



Alan Kim before the BAFTAs. Courtesy of Thom Browne. EMMA LOUISE SWANSON

Movies

# “Minari” Star Alan S. Kim Talks BTS, Teenagers, and Oscars 2021

He's also going to wear “a tuxedo or something” to this year's Oscars ceremony.



A few things to know about *Minari* star Alan S. Kim. He was just seven years old when he won his first movie role. That, of course, was his scene-stealing portrayal of David in Lee Isaac Chung's beautifully-nuanced and semi-autobiographical **Oscar-nominated film**. Both he and David were born in the United States and spoke Korean as their first language. Unlike David — who lived in shorts and cowboy boots and sported floppy bangs — Alan is a bit of a fashionista. This is fitting, given his modeling roots (Pottery Barn Kids).

Even for Zoom interviews with outlets like *Teen Vogue*, Alan was sharply dressed in an all-black ensemble, with his hair neatly brushed to the side. And during this year's awards season, the actor has been outfitted by designers such as **Armani** and **Thom Browne**.

*Minari* is up for six Academy Awards tonight, including marquee nominations for Chung (Best Director, Best Original Screenplay) and actors Steven Yeun (Best Actor) and Youn Yuh-jung (Best Supporting Actress). Alan — who won a **Critics Choice Movie Award** for **best young performer** — said he's excited about reuniting with Chung and his castmates.

He'll next be seen in the movie *Latchkey Kids*, as well as the TV series *Nora From Queens*, where he will be featured in flashbacks as the child version of Awkwafina's dad (played as an adult by BD Wong). This was one of the last interviews the third-grader gave as an eight year old.

***Teen Vogue:* Will you be attending the Academy Awards in person?**

**Alan:** The producer luckily got me to go to the Oscars, so yeah.

***TV:* What are you going to wear to the ceremony?**

**Alan:** My mom says it's a secret, but I'm pretty sure it's going to be a tuxedo or something.

***TV:* Your *Minari* dad, Steven Yeun, was so serious in the movie. Is he silly in real life?**

**Alan:** I guess so. After the scene where I “wet the bed” [makes finger quote marks to ensure we know he was just acting], my pants got wet, so I changed into new pants. I left it on the fan to dry and Steven was like, “이거 누구 팬츠야?!” (“Whose pants are these?!”)

***TV:* Did you name any of the chicks that were in *Minari*?**

**Alan:** I took a chick and named it Chickie. I would let him down and pick up another random chick and be like, “Hi, Chickie.” I got messed up so much that I didn't know which one was Chickie after he hopped away.

***TV:* Do you know that a lot of people think your acting is great?**

**Alan:** [Shrugs] Yup, I know that. I feel just fine with it.

**TV:** Have you started work on *Latchkey Kids* yet?

**Alan:** No, that is going to be at the start of summer.

**TV:** You play a 9-year-old character in that film. Do you like the idea of playing someone older than yourself?

**Alan:** Yes, but I turn nine [on April 23], so basically not exactly.

**TV:** Happy early birthday! I just made **miyeok-guk (미역국)** for my mother's birthday. Does your mom make you this Korean birthday soup?

**Alan:** Well, yeah, I think so. Yeah.

**TV:** What did you pick for your **doljabi (돌잡이)** on your first birthday?

**Alan:** I didn't remember it until my mom told me right before this meeting. I grabbed a hammer – and that stands for like the judge or the lawyer. And then I also got money.

**TV:** Do you mean a gavel?

**Alan:** Yeah.

**TV:** Does the “S” in your name stand for a middle name or your Korean name?

**Alan:** It's my Korean name, Sun. Basically my name means kind or nice.

**TV:** Both our last names are Kim. Do you think we look alike at all?

**Alan** [after staring at my face intently]: No, I don't think so.



Alan S. Kim as David in *Minari*.

JOSH ETHAN JOHNSON/A24

**TV:** You're a purple belt in taekwondo. Are you best at forms, boardbreaking, or sparring?

**Alan:** Well, I don't do sparring, really. It takes a few minutes, but now it takes about one hit for breaking. So, I'd say forms, because I can memorize it in three weeks.

