



A24

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Minari

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Publicity

Kate Parkes  
kparkes@elevationpictures.com

Olivia Nasner  
onasner@elevationpictures.com

Catherine Simmonds  
csimmonds@elevationpictures.com

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# Synopsis

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A tender and sweeping story about what roots us, *Minari* follows a Korean-American family that moves to a tiny Arkansas farm in search of their own American Dream.

The family home changes completely with the arrival of their sly, foul-mouthed, but incredibly loving grandmother. Amidst the instability and challenges of this new life in the rugged Ozarks, *Minari* shows the undeniable resilience of family and what really makes a home.

# Production Notes

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## Production Notes

Named for a peppery Korean herb that thrives best in its second season, *Minari* is a tender, funny, evocative ode to how one generation of a family risks everything to plant the dreams of the next. The film unspools with all the vividness of a lived memory. While in its basic outlines *Minari* might seem to be a story we know—a tale of immigrants making a go at their own vision of the American Dream—director Lee Isaac Chung brings a fresh and illuminating take. For within the film's at once playful, powerful, and candidly detailed family remembrances comes a larger story: the impact of the journey on a new generation of young Americans.

It all begins as recent Korean arrival Jacob whisks his family from California to Arkansas, determined to carve out the rugged independence of farm life, even if it is one on shaky ground in the USA of the 1980s. While Jacob sees Arkansas as a land of opportunity, the rest of his clan is flummoxed by their unforeseen move to a new life on a pint-sized piece of land in the far-flung Ozarks. But it is two unlikely family members at opposite ends of the spectrum—wide-eyed, unruly seven-year-old David; and his equally defiant, just-off-the-plane-from-Korea grandma Soonja—who start to forge the family's new path. In the midst of profound change, they clash at first, but soon discover the imperfect but magical bonds that root the family to their past as they reach towards the future.

The fourth feature film written and directed by Chung, *Minari* is also the film he always wanted to make: a deeply personal immersion into reconciling two worlds, with boundless affection for both. Chung himself grew up in Arkansas, the son of South Korean immigrants. But he had never found a satisfying means to write about his family's journey until he conjured David. David offered an impish, joyful way

into complicated memories, but he also offered something else—that open, awed-by-it-all spirit that can illuminate the beautiful strangeness of life.

With his lack of language for what it means to be an immigrant, David becomes a conduit for the feeling of an entire unmoored family trying to find their bearings. As the Arkansas dream threatens to dry up and upend each member of the family, Chung has the opportunity to explore how a family navigates not only the very specific dilemmas of assimilating into rural America but also broader questions of elemental humanity—the gaps we all wrestle with between family ties and independence, faith and skepticism, feeling like an outsider and yearning to belong.

Says Chung: “For me, the film comes down on the side of hoping for the best in each other. The thing I most wanted was to let people into this family's world with sincerity and honesty, and without judgement of anyone in it. There's so much more drawing us together as human beings than the superficial categories we have created. For some, *Minari* might be a chance to see a Korean American finally telling our story, but I have found these characters mean just as much to people from Arkansas—or from New York, or anywhere. That has been one of the most moving things to me, to see how such a personal story to me can touch so many different people in meaningful ways.”

### Origins

*Minari* first came into focus for Lee Isaac Chung when it hit him just how much he yearned to tell his young daughter about where he came from, what it took for his parents to come to America, and what family—in all its messiness but also its mysterious grace notes—means to him.

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“Writing *Minari* had the feeling of a last-ditch effort, because what I was thinking was: if I could leave behind one story for my daughter to see, what would I want it to be?” Chung says. “I wrote down eighty visual memories from when I was right around my daughter’s age. They ranged from my parents’ heated arguments in Arkansas, to a man who worked for my father dragging a cross around town, to my grandmother burning down half our farm. Looking through them I thought, maybe this is the story I’ve wanted to tell all along.”

What emerged was something akin to a love letter to his parents, but also a love letter to all parents who make a stab at hope for their children’s futures. It was a fiction, but one he hoped might both pay homage to his parents’ tenacity in forging an unwritten American life and be a gift to his daughter as she comes of age.

“*Minari* is not a factual representation of my childhood,” Chung notes, “and Jacob and Monica are not my parents. But there are resonances there, the personal significance is deep.”

From the start of his career, Chung has never taken the straight-forward route. While he grew up on a small farm in Lincoln, Arkansas, he made his first feature film in Rwanda (where his art therapist wife traveled as a volunteer). *Munyurangabo*, a tale of friendship between two boys of opposing ethnicities, was a markedly unusual debut. Made in just eleven days with local actors, it became the first ever feature film in the Kinyarwanda language. The reception was extraordinary, with the late Roger Ebert writing: “it is in every frame a beautiful and powerful film—a masterpiece.” Chung would go on to experiment with form: writing and directing *Lucky Life*, a family drama based on the funny,

bittersweet poetry of Gerald Stern, and *Abigail Harm*, a surreal Manhattan fairy tale.

*Minari* was something different again, something so close to the bone that the intimacy of it felt high-risk in all the best ways. Conjuring David’s boyish exuberance, angst, and cheekiness was a particular revelation for Chung, merging the child and parent within him.

“There’s a dance going on where David is a creation of two opposing things: my inner memories of being scared, excited, and curious as a kid; and watching my daughter now from the outside, seeing how she processes big moments. David became a mix of me wanting to say things to myself and wanting to tell my daughter certain things,” says Chung.

He equally enjoyed channeling the rest of the film’s fictional family with empathy and appreciation for what drives them. Family patriarch Jacob takes deep pride in his self-reliance while his wife Monica pragmatically tries to keep family life intact amid the chaos Jacob has whipped up with the move. Oldest sister Anne rapidly gains savvy and responsibility as she is handed big, unasked-for responsibilities, while David mischievously tries to repel his newly arrived grandmother Soonja, who upends the fragile peace with her foul-mouthed but perceptive commentary. Then there’s the humor and humanity of Jacob’s employee Paul, a fervent Pentecostal in a perpetual state of repentance.

