

# Burning (15)

Directed by Lee Chang-dong

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**Released: 1 February 2019**  
**South Korea**

## Synopsis

The conventions of the thriller genre are upended in this strikingly enigmatic and provocative tale of romantic obsession set against the backdrop of a contemporary South Korea fraught with uncertainty and status anxiety.

Jong-su (Yoo Ah-in) is an aspiring novelist from an inauspicious farming background, working part-time as a deliveryman. He begins an impromptu relationship with Hae-mi (Jun Jong-seo) whom he encounters by chance and who claims they grew up together - though he has no recollection of this.

When Hae-mi returns from a trip to Africa he is shocked to see she has a new man in tow, the handsome and obviously affluent Ben (Steven Yeun). Smug, and self-assured Ben is, perhaps a little bit creepy. Consumed by jealous insecurity, Jong-su is convinced of Ben's nefarious intentions and he begins to spiral into dark psychological territory.

Richly atmospheric and boasting a trio of brilliant performances, *Burning* is a teasingly complex, elusive drama of uncommon power.

## Lee Chang-dong

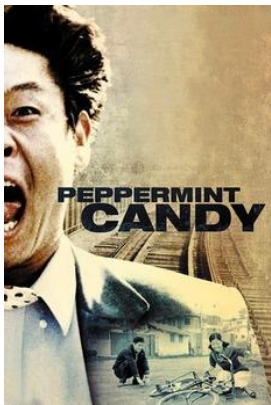
A celebrated academic and novelist prior to his directing career, Lee Chang-dong came to filmmaking relatively late in life, making his first feature in his forties. What unites all of his films is their extensive portraits of characters often at the mercy of circumstances beyond their control, be they societal and historical developments in his native South Korea, debilitating illnesses, or some omnipresent force that seems out to get them. Lee is unafraid to confront the ugliness of human nature, but he is always compassionate and never judgemental.

He has directed six feature films: *Green Fish* (1997), *Peppermint Candy* (2000), *Oasis* (2002), *Secret Sunshine* (2007), *Poetry* (2010), and *Burning* (2018).

Lee has won Silver Lion for Best Director and Fipresci International Critics' Prize at the 2002 Venice Film Festival and the Best Screenplay Award at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. He also won the award for Achievement in Directing at the 4th Asia Pacific Screen Awards in 2017,[2] Jury Grand Prize at the 2018 Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Best Director and Lifetime Achievement Award at the 13th Asian Film Awards in 2019,[3] and he has been nominated for the Golden Lion and the Palme d'Or.

## Other Films by Lee Chang-dong

We showed Lee's most recent film, **Poetry**, in our second season, and here are a couple more of his films which are well worth seeking out.



### Peppermint Candy (1999)

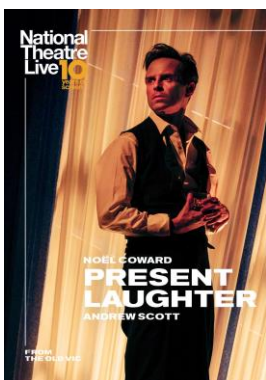
Opening with what seems to be a man's suicide on a railway bridge, as he shouts "I want to go back!" the film jumps back in time across 20 years, showing what brought the man to this point of desperation. Charting in reverse his development from idealistic student through military service to brutal police officer and abusive married businessman, Lee doesn't seek to redeem Yong-ho or explain away his personal responsibility in some of his destruction, but instead demonstrate how external forces in South Korea's history – including the massacre in the Gwangju Uprising of 1980 – play their part in the gradual corruption of citizens. Peppermint Candy is a work of deep conviction, passion and anger.

### Secret Sunshine (2007)

This powerful and moving drama follows Lee Shin-ae (Jeon Do-yeon, winner of Best Actress at Cannes in 2007) as she relocates her life to the town where her dead husband was born, with her very young son in tow. As she struggles to adjust, another tragedy strikes, sending her into an emotional tailspin in a saga that probes questions of faith, forgiveness and reconciliation. Jeon's wrenching performance has earned deserved comparisons to Gena Rowlands in *A Woman Under the Influence*.



## Coming Up at the Village Cinema in January



### Thursday 30 January

#### NT Live: Present Laughter (Encore Screening)

A giddy and surprisingly modern reflection on fame, desire and loneliness, Matthew Warchus directs Andrew Scott in Noël Coward's provocative comedy *Present Laughter*. As he prepares to embark on an overseas tour, star actor Garry Essendine's colourful life is in danger of spiralling out of control.

Engulfed by an escalating identity crisis as his many and various relationships compete for his attention, Garry's few remaining days at home are a chaotic whirlwind of love, sex, panic and soul-searching.

### Friday 31 January

#### The Kindergarten Teacher

Maggie Gyllenhaal is utterly brilliant as Lisa Spinelli, a kindergarten teacher by day, who takes poetry classes by night. Her two worlds collide when a five-year-old Jimmy Roy (Parker Sevak) reveals himself to be a poetic prodigy. Anxious to protect his gift from a world she believes doesn't understand, her fascination with the boy spills over into obsession.

This smart, sharp film entrances with the deceptive simplicity of the complex matters it deals with and is a showcase for the brilliance of Maggie Gyllenhaal and a reminder she is among the best actors working today.