**TV:** You might earn your black belt by the time you're 11 or 12.

**Alan:** Probably. I've only got four more belts.

**TV:** Would you want to do a show or movie where you use your taekwondo skills?

**Alan:** I'm not sure. I really just want to do any movie, except horror or romance.

**TV:** You wear cowboy boots in *Minari*. What kind of shoes do you wear in everyday life?

**Alan:** Mostly sneakers or sandals.

**TV: Do you wear shoes in your house?**

**Alan:** No, I actually take them off. I go outside with sneakers, so when I come back in they're going to be dirty and then the floor's going to be like dirty.

**TV: What about your dog, Cream. How clean is he?**

**Alan:** On the top, he's always clean. Absolutely clean. He might be a little wet, but clean! But his feet when we scrub them are *sooooo* dirty.

**TV: I know you like "Sugar" by Maroon 5. Do you like any K-pop bands?**

**Alan:** Well, I mean, the boy band BTS. I know only a few songs like "DNA" and "Dynamite" and... [Our BTS talk is interrupted by Cream, who wants Alan's full attention.] *Oh no, Cream, stop chewing on that slipper!* He loves doing mischievous things like taking my sister's dance shoes and chewing on them. It's her old ones, but still...

**TV: What kind of chores do you have at home?**

**Alan:** My sister usually feeds Cream. I usually pick up Cream's poop. [Wrinkles up his nose] Too smelly. But, I mean, poop is smelly. I get the mail and packages. I don't know why I like to do it, but yeah.

**TV: This interview is for a magazine called *Teen Vogue*. What do you think teenagers and young adults are like?**

**Alan:** My sister is about to be a teenager. For a start, she looks at her phone too much. She looks in the mirror too much. She likes to buy stuff a lot. And lastly she has a pen addiction. She has tons of pens. And she also is bossy a lot.

**TV: Do you wish you had a little brother or sister so you could boss them around?**

**Alan:** No, that's Cream's job to me. I don't know why, but Cream thinks I'm his baby. So yeah. He's a mini Samoyed... No, he's an American Eskimo dog [from Korea]. I searched this up and it said that his color is like biscuit cream. They are like watchdogs, but they aren't exactly good at being a guard dog.

**TV: Who's your favorite actor or actress?**

**Alan:** [Laughs] Sonic the Hedgehog! And Steven.

**TV: What makes Sonic so awesome?**

**Alan:** I mean, first he's a cute hedgehog and he runs fast, so that's a unique power, I guess.

**TV:** We used to grow minari when I was little. Have you ever eaten it?

**Alan:** I haven't grown it before, but I have eaten it with meat. I don't know what kind of meat it was. I just remember it was meat. It was really good.

**TV:** Have you ever been to Disneyland or Disney World?

**Alan:** I never went to Disney World, because we never went to Florida. But we have gone to Disneyland two times. One was when my sister was doing *her Frozen national tour*. And another time was when I was a baby. I don't remember that, though. I do remember the second time. It was really fun, actually. I got a souvenir *Lightning McQueen* baggage thing.



Alan S. Kim as David in *Minari*, with Yuh-Jung Youn as David's grandmother.

MELISSA LUKENBAUGH

**TV:** I'm going to say a few things and then you tell me which you like better, OK?

**Alan:** OK.

**TV:** Brownies or cupcakes?

**Alan:** *Hmmm*, I mean they're both good! I guess brownies, because with brownies you can put on frosting and then boom! It's a cupcake!

**TV:** Kimbap (김밥) or japchae (잡채)?

**Alan:** Kimbap, I guess. It tastes better and you can put in the other choice in the kimbap.

**TV:** Dogs or cats? And remember – Cream is listening.

**Alan:** Dogs! I mean, cats are cute, but I like dogs better.

**TV:** Cars or airplanes?

**Alan:** Cars. I get plane sick. [Looks over to the side, laughing] Yeah, Cream’s trying to eat a fly!

**TV:** Second grade or third grade?

**Alan:** Second grade. I’m doing online school. But in second grade, there was more free time. You know what I mean? Free time.

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