Though each character has their own comic plight, there is no judgement or satire. “I felt real admiration for all the film’s characters,” Chung explains. “It felt important not to allow any of them to symbolize something or be any kind of social or political archetype. I think because I had the luxury of knowing people like this just as a part of my life, that gave



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me the freedom to focus on mining what makes them tick. I wanted to create people who are fully alive, people who invite you to discover more and more about them.”

While memories make up the lifeblood of *Minari*, influences also came from American literature. Chung looked particularly to Flannery O’Connor’s fierce and comic candidness about rural Southerners facing faith, intolerance, salvation, and their own flaws. “What I love about O’Connor is that often the characters that make you feel the most uncomfortable are the ones that offer grace and redemption. There’s something so counterintuitive and life affirming about that,” says Chung. He also took a page from Willa Cather, recalling a line that spurred him to keep digging deeper: “Cather said, ‘life began for me when I stopped admiring and started remembering.’ I thought a lot about that idea.”

Yet, as much as Chung sees *Minari* as an utterly American story, he made the decision to write the family’s dialogue in Korean to reflect how newly arrived families really function. “Too often you see people in American films speaking English who would not in their real lives. But I think the more authentically a film depicts the details of how people really live, the more meaningful it is,” he explains. “There’s a dissonance to speaking Korean at home that you can’t get at any other way.”

*Minari*’s distinctive push-and-pull between enchanting specificity and relatable universality impressed producer Christina Oh (*The Last Black Man in San Francisco*) of Plan B. The screenplay arrived on her desk fittingly on Valentine’s Day, recommended by actor Steven Yeun, who she had worked with on Bong Joon-ho’s *Okja*. “Steven said, ‘you have to read this;’” she recalls, “and as soon as I did, it felt like

a divine appointment. I fell in love. I saw a beautifully told story about inclusion, tolerance, and recognizing we’re all the same. But it’s also just a remarkable emotional experience.”

Lately, Oh has been receiving streams of scripts about immigrants and cultural divides. Yet *Minari* stood far apart from the pack, with raw and precise family dynamics Oh instantly recognized with her own heart. “I felt for the first time I was seeing this story from an empathetic, humanistic, personal point of view rather than from the outside,” she says. “You really feel a part of this family’s lives; you enjoy them, and you care deeply about them. Their story has such a rich mix of feeling—funny, sweet, sad, and hopeful. And for me, as a child of South Korean immigrants, it felt like an incredibly important encapsulation of that experience, the honesty of which I had never seen before. Even though I didn’t grow up on a farm or go through the things this family does, they felt so deeply true to me, and I think that authenticity will speak to everyone.”

*Minari* then went on the fast track into production, as Plan B partnered with A24 and the film began shooting in the summer of 2019. All parties were completely behind Chung’s decision to keep the family scenes in Korean. Says Oh, “Regardless of language, this is a very American film about the chasing of an American dream. I grew up speaking Korean, yet I feel very American, which is a common experience.”

### **Jacob & Monica**

Well before *Minari* got a greenlight, Chung sent the script to actor Steven Yeun, who a few years before had become his cousin-in-law by marriage. In an expansive range of recent roles from the hit TV series “The Walking Dead” to

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Boots Riley's audacious comedy *Sorry To Bother You* to Lee Chang-dong's haunting noir *Burning*, Yeun has been helping to shatter Asian stereotypes in film. Chung felt he might understand Jacob, a chicken-sexing expert with far grander aspirations, as few actors could. Born in South Korea, Yeun was raised in Troy, Michigan.

"Steven has a somewhat unique story for a Korean-American," observes Chung. "He came to the U.S. when he was a little older than many of us, so he truly has one foot in Korea, but he also feels very American, having grown up in the Midwest. He's able to blend into both cultures yet be somewhat an outsider to both. I saw that mix work so well for his alienated character in *Burning*, and it works in a very different way for *Minari*. It's perfect for Jacob because he's a Korean immigrant who isn't interested in taking the typical path of moving to a city and building a business. He has a more unusual vision for his life."

He continues: "Another strength of Steven's is that you instantly want to root for him. You have to want to root for Jacob because he's doing this terribly risky thing, taking his family to this crazy place without even consulting them and putting them on the edge of disaster. You could easily despise this guy and not trust him at all. But the way Steven expresses what's inside of him, you feel sympathy for the intensity of his commitment, his willfulness, and his belief in hard work."

Yeun looks back now in amazement on the fact that he didn't anticipate loving Chung's script. "I've read some other things in this vein and most just touch on the surface, so I honestly didn't expect I'd be that interested," he recalls. "But I was blown away by the story's simplicity and truthfulness. Reading *Minari*, I realized what was missing from other things

on this topic: the feeling that the story is coming from an intrinsic, relatable humanity rather than a narrow identity."

Playing Jacob admittedly scared Yeun, which only made the role more irresistible. "The process of preparing for this role was tough, beautiful, worthwhile, and terrifying," he reflects.

"For one thing, Korean is something that I can speak, but not necessarily in the right vernacular for Jacob, so I knew that would take some real study and work. Even more worrisome was taking on playing a father of Jacob's generation. As a minority, playing this kind of role felt very large to me and weighty. I worried: 'Am I going to be able to portray this man authentically enough? Do I even know my own father? Do I really understand what our parents went through?' People often idealize or romanticize the first generation who came to this country, but that's not what I was looking to do. I was trying to get to the bottom of this very human man, flaws and all."

As with Chung, for Yeun that kind of understanding only seemed possible when he became a parent himself. A few years earlier, he says he probably could not have done justice to the role. "I don't think I could fully understand my parents' perspective until I had my own kids," he says. "But now I know something of what it's like to be Jacob, to be thirtysomething and to have kids relying on you but also have this fire to pursue your own ideas of success and happiness."

