

Press release
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SONG Kang-ho to receive the 2019 Excellence Award

Locarno72 will pay tribute to SONG Kang-ho as winner of this year's Excellence Award, with the South Korean actor as a guest in Piazza Grande on Monday, 12 August. The Locarno Film Festival Excellence Award for SONG Kang-ho is the first dedicated to an Asian film personality.

The Excellence Award of the 72nd Locarno Film Festival will go to SONG Kang-ho, a many-sided figure in South-Korean and international cinema. An exceptional, remarkably versatile artist, SONG has tested himself constantly across a career stretching over more than two decades, tackling an endless variety of genres and roles and subtly altering the register of his approach to find ever greater dramatic depth. His magisterial performances in films by great South Korean masters such as BONG Joon-ho, HONG Sang-soo, KIM Jee-woon and PARK Chan-wook have brought him success not only in South Korea, where he is one of the nation's biggest stars, but also at global level.

Born in 1967 in Gimhae, South Korea, SONG Kang-ho made his debut on the big screen in *The Day a Pig Fell Into the Well* (1996) by HONG Sang-soo. He was soon cast by directors who would hallmark his career, such as KIM Jee-woon, with whom he worked in *The Quiet Family* (1998) and *The Foul King* (2000). The latter showcased his remarkable versatility and athletic prowess, proving to be the first in a long series of leading roles that established SONG as an icon of New Korean Cinema. KIM Jee-woon was again behind the camera when SONG starred in *The Good the Bad the Weird* (2008), a Sergio Leone-inspired Korean spaghetti western, and in *The Age of Shadows* (2016).

SONG's career reached even greater heights when he began his long-term partnership with PARK Chan-wook, who directed him in *Joint Security Area* (2000), *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* (2002) – the first film in a revenge trilogy that ended with *Lady Vengeance* (2005) – and, in 2009, in *Thirst*. The same period saw SONG begin another collaboration that was to prove fundamental in his career, with BONG Joon-ho, who picked him as the male lead in one of his best-known films, *Memories of Murder* (2003), and later for *The Host* (2006), one of the biggest box-office hits in the history of Korean cinema. The international reach of these films made SONG a well-known face outside Korea as he garnered a series of major prizes, including Best Actor at the Asian Film Awards in 2007. The partnership with BONG Joon-ho has since gone from strength to strength: in 2013 SONG featured alongside star names of the caliber of Tilda Swinton, John Hurt and Chris Evans in the cast of the international coproduction *Snowpiercer*, based on the French sci-fi graphic novel *Le Transperceneige*, and also starred in *Parasite* (2019), presented at the 72nd Cannes Festival.

Now a global star, SONG Kang-ho played in a series of major pictures including, in 2010, *The Secret Reunion*, the huge hit by JANG Hun which provided yet more proof of the South Korean actor's talents. During the same period, he also starred in other high-profile titles such as *The Throne* (2015) by LEE Joon-ik, *A Taxi Driver* (2017) by JANG Hun and *The Drug King* (2018) by WOO Min-ho.

Lili Hinstin, Artistic Director of the Locarno Film Festival, comments, "*The Locarno Film Festival's Excellence Award goes to actors who have followed significant, courageous paths.*"

Thus far the recipients have all been American or European, but for me it was important to open up this prize to the Asian cinema. SONG might not be a household name for audiences in the West, but his face is familiar around the world. A many-faceted actor, he is a peerless interpreter of the variety and intensity of emotions generated by Korean cinema, at ease in anything from drama to hard-boiled thriller, his face and body indelibly associated with the films of directors such as BONG Joon-ho, PARK Chan-wook and KIM Jee-woon; who if not SONG Kang-ho can embody in a single performance all the excellence of Korean filmmaking over the past twenty years? I am delighted that he should receive the first Excellence Award given to an Asian personality."

SONG Kang-ho will receive the Excellence Award in Piazza Grande on Monday, 12 August. On Tuesday 13 August Festival-goers can enjoy a panel discussion with actor at the Spazio Cinema.

The Excellence Award pays tribute to film personalities whose efforts and talents have enriched cinema. Winners of the Excellence Award at previous Festivals include Ethan Hawke, Mathieu Kassovitz, Edward Norton, John Malkovich, Juliette Binoche and Isabelle Huppert.

The 72nd Locarno Film Festival will take place from 7 to 17 August 2019.

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