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- ADVERTISE
- ABOUT JWR
- REVIEWS
- FEATURES
- CULTURAL LIFE
- SURVEYS & CONTESTS
- READERS' FORUM
- JWR QUARTERLY REPORT
- LINKS
- ARCHIVES



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[Back to Film, DVD & Video Reviews](#)

QUICK TAKES 3

Reviewed for the 2007 Insideout Gay & Lesbian Film and Video Festival
by S. James Wegg
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Death of a minstrel

King and the Clown (Wang-ui nam-ja)

Lee Jun-ik

2005, 119 min

☆☆☆☆



The King and his concubine, Nok-su

Epic history can make for fabulous cinema if there is a director with vision and producers with cash. In *King and the Clown*, Lee Jun-ik has a truly spectacular view of this tale of tyranny, treachery and love, whose storyline has been cherry-picked from Joseon Dynasty diaries over 500 years old, originally in a play by Kim Tae-woong. Every colour, fabric, musical instrument, weapon and utensil has been meticulously created, restored or polished to convincingly reconstruct the era of autocratic rule. The cast is universally engaging. The camera can't get enough of Gong-gil (Lee Jun-gi whose dreamy visage transcends gender with ease). Chief Clown (or more aptly, minstrel), Jang-saeng (played with athleticism and rhetorical passion by Kam Woo-seong) steals the dramatic limelight as he outsmarts the King (Yeong Jeong-jin). His ruthless, blind ambition and lusty switch from the palace "whore" Nok-su (Kang Sung-yeon) to the demur Asian drag queen gets tongues wagging and, ultimately, destroys all of those entwined in the struggle for moral and political supremacy. No winners here, and the squeamish might have to avert their eyes for the few frames of royal justice meted out without benefit of a trial. Lee Byung-woo's string-rich score, with an entrancing flute marking the beginning and end, verges on the saccharine but provides the overt passion that largely remains hidden away in the principals' inner souls. A notable exception being Gong-gil's powerful, hugely expressive last rant, where his love for Jang-saeng moves even the murderous King. Yet, if that had been smouldering in the royal concubine's chest, why had he succumbed so readily to his privileged "position." The answer is as timeless as the human experience.

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Flopping dicks lack hard drive

Dead Boyz Don't Scream

Marc Saltarelli

🇺🇸 2006, 78 min



Surrounded by such noble efforts as *King and the Clown* (above), *Byron Chief-Moon: Grey Horse Rider*, *Glue* and even *Eating Out 2: Sloppy Seconds*, Marc Saltarelli's *Dead Boyz Don't Scream* seems a sad embarrassment. In what could have been titled *So Many Dicks, so Little Script*, a gaggle of male models shamelessly parade their jewels (yet like the majority of male strippers everywhere, most are straight and toned not queer and tempting) in a "just so" manner that is soon tiresome and sexless. Once the murders begin (lesbians to the rescue—including Belle Van Dyke, Forest Ranger), there's even more to get in a flap about as the pretty boys and their trimmed pubes go down softly.



Male models should be seen ... and not heard

Singing on empty

Colma the Musical

Richard Wong

🇺🇸 2006, 117 min



Colma: "A Town That's Really Dead." And it seems that the living dead are writing, directing and starring in this musical of the burbs. Billy (Jake Moreno) can't sing: his nasal production is only outstripped by his too imperfect pitch. H.P. Mendoza wrote the script, the lyrics (with a cliché dictionary the main reference tool, e.g., "one step at a time," "Things Will Get Better") and the pastel music. Maribel (L.A. Renigen) fares the best as friend, fag-hag-in-waiting to the two guys. Thanks goodness for Richard Wong's (who also directs) long shots, which keep the eye engaged even as the ear shuts down. **JWR**



Rodel looks over the town

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