

Min Hee-jin - 5th Annual Year-End Talk Concert

241206 Hanwha General Insurance x FOL:IN

"Women Who Create Genres": Dream Plus Gangnam, Seocho-dong

[NOTION LINK](#)

이 문서는 개인 감상용으로 만들어졌으며 정확성을 보장하지 않습니다.
PC 혹은 어플에서 보는 것을 권장합니다.

13NEVERDIE

English Translation: Itokki

- [1. Work and Loyalty](#)
- [2. An Unfinished Process, a Vision to Be Fulfilled](#)
- [3. Proving Through Genuine Actions](#)
- [4. A Leader Who Doesn't Interfere with Strengths](#)
- [5. Crossing Boundaries to Envision the Bigger Picture](#)
- [6. And don't you know HOW SWEET it tastes](#)
- [7. Starting Ideation with "Why Are We Doing This?"](#)
- [8. Trends Are Created by Confident People](#)
- [9. My Love Rides the Southern Wind](#)
- [10. If You Live Sincerely, One Day...](#)



1. Work and Loyalty

Chae Jin-sol:

Hello, everyone. I'm Cha Jin-sol, an editor at *Folin*, and I'll be hosting the final session on the first day of *Women Who Became Their Own Genre*. Nice to meet you. This event is a collaboration between Hanwha General Insurance, a female-focused insurance company, and *Folin*, a career content platform. It builds upon the interview series of the same name, which ran in August. You can still find the full interviews on the *Folin* website.

Today, we'll hear firsthand how women who have become their own genres established unique positions in their careers. I hope you'll gain insights that could transform your life and career. This session will be a talk format: a 40-minute discussion followed by a live Q&A. If you have any questions, please leave them using the link included in the event information message. We'll collect and address them in real time.

Now, let's get started by welcoming CEO Min Hee-jin to the stage. After joining SM Entertainment, she served as the Creative Director before moving to HYBE, where she became the CEO of ADOR and planned the group NewJeans. With a firm belief in breaking boundaries, she continues to innovate and create new genres in K-pop. Please join me in welcoming Min Hee-jin with a round of applause.

(Cheers fill the room as bossa nova music plays.)

Min Hee-jin:

Wow... this song...

Chae Jin-sol:

I picked it out for you.

Min Hee-jin:

Thank you so much.

Chae Jin-sol:

It's nothing. Please, have a seat. Could you greet everyone briefly?

Min Hee-jin:

Oh, yes. Hello, I'm Min Hee-jin. *(Cheers erupt in the room.)* Also, I'm no longer a CEO, so...

Chae Jin-sol:

Then what should we call you?

Min Hee-jin:

Just call me *Hee-jin-nim*.

Chae Jin-sol:

Okay, *Hee-jin-nim*. That sounds perfect. Actually, ever since we announced this session, I've been getting calls and messages nonstop. What was it like for you?

Min Hee-jin:

Oh, first of all, thank you for inviting me. I'm sure it was a bit of a hassle to organize, but I appreciate how smoothly it's been handled. Thank you to everyone who came today. I hope this will be a meaningful session, though I'm not sure how it'll turn out.

Chae Jin-sol:

It already is. (Laughter) I'm sure the audience is curious about many things, but as you know, *Folin* is a platform serious about work. So today, we'll be discussing work with someone who is also serious about it. While researching for this session, I was struck by an old article describing you as a "workaholic" and someone who "loves work."

Min Hee-jin:

I wouldn't say I love it, but I do end up working a lot. (Laughs)

Chae Jin-sol:

If you don't love it, that sounds tough. What do you think?

Min Hee-jin:

Well, there are parts I enjoy, but often, it's work that I feel I must do. Over time, I think I've grown to like it and find it interesting.

Chae Jin-sol:

I see. While reviewing your interviews, I found the concept of *loyalty* particularly striking. It's not a word you hear much these days, but you applied it to work, which intrigued me. Why is that?

Min Hee-jin:

When I said I have loyalty to my work, it's because work means different things to different people. For some, it's a basic necessity for survival, while for others, it's a tool for self-fulfillment. Everyone has their own definition of work.

For me, as I mentioned earlier, I didn't necessarily do my work purely out of love for it. But as I took on assigned tasks, I found myself thinking, *How can I do this well? I want to do it well; I have to do it well*. That sense of responsibility became stronger

over time. With that mindset, I realized that to complete a task properly, you develop a kind of loyalty to the work. It becomes necessary.

You've probably experienced this too. When you start a task, it may feel unpleasant or frustrating, but as you continue and grow attached to it, you might find your affection for it suddenly increasing. These experiences often deepen your connection to your work. It's not just about finishing the task but also about what you can gain through it and the bigger goals you can achieve. In this sense, work can give you a vision for something greater.

This is why I used the term *loyalty* when describing my relationship with work.

If I apply this idea to reality, I think back to when I started working on NewJeans. NewJeans was a very meaningful project for me. I've mentioned this before in other places. It wasn't just about the members or anything like that—it was about the undeniable reasons for why I had to take on this project and why the label needed to be created. Because of this, I felt a strong responsibility to execute the project well and show the world something important through it.

But honestly, I think my deep immersion in this work and my effort to uphold loyalty to it led to the conflicts I've faced. Ironically, doing good work and maintaining loyalty to it often involves not compromising with things that are wrong. If my primary goal had been earning money or simply fulfilling the role without much thought, I probably wouldn't have raised issues or tackled inconvenient and challenging tasks.