Jacob holds firm to the idea that ultimately David and Anne will benefit from his dream, once the dust settles. But while Jacob's wife Monica admires his aspirations, that doesn't mean she can easily embrace life in an Arkansas trailer in the middle of nowhere. She's anxious about the family's isolation, and about where her own life and marriage goes from here—even as she transforms their trailer into a place that increasingly feels like home.

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Taking Monica through nuanced emotional shifts is Yeri Han, an award-winning South Korean actress making her American debut in *Minari*. “We so lucked out in getting Yeri,” says Chung. “When I met her, I knew instantly this is who I wrote Monica for. It would be easy to play Monica as a stereotype of a complaining wife, but Yeri reveals her as very strong, with her own clear, vital sense of herself, despite having grown up in a culture where women traditionally had little agency. I wanted you to feel Jacob and Monica should be perfect together, only the situation is so imperfect, and Yeri got to all of that with an astonishing naturalism and subtlety.”

Yeun especially enjoyed working with Han. “She’s a deep, wise soul,” he says. “We talked a lot about how Jacob and Monica could each assert themselves completely inside this marriage. Two human beings trying to exist together is difficult enough, but when you add the pressure that they’re under there are going to be cracks. Still, we both felt certain there’s a lot of love there.”

### David & Anne

From the start, the filmmakers knew one big crux of the production would be discovering their David. Could they find a kid at such a tender age who could be funny and believable, yet get all the shadings of innocence and naughtiness, vigor and vulnerability, caution and fury that forge the richness of *Minari*’s world? Even more, could they find someone who could enter a battle of wills with his salty, peculiar grandmother, but ultimately show how closely they are linked under the skin?

“We knew the key to the whole movie was that the audience has to fall in love with David,” says Oh. “You really have to

understand that his life has been turned upside down and he doesn’t know how to convey things any other way than mischief, which lets you forgive him.”

Casting director Julie Kim scoured everywhere from church basements to after school programs, scanning countless audition tapes for that ineffable quality. The whole filmmaking team was struck by newcomer Alan S. Kim. “Alan was the one I kept wanting to go back and watch. He was mesmerizing, maybe because he seemed to be so much himself,” says Chung. “In person, he just comes off like this fully formed, tiny grown-up. He’s effortlessly funny yet able to connect. What I loved most is that he was constantly doing things natural to him but very unexpected to me.”

Adds Oh, “Alan was so young, we worried briefly that he might not be ready to handle it. We couldn’t have been more wrong. He brought it every day and he was this bright light on set who set the tone with his cheerfulness. And the same was true of Noel Kate Cho as Anne.”

Noel is also a newcomer who hails from Virginia. “She was amazing in her audition, maybe because she has a younger brother in real life and really gets that relationship,” says Chung. “When we put her with Alan, they instantly felt like family. Noel had a lot to give, but in being the big sister she was also able to help corral Alan. “An important part of Anne’s character is that she’s serious about caring for the people she loves, and Noel did that in her own clear way.”

The hazards of children on sets may be legendary, but Chung likes working with them, likes their spontaneity and open spirits. Though he talked with some fellow filmmakers about strategies for directing youngsters, in the end he says: “There is no systematic way to work with kids. It’s almost all improvisation.”

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A child's innate ability to react before thinking is what Chung treasured most. "Alan not only was ready to try anything I wanted, he did things I could never have written. It was daily fun discovering what he might do. There are so many little moments, like when Jacob's digging the well and David's sits there looking bored... that's not something I planned but it feels so true. It was a wonderful dance where Alan was adapting to filmmaking and I was adapting to his impulses."

### Soonja & Paul

For all the tumultuous changes in David's life, nothing sets off more sparks than the arrival of Soonja, who, much to David's abject horror, moves into his bedroom, making them instant rivals.

To David, Soonja can't possibly be a "real" grandmother. She certainly doesn't bake cookies or tenderly dote. She smells weird, gets a kick out of teasing him, and is as foul-mouthed as anyone he's met. Nevertheless, in ways David cannot immediately see, he and Soonja share much in common—both are spirited rebels, both are physically vulnerable, and both are linchpins of the family, with Soonja connecting them to where they've come from just as David points to an unseen future. And when David pulls a boyish prank on Soonja, hoping that will make her go away, it instead binds them closer as David realizes Soonja understands him better than he could have known.

Chung knew he needed a strong and nuanced performer to play a character who starts in a comic register but ultimately brings profound life changes to her family. Chung jumped at this chance to cast a true legend of South Korean cinema: Yuh Jung Youn. In her nearly 50-year, highly acclaimed career, Youn has acted in over 80 films. After coming to the fore in the '70s as the muse of auteur Kim Ki-young, she

retired and moved to America, only to return to South Korea in the '80s and reignite her iconic status with a series of roles that shattered the standard clichés of middle-aged women in South Korean films. Sometimes referred to as 'The Meryl Streep of South Korea,' she is perhaps best known in the U.S. for her award-winning work in Sang-soo Im's remake of the classic *The Housemaid* and the recent sci-fi Netflix series "Sense8."

"I used to teach film history and I'd show her films in my class—so it was an incredible honor to actually work with her," says Chung. "My father even said to me, 'oh maybe you've finally made it,' when he heard she was in my film. She's a true artist, a master at her craft, and her level of intuition and skill put her up there in the conversation with the greatest living actors. She only isn't better known because she never set out to make it in America."

Youn proved the perfect catalyst to push David and family to the edge and bring them back. "The film's momentum completely opens up when Soonja arrives," says Chung. "She's vulgar and has a wicked sense of humor, but what I find interesting is that quite often salvation comes from someone like that. Somehow, she might embody ideals of tolerance and love more than anyone."

