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### King & the Clown, The

South Korea 119 minutes

DIRECTOR: Jun-ik Lee

SCREENWRITER: Suk-hwan Choi

CAST: Woo-sung Karm, Jin-Young Jang, Sung-Yeon Kang, Joon-gi Lee

[ [show times](#) ]

The unusual outfit of a period drama cloaks South Korea's all-time box office record breaker, THE KING AND THE CLOWN. Lee Jun-ik's film wins the audience's heart with pristine performances elicited from a charged, charming script that whispers in gay undertones.

Based on the popular play "Yi", which was inspired by the diaries of a sixteenth-century king, the film blends comedy and wit with ominous, darkly Shakespearean tragedy. And it's all served over a taboo-breaking gay subtext.

Weaving a rich, colorful tapestry of historical landscapes, amazing acrobatics and unspoken emotions - made all the stronger for their concealment behind painful, hinted allusions - Director Lee masterfully reveals the fateful story of two clowns. Self-confident Jang-seng and androgynous Gong-gil earn a meagre living by performing in the streets of Hanyang, the capital city of the Chosun era. Their wretched poverty combines with their free spirits, unquestionable skills as performers and fearless mockery to form the explosive mix of their shows - and to bring their popular art before the despotic monarch King Yon-san.

Against all odds, instead of being sentenced to death for staging an irreverent satire of the tyrant's affair with Nok-soo, the two jesters make the king laugh with their coarse, earthy wit and are admitted into his court.

- Giovanna Fulvi (Toronto International Film Festival)

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