing all that resisted their force. At least two thousand civilians were killed in less than a week.

PARK was 20-years-old at the time of what became known as the Kwangju Rebellion and it had a strong impact on Koreans of his generation. Within the Korean Confucian tradition, students, professors and intellectuals hold a special position as a sort of public conscience. Similarly, the military is considered a lesser branch of society, one that has a duty to remain subordinate. When the former security chief CHUN became leader of the country and closed the universities, it represented a total upheaval of traditional roles in society. Moreover, as the Kwangju Rebellion became a dissident rallying cry, anti-Americanism surged based on what was perceived as acquiescence in the massacres and America's embrace of the Chun regime.

When that era's university students and young workers became filmmakers, it was no surprise that their views of Korean society and authority would be merciless, yet their view would not always use explicitly political themes and stories in their films.

PARK's *JSA: Joint Security Area* is a case in point. Set in the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ), where South and North Korean troops have been nearly face-to-face for half a century, it is one of the few movies to examine the military through a class perspective. The movie's action is built around the death of a South Korean soldier and the wounding of another as they run back to their side of the DMZ from the North Korean side. A foreign-born Korean woman, a member of the Swiss Army, and of the neutral nation force policing the DMZ, refuses to accept the South Korean army's official line that the two men were heroes. She pursues the facts and determines that the pair had struck up an odd, but deep friendship with their two opposite numbers as they faced each other from sentry positions. Trouble arises with the intervention of officers, an unmistakable assertion that the unity of the Korean people has been undermined by competing military establishments.

*JSA* is compelling, but clearly didn't satisfy PARK's desire to expose the underlying violence in Korean life. *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* did just that. A deaf-and-mute foundry worker is laid off just as he needs money to pay for his dying sister's kidney transplant. Desperate, he kidnaps his former boss's daughter in the hopes of claiming a small but sufficient ransom. But the kidnapping goes horribly awry, and the young kidnapper becomes a victim of his boss's vengeance just as the boss was the target of his former employee's.

PARK takes aim at Korea's criminal class, the medical establishment, and violent radical groups until the film becomes a cauldron of competing interests each of whom fatally lack empathy. At several moments in the film, the oncoming tragedy could be averted by a simple act of generosity or even just honesty. But the characters in his films value class and group loyalty above simple empathy.

With **OLDBOY**, PARK turns up the heat again. Here, the focus is less on a broad social tapestry than on an individual's psychology. OH Dae-Su is an unexceptional businessman whose incarceration by an unknown enemy and subsequent "freedom" results in the destruction of his identity.

PARK depicts the psychological cost of Dae-Su's predicament. It involves trampling a series of social taboos into the dust, as Dae-Su and his opponent becomes obsessed with revenge to the exclusion of all other values. Each is willing to wager his sanity and life on the chance for vengeance and ultimately winning and losing in their own way.

**OLDBOY** confirms PARK's talent in depicting minds under excruciating pressure, unbalanced social dimensions leading inevitably to the disturbed psyche. PARK combines anger and detachment with a flamboyant gift for violent drama, and excels at making the otherwise off-putting, relentlessly compelling. PARK manages the rare trick of being both quintessentially local and disturbingly, universal.

## FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES:

### PARK CHANWOOK (DIRECTOR)

PARK Chanwook was born on August 23, 1963 and, as a young man, graduated from Sogang University with a degree in philosophy. A chance viewing of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* during university confirmed his desire to become a filmmaker. He first became a film critic and then a director's assistant. He made his directorial debut in 1992 with *Moon Is...Sun's Dream* and achieved widespread success in 2000 with *JSA: Joint Security Area*. His next film, the far less conventional *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*, was a critical success. With **OLDBOY**, PARK again collected critical kudos and was honored with the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2004. Since then, he has contributed the Korean segment of the Asian horror omnibus, *Three Monster* (co-directed with Takashi Miike and Fruit Chan).

### FILMOGRAPHY:

2004: Three, Monster  
2003: Old Boy  
2002: Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance  
2000: JSA: Joint Security Area  
1997: 3 Members  
1992: Moon Is....Sun's Dream

### CHOI MIN-SIK (OH DAE-SU)

CHOI Min-Sik was born on January 22, 1962 and first achieved fame on the stage and on television. He started appearing in films in 1992 and soon began making his mark in such notable works as KIM Ji-Wun's *Quiet Family* (1998). Commercial success came his way in 1999, when he played a North Korean spy in KANG Je-Gyu's blistering action film, *Shiri*, a huge box office smash. In 2002 he received international acclaim by starring in *Chihwaseon*, a film by Korea's most revered director, IM Kwon-Taek. As the nineteenth-century painter JANG Seung-Up, CHOI created a vivid portrait of a proudly vulgar artist who both upset aristocratic artistic norms and altered the shape of Korean painting.

CHOI has said that he created the character, OH Dae-su, in **OLD BOY** in a very different manner than *Chihwaseon*. CHOI said he felt a responsibility to bring back to life the painter JANG Seung-Up in *Chihwaseon*, while in **OLD BOY** OH Dae-su is the absolute product of his imagination.

*"CHOI Min-sik is an actor who has the classical virtue of old stars. I tried to emphasize the great resonance in his voice which is worthy of a Shakespearian play. I also tried to emphasize his very trustworthy eyes which never change no matter what he says or does, and his sharp facial features. In order to present his voice to the audience, I used narrations and several close-ups to put emphasis on his deep eyes to highlight the experience hidden in the wrinkles on his face."* **Director PARK Chan-Wook**

#### SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

2003: Old Boy (Director: PARK Chan-wook)  
2002: Chihwaseon (Director: IM Kwon-taek)  
2001: Failan (Director: SONG Hae-sung)  
1999: Shiri (Director: KANG Je-kyu)  
1999: Happy End (Director: CHUNG Ji-Woon)  
1998: The Quiet Family (Director: CHUNG Ji-Woon)  
1997: No. 3 (Director: SONG Neung-han)

#### **YOO JI-TAE (LEE WOO-JIN)**

One of Korea's most famous young stars, YOO graduated as a Film & Theater major from Dankook University. YOO then entered the Graduate School of Advanced Visual Production at Chungang University. He went into dance when he was in high school, but after he suffered a back injury in college, the good-looking youth started a career in modeling and in television commercials. In 1998, he made his screen debut with *Bye Joon* and achieved widespread popularity the next year in *Attack of the Gas Station*. YOO described his character in **OLD BOY**, LEE Woo-jin, as "*strong on the outside, but weak on the inside; sophisticated and shallow at the same time.*"

#### SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

2004: Woman is the Future of the Man (Director: HONG Sang-soo)  
2003: Old Boy (Director: PARK Chan-wook)  
2003: Natural City (Director: MIN Byung-chun)  
2003: Into the Mirror (Director: KIM Seong-ho)  
2001: One Fine Spring Day (Director: HUR Jin-ho)  
1999: Attack of the Gas Station (Director: KIM Sang-Jin)

#### **GANG HYE-JUNG (MIDO)**

Born in Incheon, January 1, 1982, GANG was a theater major at Seoul Arts College. Her big break came when she co-starred in director MOON Seung-wook's *Butterfly*, and was rewarded the Best Actress award at the Pucheon International Fantastic Film Festival in 2001. For the part of Mido in **OLD BOY**, she beat out 300 other actresses in an open audition.

#### FILMOGRAPHY:

2003: Old Boy (Director: PARK Chanwook)  
2001: The Butterfly (Director: MOON Seung-wook)