

unrelenting portrayal of the evil that men do—from gang-rape and murder down to adultery and bad parenting — does not shy away from showing its punishment. But the spirit “M” seems not to understand the existence of degrees of guilt, and the punishments it doles out can be vastly disproportionate. A lie or an unwanted kiss incurs the same payback as having driven someone to suicide.

Further, the drama’s fire-and-brimstone treatment of abortion would be laughable if it weren’t so offensively one-sided. For example, a bizarre anti-abortion diatribe by an unnamed and unseen priest is occasionally thrown in as an unrelated voiceover, and in general it is taken for granted that abortion is simply something that selfish, evil people do to satisfy their selfish, evil wants — no nuance allowed. Though surely some people hold this view sincerely, if the producers of the drama are in agreement with it, it’s odd that they chose to have both a priest and a vengeful, murdering spirit share it.

There are other odd, inexpert, and sometimes unintentionally funny aspects to the drama. At the risk of being uncharitable regarding the difficulties of subtitling, there are one or two hilarious moments. It’s not until “Dr. Prohm” comes to Korea to speak at a conference that we finally learn, from a publicity banner behind his head, that his name is actually Dr. Plum. On that same occasion, the eminent Dr. Plum gives a humorously misguided and factually incorrect speech on the psychological



M is now available from YA Entertainment.

tenets of “Floidians,” also known as Freudians.

Errors in subtitling are understandable. More remarkably, both the plotting and the dialogue often betray a tin ear. To illustrate, some rhetorical questions: If you believed that you had found the sister whom you had thought dead, would it be your first move to march up to that person at work and begin badgering them about it in an accusatory fashion? If an Ebola-like virus were spreading, wouldn’t it make sense for health officials to do something besides house the victims in a ward in plastic-wrapped beds and observe them through a window while shaking their heads? And finally, if you were in a room with what looked like a time bomb and managed to escape, wouldn’t it be sensible to at least tell someone else about it?

Most of the actors do what they can with a script that relies more on atmosphere than on sensible writing. Many of them (such as Eun-ha Shim and Chang-hoon Lee) went on to become K-drama favorites. However, notable for his utter awfulness is the actor playing Dr. Plum, who can only have been chosen for the role

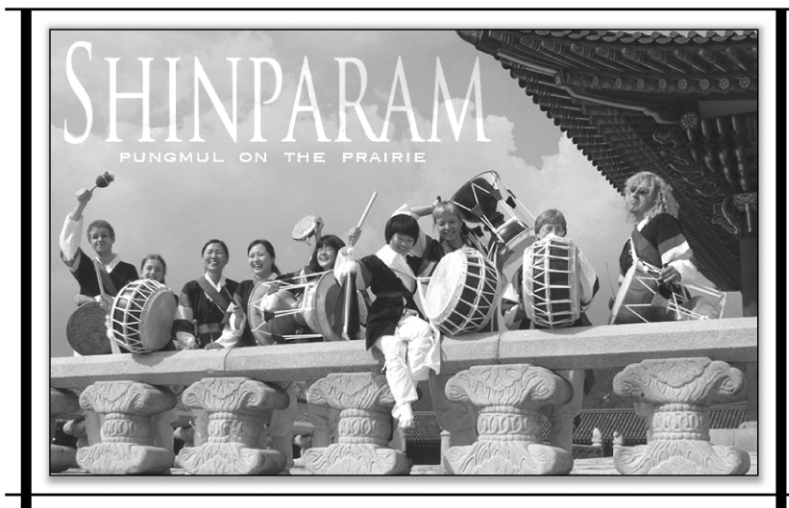
because he was American and was available for film work.

More than 50 percent of the Korean television audience watched *M* back in 1994, and many people still remember it well. It was considered very scary and shocking at the time, though today it looks rather corny. Because it was such a big event in

the development of Korean television drama, international K-drama fans will probably want to watch it, despite its having been surpassed in creepiness and sophistication by other dramas in the years since it first aired. ●

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