



PLUTO (MYUNGWANGSUNG)

Autumn
Season
2014

Release: 2012

Cert (UK): 15

Language: S Korean

Runtime: 114 mins

Director: Su-won Shin

Writer: Su-won Shin

Cinematographer: Ji Un Yun

Cast: Da-wit Lee, Jun Sung, Sung Ha Jo



Shin, who was a middle school teacher before she became a filmmaker, explores the competitive nature of the Korean education system through a compelling fictional narrative that weaves between past and present as it tells the story of a student who is forced to conduct a number of cruel tasks in order to enter an exclusive club at a prestigious school.

The citation given at the Berlin Film Festival when making a special mention for *'Pluto'* in the Crystal Bear Award category (jury comprised youths aged 14 – 18) reads –

Our special mention goes to a film that critiques the educational structures and more broadly society in an original way, reflecting its deep injustices. The characters in this film draw us into a universe of isolation and powerlessness in the face of brutal peer pressure to conform. We felt the cosmic dimensions of the story and the protagonist's sense that, although being alone in school is harsh, being alone in the universe is devastating.

The title refers to a science class debate at the elite Se Young High School, during which Pluto, until recently believed to be the farthest planet in the solar system, is branded an outcast and thus identified with the film's central figure, June (Da-wit Lee).

The film's depiction of initiation rites may have equivalents in schools everywhere, but its macabre depiction of the national obsession with getting into prestigious universities will probably seem more alien to Western cultures. *'Pluto'* also demonstrates the traumatic effects of putdowns and other forms of psychological abuse that children seem to be able to deliver with ease but may be unaware of the devastating consequences.