Salvation is more directly sought by the family's invaluable neighbor, who lends Jacob the help he needs to tend to his crops. This is Paul, a completely committed Pentecostal who speaks in tongues but doesn't say much about the reasons he is driven to make so many amends. Even as the ferocity of Paul's faith is a mystery and at times an affront to Jacob, no one in David's family can quite shake the strange, poignant beauty of Paul's kindness to them.

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Taking the role, modeled in part after a man who worked for Chung's father, is Will Patton, renowned for his screen and stage work, and himself the son of Lutheran minister and playwright. Patton had appeared in Chung's *Abigail Harm*, but the idea of casting him as Paul came to Chung unconsciously. "I had a dream about Will in the role, and that's where it started," he muses. "Will was actually the first person I cast for this film, and he was an anchor for me in that way."

Chung knew the role had pitfalls—Paul's un-self-conscious sincerity could have crumbled through even a drop of irony—but he also could see Patton sidestepping them in all the right ways. "Religion in a character can carry so much baggage, but I knew that Will would approach Paul first and foremost as a human being," says the director. "He uses the intensity of Paul's belief as a means to reveal who he is as a person. Paul was always an important character to me. The companionship he finds with Jacob speaks to how two people can come from entirely different backgrounds, yet find a closeness rooted simply in shared work. I find that a very beautiful ideal."

Chung gave Yeun and Patton wide open space to explore where these two seemingly contrasting men connect. "By design I wanted their friendship to be improvised, to give it a feeling of something evolving," he says. "Will and Steven riffed so beautifully together."

Patton's performance deeply moved Yeun. He loved that out on the land, where there is no need for social masks, Jacob and Paul discover they can simply be themselves.

"Like Jacob, Paul's a man living in the gaps," he describes. "He is alone, misunderstood, and burdened. Jacob relates

to that intrinsically, even if he sees himself as a man who believes only in science and hard work. They both have their beliefs, but at core, they're just two lonely dudes trying to do their thing, which is their connection. Will was willing to go so deep with me. I love the scene when Jacob finally says to Paul, 'good job.' You see how difficult it is for him to let down his guard and acknowledge someone helped him, but he's getting there."

### **This American Land**

Just as working his own patch of land is the lure for David's father to head for Arkansas, so too is the power of the land woven throughout *Minari*. This family might speak Korean, but their fates are as tied to the potential and peril in the American soil as the characters in John Ford's *Grapes of Wrath*, George Stevens' *Giant*, William Wyler's *Big Country*, or Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*.

For Chung, the land has been in his bones since his own father brought him to Arkansas. It's an inseparable part of who he is—and that link comes to the fore in the film—but it's a connection beyond sentimentality. "My father came to America believing in the romantic dream of what he saw in films like *Big Country* and *Giant*—this fertile land able to yield so much promise. But what I saw is that it was a lot harder than that. The dirt is not forgiving. I remember him out at 2 a.m., in the snow, covering trees. There's a constant level of risk in farming that so few movies let you feel. I wanted to show some of that, but also, by contrast, reflect on how nature so often offers grace."

Though Yeun did not grow up on a farm, he too became fascinated with the farming life through Jacob. "The ability to grow your own food, to create your own bounty, maybe



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that's the closest you can be to knowing God," he muses. "Certainly, Jacob gets humbled in the process."

Jacob's pastoral dreams were also on the mind of the film's director of photography, Australian Lachlan Milne, who often shot the exteriors in the clear, drenching light of the dusky 'magic hour.' The filmmakers were drawn to Milne's compelling outdoor work for Netflix's 'Stranger Things' and Taika Waititi's *Hunt For the Wilderpeople*. "This film really taps into Lachlan's aesthetic," says Oh. "This wasn't an easy film to shoot, but he has such a beautiful spirit that I don't think we would have survived without him. You can feel his understanding of the material in every frame."

Says Yeun of working with Milne: "Like Isaac, he's a deep, sensitive feeler. He's not coming at it from his head as much as his gut. He's drawn to things that are beyond the technical."

Chung and Milne talked an array of influences, from the spatial relations of Ozu to the raw terrain of Westerns to Spielberg's affinity for a child's inner mind. "Isaac and I were so simpatico," says Milne. "I'm a huge fan of not getting in the way of the story, of using available light and being as honest as you can—and so is he. For me it's all about letting the actors be free. That allows for moments like Steven just smoking in the most perfect light that create an unnamable feeling."

### **A Tulsa Trailer**

A big part of creating that feeling was shooting on real farmland in the Ozark hill country. The production set up camp just outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, due west of the Arkansas border, using all practical locations. These included a working farm tended by immigrant Hmong workers

who, Chung notes, "reminded me of the direct connection between immigrant families then and now."

As an Australian, Milne was taken aback by Tulsa. "I had assumed Oklahoma would be dry, bare, wide-open plains, but eastern Oklahoma is shockingly green, with its own breathtaking beauty."

When Chung decided he wanted cast and crew to move into an actual trailer—mirroring the same chaos experienced by David and family—production designer Yong Ok Lee (*The Farewell*) carefully chose a trailer from a huge consumer lot. "She took a classic trailer home and made it feel exactly like a Korean American home of the 80s," observes Christina Oh. "I instantly recognized the carpeting and drapes, even the water basins were spot on. It was just incredible. It felt like my own family to me."

Chung and Milne had many conversations about how to shoot inside the very close quarters of the trailer. "The big question was, how do we get it to not feel too claustrophobic? We wanted people to understand their circumstances, but also for it to feel very cinematic. Lachlan's photographic choices kept it from ever feeling static," says Chung. "I like to shape the compositions around where the actors want to be. Lachlan was brilliant at making that work in this minimal space."

"To be honest, it was incredibly difficult," confesses Milne. "But the difficulties of not being able to pull walls or find the easy angles forces you to be more creative."

