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SEPTEMBER 7, 2006

TIFF 2006 Preview: Discovery: King and the Clown

We said in an [earlier review](#) that we always stay to the end of the credits of a film that we've enjoyed; *King and the Clown* is the kind of film that this rule was made for.

The biggest box office smash in Korean cinematic history (well, until *The Host* came along) *King and the Clown* is the story of a pair of travelling performers, the headstrong Jang-seng (Karm Woo-sung) and the feminine Gong-gil (Lee Joon-gi, who [likes pomegranate too](#)). After escaping the abusive pimp of Gong-gil, they travel to Seoul, where Jang-seng's ambition would have them perform for no less than the king himself, and Gong-gil finds himself the centre of the king's unspoken desires.



This has been referred to as the Korean *Brokeback Mountain* already and probably will be many times yet, but that is in fact a terrible disservice, as it's actually a far more subtle, deeper film than that. Though the gay angle is unmistakably there, other than one blink-and-you'll-miss-it kiss there are no unambiguous references. More powerful than that, this is a film about a love that transcends gender or sexual orientation entirely and for that is profoundly moving. While certain characters and plot points are sketched too broadly, and like many other Korean films the ending seems rushed, the film is shot and staged utterly beautifully, in particular the captivating scenes of Jang-seng and Gong-gil's performances.

While it's not perfect, *King and the Clown* is a truly great Korean film. **4/5**

Posted by [Mathew Kumar](#) in [TIFF 2006](#) | [Link](#) | [Comments \(1\)](#) | [Recommend this!](#) (29) | [\[+\]](#)