

Member and Guest Feedback for *Next Sohee*

Fascinating glimpse of the intern culture in Korea. Lack of culpability, blaming the victims.

Thought it was great but slightly overlong. It portrayed so many conflicting elements...parents who could not talk to their children, friends who were emotionally attuned to each other but unable to offer solutions and a school system which disposed of their pupils into dead end jobs, where there was no hope of reprieve or satisfaction, let alone joy. All of this contrasting with a society where rituals of manners and courtesies masked brutality, cover ups and oppression. And a lone, maverick police officer trying to unearth the truth, fight against the system and make things better. Very thought-provoking.

The impact on me of this film on this second viewing had not been dimmed since when I first saw it in 2022. Such a powerful and relevant narrative. Not to mention the exposé of systemic corruption. Loved the two extremely well-directed punches, one from Sohee to the manager and the other from the cop, Oh Yu-ji, to the vice-principal. It may have been 2hr 18mins but only felt like 90mins!

Despite the length, it held our rapt attention as we watched the sorrowful tale of the promise and joy of youth being thwarted and destroyed. The police investigator's ultimate role as a healer only served to spotlight a cold and cruel society, devoid of soul and morals, thus failing its youth and its future.

This film reminded me of J.B. Priestley's *AN INSPECTOR CALLS* and also the Luis Bunuel film *EXTERMINATING ANGEL* in that it is also a parable about cruelty, negligence, collective guilt and retribution. The avenging angel here is a policewoman who defies her superior by calling everyone to account for the death of the young call centre internee. She persists like a dog with a bone and becomes the real moral centre of a story about the unacceptable face of capitalism and those who are complicit with its values. Enjoyable but a bit overlong and mawkish.

A very good film but it was very grim.

The fact that this film was inspired by a true story made it a painful watch. At times it felt more like an investigative documentary than a drama but the female detective and the lead character Sohee gave great performances. It was a bleak insight into this area of Korean life.

Brilliant.

Fantastic. I was riveted for the whole thing, which I was not expecting at all!

Excellent film lacerating the straightjackets of South Korean society and the difficulties it poses for the young seeking outlets more commonly available in western societies. Loved its 2-part format and how the detective empathised with Sohee's predicament. My only criticism was it could have been slightly shorter.

A powerful and highly intelligent film, all the more chilling for the fact that it was inspired by a real-life case.

A really interesting film with strong performances but I found the pace rather slow at times and thought it could have benefitted by being 20 or 30 minutes shorter.

A very interesting film, both as a view into the apparently inhumane aspects of Korean society and the practices at call centres. I was intrigued by the title *Next Sohee*. I was wondering if this emphasised the commodification of humans in society where one Sohee could simply be replaced by the next Sohee. I would have given the film the highest score if it had been less long and ponderous.

It didn't need 137 minutes to tell Sohee's story. 90 minutes would have given it more punch than the drawn out 137 minutes.

I thought that the film was very thought-provoking and well-acted. It described the problems of bureaucracy and targets it very graphically. However, it was far too long - it would have been so much better if it had been about 30 minutes shorter.

Absorbing, wide ranging insight into life in Korea. Collective responsibility. High price of conformity - a life ended.

A thought-provoking movie, superbly acted by the entire cast. Having lived in Asia for many years - but not in South Korea - from what I know of South Korean culture, I could imagine that this system exists and the casualties, envisioning no escape from a miserable existence excepting alcohol and dance, feel they have no alternative but to end their lives. Perhaps things have changed but I knew one South Korean who left the country after, unmarried, she had lost her virginity as she knew there would be no future for her in South Korea. And thinking of wider similarities: the shifting of guilt at the poor treatment of students and staff reminded me so much of other 20th century blame-shifting in post-WW2 Europe....

The exploitation of workers, in particular of those who are young, is a difficult issue but the film of July Jung is intelligent and delicate. We could see so many facets of the life in a factory and in the life of youngsters, of managers and the Police. The large casting seems to follow the rich and sad script with ease. Fantastic director and actors.

Perhaps the committee should reflect on the impact of a second depressing film as we struggle through a cold and dark January?

Both my wife and I thought this was an outstanding film (the best of the season, so far) and rate it Excellent. Brilliant acting, a gripping story and the grim representation of the exploitation of Korean schoolgirls and the uncaring attitudes of those that should look out for them (and the lack of accountability- see Post Office scandal and Grenfell here), offset by the super female detective shining a light into dark spaces. Possibly not a great advert for South Korea! My wife adds: depressing but in a good way. It's a film that I am still thinking about a couple of days later.

***Next Sohee* has really stayed with me these past few days. I found it a compelling, moving story with a strong message, relevant to any culture. Short scenes between the friends helped to lighten the bleakness. Well-acted and directed. My only criticism - just half an hour too long.**

I give this an Excellent and my husband gives it a Good. He felt that it was too long but I was absorbed throughout.

What a wonderful film! Absolutely terrific acting performances by everyone involved. My son taught English as a foreign language in South Korea for five years and often spoke about the high expectations of parents, teachers, and employers there, with many children being 'crammed' to pass exams from a very young age.