The most daunting obstacle for Milne was perhaps the fact that he speaks little Korean, which made it all the more challenging to work in the instinctive way he wanted. "I wasn't sure how that would go, because a lot of the camera

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movement and framing that I like is motivated by dialogue and feeling,” he explains. “But Isaac and Steven would give me a sense of what some key words were and then a lot of it was just keying into the emotions, which didn’t need translation.”

### Home Fires

As *Minari* builds, David witnesses his father’s dream waver on the edge of absurdity, then near catastrophe as it seems the family’s future might literally go up in smoke. Chung always knew his memory of his South Korean grandmother accidentally setting much of their property aflame would be woven into the story.

Because he wanted the intensity of real heat, the kind that would be seared indelibly in David’s memory, Chung was determined to do it practically, without VFX. “You can’t cheat the awe-inspiring spectacle of a fire,” he says. “Once I saw Steven and Yeri with the pillar of fire in the backdrop, I knew I made the right decision. Lachlan was running around with an Easyrig for all it was worth, and in the aftermath, the fire left behind the twisted shapes of a Gehry sculpture, as only a real fire could.”

Recalls Milne: “There’s always one scene everybody stresses over on a production, and for us it was the fire. There was the realization we would have one crack at getting it right. We did all the prep we could, but you can’t ever really know how high the flames will be or how long it’ll burn. I shot it all handheld, relying on the residual glow to light the scene as much as possible. Then we came back first thing the next day to shoot around the smoldering ashes. It’s one of those scenes where you all feel you pulled something off, against all the odds.”

When production wrapped, editor Harry Yoon (‘Euphoria’) presented Chung with a relatively lean first cut that became the foundation for the final structure. “Harry understood how difficult it was for me to cut away these things that meant so much to me, but he encouraged me to keep paring, to keep the story very contained, which was so necessary,” says Chung.

Chung also had a satisfying collaboration with composer Emile Mosseri (*The Last Black Man in San Francisco*). “I told Emile that the one thing I didn’t want was any kind of Korean ethnic music,” he recalls. “Then he told me he was thinking about Ravel and Satie and I thought ‘oh, that might be too serious.’ But what he did with that inspiration was so amazingly in tune with the spirit of the family.”

With the film’s finishing touches complete, cast and crew couldn’t help but contemplate how this delicate, yet timely, film might take on a life of its own. For Oh, the film threads the needle of bringing welcome recognition for Asian American families while touching broader chords. “For my generation of Korean Americans, this is a celebration of what our parents did for us. And I’m excited that immigrants, not just Asian immigrants, may feel heard and seen in this story. But it’s also a story about how crazy hard it is to keep any family together,” she says. “Loving people is a lot of work, and things will go awry at times, but at the end of the day you have that love and it’s real and so meaningful.”

Yeun hopes that with its distinctly engaging and directly emotional childhood viewpoint, *Minari* “both reflects on and transcends the moment we’re in right now. There’s something so deeply human about it that maybe it is beyond labels. It’s about questions we all ask: what is a good life,

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what is purpose? I think it can spark conversations about who we are, but I hope the answer will be really no different from anyone. All people have their masks, all people have their triumphs and their failings. I think anyone can see a bit of their family in this family."

# The Cast

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### Steven Yeun

Steven Yeun received the best reviews of his career for his role in Lee Chang-Dong's film *Burning* last year. To date, he has won 17 critic's awards for 'Best Supporting Actor,' including the Los Angeles Critics Association, the Chicago Film Critics Association, the National Society of Film Critics, and he was honored by the Santa Barbara Film Festival with their Virtuoso Award. *Burning* premiered in May 2018 at the Cannes Film Festival and became the best reviewed film in the history of Screen International chart of top critics' reviews.

Alongside A24 and Plan B, Steven serves as executive producer on his next project, *Minari*, in which he stars as a father who moves his family to Arkansas in the 1980s to start a farm and hopefully a better life. *Minari* was directed by Isaac Chung and will have its world premiere at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival. Steven also finished filming Scott Rudin's film *The Humans* recently in which he stars opposite Richard Jenkins, Beanie Feldstein, and Amy Schumer. Based on the Tony-award winning play, *The Humans* was a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and directed by its writer, Stephen Karam.

Steven also stars in the hit feature from Boots Riley, *Sorry To Bother You*, which opened this past summer; opposite Tilda Swinton, Jake Gyllenhaal, and Paul Dano in director Bong Joon Ho's visionary masterpiece, *Okja*, which also premiered in competition at Cannes in 2017; as the voice of 'The Donkey' in Sony's animated Christmas movie *The Star*; and in Mike Cahill's independent Sci-Fi drama, *I Origins*, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. Steven is best known however for his starring role in the AMC smash hit "The Walking Dead" as 'Glenn Rhee,' a role which he originated and developed into a pivotal character, becoming a favorite of both fans and critics alike for seven seasons. Additionally, he will appear in Jordan Peele's highly anticipated remake of *The Twilight Zone* and *Weird City*.

Steven provides voices on a number of animated series including Guillermo del Toro's "3 Below" and "Trollhunters," "Voltron," "Stretch Armstrong," "Final Space" and most recently, "Tucca and Birdie" opposite Tiffany Haddish and Ali Wong. He next stars in "Invincible" opposite Sandra Oh and J.K. Simmons for Robert Kirkman. His origins are rooted in sketch, improv, and stand-up comedy where he was a member of Second City and IO in Chicago. Steven recurred on



## The Cast

### **Steven Yeun (cont.)**

Paul Scheer's Adult Swim series "NTSF" and "Filthy Sexy Teen"; he is a regular at Paul F. Thompkins Largo improv show "Spontaneantion," and he regularly appears on Conan O'Brien's talk shows performing sketches and bringing comedy to South Korea!

