

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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Wednesday 17th April: [Return to Seoul](#)

France/Germany/Belgium/South Korea 119 mins 2022

Director: Davy Chou

Writers: Laure Badufle; Davy Chou; Violette Garcia

Cast:

Park Ji-min (*Freddie*); Oh Kwang-rok (*her Korean Father*); Guka Han (*Tena*); Kim Sun-young (*Korean Aunt*); Yoann Zimmer (*Maxime*); Louis-Do de Lencquesaing (*André*)

We began this season with a young Korean mother leaving her child in a Baby Box at a Christian Church (*Broker*). In *Return to Seoul*, we end with a young, Korean-born, Frenchwoman (French-Korean visual artist Park Ji-Min, in her first acting role) returning to Seoul and trying to trace her roots. NB: between the end of the Korean War in 1953 until the late 1980s over 200,000 Korean children were adopted internationally.

When her planned holiday to Japan is cancelled at the eleventh hour, on a whim 25-year-old Frédérique Benoît (Freddie) books a flight to Seoul instead. On her first night there, Tena, a new-found friend, mentions a well-known adoption agency that helps adoptees trace their birth parents. Although never her reason for visiting South Korea, Freddie subsequently visits their offices, embarking on a quest to find her biological parents in a country she knows nothing about, taking her life in new and unexpected directions.

Director Davy Chou's screenplay was motivated by disenchantment with the false sentimentality of existing narratives of adoption and cultural reunification. "So many documentaries," Chou told *Filmmaker Magazine*, "even when told from the viewpoint of the adoptee, feel so fake". Freddie's meandering search for identity never arrives at a fixed destination and offers few certainties along the way. Just as she never achieves the sort of reconciliation promised by conventional adoption stories (an easy integration of birth and adoptive families, and of the place one is born with the place one grows up), the film refuses to offer a straightforward narrative or tidy conclusion – leaving the intensions of her Korean family untranslated and her own decisions and motivations unexplained.

This fantastic film is just as much the creation of its star, Park Ji-min. She gives an extraordinary performance as Freddie – wilful, disruptive, positively unkind – who refuses to conform to the role most audiences would expect of her. She is a force of nature, her incredibly expressive face, repeatedly seen in extended close-up, holding the whole movie.

The Committee have now begun planning for the 2024/25 season:

Details of which will be emailed to members and appear on the [CFC website](#) as they become available. We wish you a pleasant summer and look forward to seeing you again in October.