Excellent acting. A rather depressing view of how little people are valued – and a salutary warning as to what happens when you let the bean-counters take over. I was engaged throughout the film but it should have been rather shorter.

Fascinating insight into Korean workplace and business culture. It illustrates very well why we need effective employment regulation (which some dismiss as bureaucracy), not to mention trade unions. Rights here are being eroded by Amazon and other big companies, so it's not just South Korea. I would have given it an Excellent but felt it was unnecessarily long. Otherwise, a good choice.

The bookending of the dance sequence was very moving, as were the tears of the tough detective. The system cannot tolerate difference and all will carry on, with no-one to blame. Great film.

Both the depiction of the exploitation of innocent school pupils and the thorough investigation and revelation of the widespread collusion. Superb acting.

This was a very interesting film, showing a glimpse of the harsh and poor practices in some Korean call centres, which lead to many of the young employees' mental health suffering. The conspiracy discovered between the educational institutions and the businesses to exploit the children is sickening. The film revealed the resulting depressive mood of many school children. It is alarming the extent to which children take solace from alcohol on a routine basis. They seem to be largely emotionally estranged from their parents. It's a very harsh, bleak and sobering depiction.

Excellent acting and a truly sad tale. Can only assume it is based in reality and a disturbing system affecting the youth (and all workers) in that country.

A revealing insight into the consequences of a system of education and employment that prioritises economic outcomes over personal development and well-being.

The film's first half had a predictable, awful story. It made me believe that South Korean society lacked empathy, was surprisingly uncaring, even by parents, leading to suicide of the main character but the second half reversed my feelings. The police inspector, with care, analysed the situation even endangering her own job and questioned the various authorities reaching the truth. Very different to my experience in England, where ordinary people care and help while the police jump to quick answers. The film has parallels with *An Inspector Calls* (J. B. Priestley), which concludes that all of society has responsibility for individual crimes.

A strange one, it looked like an interesting story of a subject I knew nothing about but sadly it did not grip me. The main protagonist I found annoying and I had no sympathy with her because she acted like a spoilt brat. It was far too long....this would have been OK if nearer one and a half hours but my interest waned after that and I noticed the uncomfortable seats more.

Thoroughly enjoyed it but felt it could have been shorter by twenty minutes as it sometimes felt the point was being laboured.

This brilliant film gave us a window on the lacer conditions surrounding young people in South Korea, with few options and the victims of the repressive, cruel system from the bottom up - each level of society struggling to meet targets, regardless of the human cost. Sohee and her manager both paid the price. Her isolation was not unique to her but demonstrated the distance between the characters. Her parents had no clue that her passion was dance and her teacher never bothered to check on conditions in the call centre. A tragic tale. Kafkaesque but very well worth watching.

A damning indictment of the intern system in South Korea for young students. I was impressed by the tenacity of police detective, Yoo Jin, who although her supervisor tried to stop her from continuing her investigation, was not deterred.

Grim film though (2 suicides) but a searing critique of Korean society.

I almost gave this an Excellent but it was about fifteen minutes too long, especially the "postmortem" part. Also, I do find East Asian films a bit weird as the mentality of the people is so different. (I say that having taught hundreds of them). On the whole I found them to be very emotionally repressed, which also came through in this film. Even so, a very good film, highlighting many points which people need to be aware of, assuming they have time these days to even take them in. In other words, plenty of food for thought. It goes without saying that the acting, direction, cinematography et al were all excellent. Maybe it was just the script that needed a bit more work on it. I am not normally that keen on "message" films as the problem is that the drama turns into a lecture and indeed that turned out to be the case here, with for example the "decent" police officer railing against her own bureaucratic machine. But the same applies here. There are not enough decent well-paying jobs. Everything else is a drudge. The school where the kids are being farmed out for exploitative labour with the threat of your certificate being withheld if you do not comply reminds me of our own secondary moderns or technical colleges back in the day which were then mostly vehicles for factory fodder. The educational system is different now but I wonder how much it has really changed. Here, I suppose, a lot of these jobs are outsourced to English speaking people in India, the Philippines and even Africa but I suppose they actually need Koreans to do that kind of work in South Korea. At least until the robots take over, which won't be for a while yet. Everything is portrayed in that society as being institutionally corrupt; big business and the state sector collude so everyone gets their piece at the end of the month and it is not much different here. When I was growing up, work used to be known as the four-letter word; that and the increasing cost of living, no wonder young people today find it preferable to claim "mental health issues" and live off benefits and maybe do a bit of influencing. Only Fans work or drug dealing on the side - at least they won't end up like the poor devils in this film. Overall, an excellent choice.

A powerful film and a biting criticism of - South Korean culture (male domination - which everyone seems to accept!) - the political structure (corrupt) - and (most important) the brainwashing, lies, pretense and cruelty of the corporate environment (not restricted to South Korea) I liked the way in which the film continued after the death of Sohee and who could not fail to like the persistence of the detective?

A frightening picture of South Korean society, extremely well-acted.