### **Yeri Han**

Yeri Han has a solid career as a Korean traditional dancer until she made her significant debut as an actress through a short "Giraffe & Africa" in 2007. With her acting ability for wide range of characters, she has quickly built up her acting career. For over 10 years, she has starred in more than 40 features and tv-series, and received more than ten awards in Korea for her performances. Some of her notable films and tv-shows include *As One* (2012), *A Quiet Dream* (2016), "Hello, My Twenties" (2016), "Worst Woman" (2017) and the recent periodic series "The Nokdu Flower" (2019). Not only as an actress and a dancer, but she also proved her capability as a host by successfully leading a famous radio show. She made her US film debut with *Minari* by critically acclaimed director Lee Isaac Chung along with Steven Yeun and Youn Yuh-Jung.

### **Alan Kim**

Alan Kim, who plays the role of David in *Minari*, is thrilled to make his film debut. Recently, Alan was shown in the national campaign of Pottery Barn Kids. Alan is in the second grade, and his favorite subject are Math and Science, also loves riding a bike and making something creative on his free time. Alan lived in SF Bay area, but now travelling all around US along with his sister, who is playing Young Elsa in *Frozen* Broadway national tour. Special thanks to God, director Issac, everyone in *Minari* team and family.

## The Cast

### Noel Kate Cho

Noel Kate Cho was born and raised in the suburbs of Washington DC metro area and currently lives in Northern Virginia with her parents and younger brother. Noel enjoyed creating drama stories at home, directing and acting out various roles with her family since she was 3 years old. She was part of a drama club at her school, but *Minari* is her first ever professional acting experience. She is thrilled to be part of the film and excited to see herself on the big screen.

### Scott Haze

Scott Haze is an American actor, writer and director. His breakthrough role was in the 2014 film, *Child Of God*, directed by James Franco and based on the novel by Cormac McCarthy, for which he was named a New York Times Breakout Actor and 1 of VARIETY's Top 10 Actors to Watch.

Haze can next be seen starring alongside Keri Russell and Jesse Plemons in the Guillermo del Toro-produced film *Antlers*, directed by Scott Cooper. Fox Searchlight will release the mystery/horror on April 17th. Later this year he will also star in upcoming indie *What Josiah Saw* directed by Vincent Grashaw; A24 and Plan B Entertainment's drama *Minari* opposite Steven Yeun which will screen at SXSW; Ty Roberts' *12 Mighty Orphans* opposite Robert Duvall, Martin Sheen and Luke Wilson; and the indie drama *Wild Indian* opposite Kate Bosworth and Jesse Eisenberg.

Haze's past credits include Sony and Marvel's *Venom* with Tom Hardy, Michelle Williams and Riz Ahmed; Warner Bros. *Midnight Special*, alongside Michael Shannon, Joel Edgerton and Kirsten Dunst and directed by Jeff Nichols; Universal/DreamWorks' *Thank You For Your Service* opposite Miles Teller; and Sony's *Only The Brave* alongside Josh Brolin and Jeff Bridges.

In 2006 Haze established The Sherry Theater, a non-profit arts centre in North Hollywood for aspiring playwrights to create and perform original works. In 2015 he and The Sherry Theater partnered with the off-Broadway Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York to create a bi-coastal partnership for playwrights to further their careers, using both venues to develop and

### **Scott Haze (cont.)**

workshop their plays. In 2012 Haze began the 120 Hour Film Festival, which is designed to take upcoming and aspiring filmmakers and give them 120 Hours (5 days) to write, produce and finish a short film, which would then be presented to a jury of industry professionals. From their work within the festivals, past participants have gone on to secure representation, development deals, and a variety of high-level positions within the film industry.

Haze made his directorial debut in 2017 with *Mully*, a documentary on Kenyan humanitarian Charles Mully. The film was met with critical and box office success upon its release. Haze worked with the distributor of *Mully* to create a social action campaign that rolled out as the film hit cinemas. On top of this, half of the film's 2.1 million dollar box office gross to date, has been donated to Charles Mully's charity, The Mully Children's Foundation, and in 2017 MCF USA raised a staggering 2.7 million dollars upon the release of the film.

### **Yuh-Jung Youn**

Beloved by audiences around the world, Youn Yuh-Jung is a legendary actress who has starred in many of Korea's most revered films and television series in a career that spans five decades. After becoming a star in her first film, *Woman of Fire* in 1971, she has taken on memorable roles in over eighty television series and close to thirty feature films and has won countless awards. Recently, her reality television show, "Youn's Kitchen" became one of Korea's highest rated shows and revitalized her popularity amongst a new generation of Korean audiences. She received international acclaim for her appearances at the Cannes Film Festival for *The Housemaid* and *The Taste of Money*, and she starred in her first American, English-language series as "Min-jung" in the Netflix drama "Sense8," by the Wachowskis. In 2020, she debuted in her first American feature film, *Minari*, produced by Plan B and A24.

### **Will Patton**

Will Patton has worked extensively in film and theater. He is perhaps best known for his roles in *Remember the Titans*, *Armageddon*, *The Mothman Prophecies*, and *No Way Out*. His was most recently seen in David Gordon Green's box office smash hit *Halloween* along side Jamie Lee Curtis as well as in Boaz Yakin's *Boarding School* and *An Actor Prepares* with Jeremy Irons. Upcoming 2020 film releases include *Borderline*, *Minari*, *Sweet Thing*, *Blood On Her Name*, *Shookum Hills*, *Radioflash* and *Hammer*.

Will's many other film appearances include *Megan Leavey* with Kate Mara and Edie Falco and also in the indie favorite, Cannes Festival Prize winner, *American Honey* directed by Andrea Arnold. He has been seen in over sixty other feature films including, *The Sent Of Rain And Lightening*, *The Girl*, *The November Man*, *Meeks Cutoff*, *Brooklyn's Finest*, *A Mighty Heart*, *The 4th Kind*, *Gone In 60 Seconds*, *The Postman*, *After Hours*, *The Rapture*, *Inventing The Abbotts*, *The Client*, *In The Soup*, and *Desperately Seeking Susan*.

Will starred in the role of Avery Sunderland, in the critically acclaimed and highly anticipated series, "Swamp Thing" from DC Comics and James Wan, which airs on the DC Universe streaming platform. Will also starred in the acclaimed FOX series, "Shots Fired" and was seen in the role of Captain Weaver for five seasons of Steven Spielberg's "Falling Skies" on TNT. He also recurred on the final season of "The Good Wife". Theater credits include the original production of Sam Shepard's *Lie Of The Mind*, Don DeLillo's *Valparaiso* and Denis Johnson's *Shoppers Carried By Escalators Into The Flames*. Will garnered Obie awards for his performances in *What Did He See* and *Fool For Love*. He was last seen on stage in 2017 at the Signature Theater in New York leading the ensemble cast of Pulitzer prize-winning playwright, Annie Baker's play, *The Antipodes*.

A well- known audio book narrator, he has recorded a diverse array of over fifty audio books including the 50th Anniversary release of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* and Denis Johnson's *Train Dreams*, *Tree Of Smoke*, and *Jesus' Son*. Will received the distinguished award for Audible's 2013 Narrator of the Year for his work on Stephen King's book, *Dr. Sleep*.

# The Crew

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## The Crew

### **Lee Isaac Chung**

*Writer/ Director*

Lee Isaac Chung grew up in Lincoln, Arkansas, on a small farm in the Ozark Mountains. He is an award-winning writer and director. His first feature film was the Rwandan family drama *Munyurangabo*, which premiered at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival to great acclaim. His other feature films are *Lucky Life* and *Abigail Harm*.

He received his BA in Biology at Yale University and his MFA in Film Studies at the University of Utah. He was awarded a USA Artist Ford Fellowship In 2012 for his work.

### **Dede Gardner**

*Producer*

Dede Gardner is an Academy Award-winning producer and Co-President of Brad Pitt's production company, Plan B Entertainment. Throughout her career, she has produced many Academy Award and Golden Globe-nominated and winning films including: Barry Jenkins' *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Moonlight*, Adam McKay's *The Big Short* and *Vice*, Ava DuVernay's *Selma*, Steve McQueen's *12 Years A Slave*, and Terrence Malick's Palme d'Or-winning *The Tree Of Life*.

Recently, she released James Gray's *Ad Astra* and David Michôd's *The King*—Plan B's second feature with both directors. In TV, she is in production on Barry Jenkins' "Underground Railroad," Dennis Kelly's "Third Day" starring Jude Law and Naomi Harris, "Americanah" created by Danai Gurira and starring Lupita Nyong'o, and "Lego Masters" hosted by Will Arnett. She is also producing Andrew Dominik's upcoming feature *Blonde*, Jon Stewart's feature *Irresistible*, and Miranda July's *Kajillionaire*, which is premiering at Sundance.

### **Jeremy Kleiner**

*Producer*

Jeremy Kleiner is a two-time Academy Award-winning producer and Co-President of Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment. He produced 2017's Academy Award-winning *Moonlight* (A24) directed by Barry Jenkins, 2014's Academy Award winning *12 Years A Slave* (New Regency) directed by Steve McQueen, and Academy Award nominees *The Big Short*

**Jeremy Kleiner (cont.)**

(Paramount) directed by Adam McKay and *Selma* (Paramount) directed by Ava Duvernay.

In film, he also produced Bong Joon-ho's *Okja* (Netflix), James Gray's *The Lost City Of Z* (Amazon), Barry Jenkins' *If Beale Street Could Talk* (Annapurna), Adam McKay's *Vice* (Annapurna), and Felix van Groeningen's *Beautiful Boy* (Amazon). In TV, he executive produced "The OA" for Netflix and "Sweetbitter" for Starz.

This year, he produced James Gray's *Ad Astra* (New Regency) starring Brad Pitt and David Michod's *The King* (Netflix) starring Timothee Chalamet. He is currently in post on Jon Stewart's *Irresistible*, Andrew Dominik's *Blonde*, and Miranda July's *Kajillionaire*. There are also numerous TV projects in production including "Americanah" (HBO Max) created by Danai Gurira and starring Lupita Nyong'o, "The Third Day" (HBO/Sky) created by Dennis Kelly and starring Jude Law and Naomie Harris, "The Underground Railroad" (Amazon) created by Barry Jenkins, and "Lego Masters" (Fox) hosted by Will Arnett.

**Christina Oh**

*Producer*

Christina Oh is a Producer at Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment. Since joining in 2011, she has worked on a number of their titles, including Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* for Netflix and Joe Talbot's feature film debut *The Last Black Man In San Francisco* for A24. Most recently she produced *Minari*, written and directed by Lee Isaac Chung, which will premiere at Sundance 2020. She is also developing and producing TV with FX, FOX, CNN, and Amazon.

**Lachlan Milne**

*Director of Photography*

Lachlan's work has premiered at Toronto, Sundance, Berlin, Cannes, SxSW, Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals. He was the cinematographer for New Zealand auteur Taika Waititi's *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* which premiered at Sundance in 2016 and remains the highest grossing New

**Lachlan Milne (cont.)**

Zealand Film of all time. Twice he has collaborated with director Abe Forsythe on his films *Down Under*, and *Little Monsters* starring Lupita Nyong'o. In 2018 he shot 4 episodes of the Netflix giant "Stranger Things", which went on to become the most streamed TV show in Netflix history. Shortly after that Lachlan again teamed up with Academy Award nominated 21 Laps to shoot *Monster Problems* for Paramount, before shooting *Next Goal Wins*, another film with Oscar nominated Waititi. *Minari* was his 7th feature film.

**Harry Yoon**

*Editor*

Harry Yoon is a wildly talented editor based in Los Angeles. His most recent work can be seen on HBO and A24's teen drama "Euphoria," created and directed by Sam Levinson. Yoon continued to collaborate with A24 as an additional editor on *The Last Black Man In San Francisco*, which was directed by Joe Talbot and premiered at Sundance. Yoon co-edited *Detroit*, Kathryn Bigelow's feature film about a true-crime incident that occurred during the 1967 Detroit riots. He met Kathryn and his co-editor Billy Goldenberg while serving as the VFX Editor on Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*.

Yoon edited the historical drama *The Best Of Enemies*, written and directed by Robin Bissell, starring Sam Rockwell and Taraji P. Henson. He also worked as an additional editor on Universal Pictures' *First Man*, directed by Damien Chazelle, which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival and starred Ryan Gosling and Claire Foy.

Yoon's previous credits as an editor include HBO's *The Newsroom* and several feature films that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, including *Drunktown's Finest*, directed by Sydney Freeland, and *Half-Life*, directed by Jennifer Phang. His credits as a VFX Editor and Assistant Editor include *The Revenant*, *The Hunger Games*, *Footloose*, *The Crazies*, and *Lords Of Dogtown*.

## The Crew

### **Yong Ok Lee**

*Production Designer*

Yong Ok Lee is a Los Angeles-based production designer. She received her MFA in Production Design from the American Film Institute. She is originally from Seoul, South Korea, where she began her career in the fashion industry as a buyer and merchandiser for F&F before becoming a fashion editor for industry publication Fashion Biz. Her work in Korea include box office top 10 hits such as *Seven Days*, starring Yunjin Kim (“Lost,” “Mistresses”). Projects now take her across the United States, in addition to South Korea and China.

Her most recent work *The Farewell*, starring Awkwafina, screened at 2019 Sundance and was a nominated for the Grand Jury Award. An excerpt from The Hollywood Reporter: “Cinematographer Anna Franquesa Solano and production designer Yong Ok Lee fill the widescreen frame with eye-catching visuals that never feel too studied.”

Her other US credits include *They* (Cannes) and *Dead Women Walking* (Tribeca, Venice) among many others.

### **Susanna Song**

*Costume Designer*

Susanna Song is an American-born Korean Costume Designer. During her teen years in Silver Lake, California, she slept next to her grandparent's sewing machines. Song soon dreamt of designs in her sleep, which propelled her to start a career in the LA Fashion industry before transitioning to TV & Film, via the fast-paced world of Music Videos & Commercials. For the past two seasons Susanna has been the Assistant Costume Designer on ABC's hit TV show “Schooled” and Jimmy Kimmel/ Norman Lear’s “Live: In Front of a Studio Audience.” In addition to her 80's & 90's expertise, Susanna's fashion and art backgrounds influence her eclectic styles and color palettes as a Designer, allowing her to create diverse looks that distinguish each project from the last. *Minari* is Susanna's third feature as a Costume Designer.

## The Crew

### **Julia Kim**

*Casting Director*

Julia Kim is an Independent Casting Director. The films she's worked on have been recognized by a multitude of top-tier festivals. *Minari* is premiering in the U.S. Dramatic Competition at Sundance 2020. *The Last Black Man In San Francisco* premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and won two top prizes. *Spa Night* premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and won Best Breakthrough Performance. *Starlet* was awarded the Robert Altman for Best Ensemble Cast at the Indie Spirit awards. *Shit Year* premiered at Cannes Directors Fortnight and *Wild Tigers I Have Known* premiered at Sundance. She is also excited about invAsianLA: a fresh endeavor that helps Asians learn to better navigate the Hollywood landscape.

### **Emile Mosseri**

*Composer*

Emile Mosseri is an award winning composer, pianist, singer and producer based in Los Angeles. He has scored films including *The Last Black Man In San Francisco* and *Kajillionaire* and composed for TV shows like HBO's "Random Acts of Flyness" and Amazon's "Homecoming." Emile is also a member of the group Human Love, and a recording artist and touring musician.



# Credits

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## Credits

## Crew

<b>Written and Directed by</b>	Lee Isaac Chung
<b>Produced by</b>	Dede Gardner Jeremy Kleiner Christina Oh, p.g.a.
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Brad Pitt Steven Yeun
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Lachlan Milne, ACS NZCS
<b>Editor</b>	Harry Yoon, ACE
<b>Production Designer</b>	Yong Ok Lee
<b>Costume Designer</b>	Susanna Song
<b>Casting by</b>	Julia Kim, C.S.A.
<b>Music by</b>	Emile Mosseri

## Credits

## Cast

<b>David</b>	Alan Kim
<b>Monica</b>	Yeri Han
<b>Anne</b>	Noel Kate Cho
<b>Jacob</b>	Steven Yeun
<b>Mr. Harlan</b>	Darryl Cox
<b>Mrs. Oh</b>	Esther Moon
<b>Dowsing Dan</b>	Ben Hall
<b>Randy Boomer</b>	Eric Starkey
<b>Paul</b>	Will Patton
<b>Soonja</b>	Yuh-Jung Youn
<b>Johnnie</b>	Jacob Wade
<b>Brother Roy</b>	James Carroll
<b>Bonnie</b>	Jenny Phagan
<b>Debbie</b>	Tina Parker
<b>June</b>	Chloe Lee

## Credits

<b>Older Kid</b>	Joel Telford
<b>Billy</b>	Scott Haze
<b>Lab Tech</b>	Kaye Brownlee-France
<b>Doctor</b>	Skip Schwink
<b>Grocery Store Owner</b>	Tea Oh



**A24**

New York 31 W. 27th Street, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
[info@a24films.com](mailto:info@a24films.com)  
646-568-6015

Los Angeles 8321 Beverly Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90048  
[infoLA@a24films.com](mailto:infoLA@a24films.com)  
323-900-5300