However, to do good work, certain problems had to be addressed, and I believed that resolving those issues was necessary, even if it meant conflict. At the time, I couldn't foresee how long or difficult this process would be, but I knew the issues had to be confronted and resolved. That belief is what loyalty to work means to me.

It means not avoiding problems but facing them directly, even if it requires a confrontation. Honestly, I didn't think much about the losses involved. If you focus on potential losses, there are too many things you can't do in this world. Some tasks require not worrying about the risks. That's just how I am—I'm not the type to weigh potential losses carefully. Instead, I work with the conviction that certain things must be said and fixed.

As a result, I've made choices that most people wouldn't normally make, and yes, it's been exhausting. Very exhausting. (Audience laughter) Let me take a sip of water.

Chae Jin-sol:

Take your time.

2. An Unfinished Process, a Vision to Be Fulfilled

Chae Jin-sol:

It seems like trying to uphold that "loyalty" you mentioned could make many things feel unstable. Thank you for sharing that perspective. To be honest, I thought there were many layers to the concept of loyalty. For example, during your long tenure at SM, I felt that might have been a form of loyalty as well.

Min Hee-jin:

That's true. It's definitely connected to loyalty to one's work. However, the concept was a little different back then. At the time, I was in a period of growth and taking on many projects. Each project felt like a completed piece on its own, but I still saw myself in the middle of an unfinished process. When I thought long-term, I felt I needed to stay a bit longer in that environment to accomplish the bigger vision I had. I believed staying would allow me to expand my capabilities and increase the quality of my work.

I still vividly remember an episode from back then. A college friend and I were on a bus heading to Banpo, sitting in the back. My friend, who had joined Samsung Cheil Industries as a designer, asked me why I stayed with one company for so long. They pointed out how many of our peers were job-hopping and said, "Why don't you move on like everyone else?"

I answered, "I still have a lot of unfinished work here. I can't leave yet." My friend looked at me like they didn't understand, almost as if they thought I was being naive or foolish. I could understand their perspective, too.

Years later, after I'd spent over a decade in the industry and earned some recognition—maybe around the time I started working on NewJeans—that same friend told me, "I remember what you said back then. I couldn't understand it at the time, but now I see what you meant." They acknowledged that my perseverance had allowed me to complete projects, which eventually built the foundation for who I am today. They said, "That persistence made you who you are." It was such a touching moment for me.

For those who are younger or just starting their careers, I want to say this: Staying at one place like I did isn't necessarily better. (Laughs) Depending on the industry, there are sectors where you learn more by moving around. Not all fields are the same.

First, I think it's important to understand the nature of your work. Is this a role where you need time to grow, learn, and wait for things to unfold? Or is it an environment

where you need to move quickly and gain varied experiences? You need to assess the industry first. It's not as simple as saying, "Switch jobs quickly" or "Stay put."

You also need to evaluate your personality. Are you someone who feels comfortable staying in one place to dig deeper, or do you thrive in fast-paced, ever-changing environments? Matching your work style with your personality is essential.

If you decide to endure and stay for a while, even if it's tough, pushing through those challenges often leads to rewards. Life doesn't lie—effort and patience eventually pay off. Struggles also teach you valuable lessons. So, I encourage you to believe in the power of persistence and give it your best shot.

When you're facing difficulties, friends often tell you to quit or make changes quickly. But no one else will live your life for you. Even within the same company, everyone's circumstances are different. Decisions should be based on what you truly want and can endure. Other people's opinions should only serve as reference points.

Find out what you truly want, whether you can stick it out a bit longer, and how much you're willing to tolerate. Most people grumble about their jobs, whether they're in an office or freelancing. (Laughs) But enduring those tough times often leads to more meaningful outcomes than taking the easy route.

Chae Jin-sol:

Did you understand your own nature—how your personality aligns with your field—during your junior years? Did you know then that you were someone who could persevere?

Min Hee-jin:

Well... I actually joined SM impulsively after working at an ad agency. For the first year or so, I constantly debated whether to quit. Even after two or three years, I still struggled with that decision. I wasn't any different from you all. I was anxious, worried, and often questioned whether I was in the right place.

To be honest, in the early years, the company and I were a terrible match. I found it so difficult, even for the first five years. But even in tough situations, you eventually find moments of joy. If you decide to work hard despite the challenges, you realize that no company or organization is a perfect fit. That realization can be quite comforting.

Of course, there are differences between industries, and some transitions can be significant. But in general, you're unlikely to find a company that fits you perfectly. You also have to make an effort to adapt to your environment. Building a harmonious workplace is a collective effort between colleagues, seniors, and juniors. Even in a dysfunctional organization, you can find great teams, and vice versa. It's the

same everywhere—schools, workplaces, or any group of people. It's just human nature. (Audience laughter)

3. Proving Through Genuine Actions

Min Hee-jin:

It's interesting how, in movies, there are always villains tormenting the protagonist, along with their henchmen supporting them. On the other hand, the protagonist usually has a group of friends or allies.

When we watch these dramas or movies, we often wonder, *Why would anyone side with the villains?* (Laughs) We instinctively think, *If you're going to be friends with someone, why not stand with the person pursuing justice instead of the one stealing or committing crimes?*

But that's because we, as viewers, have an omniscient perspective—we can clearly distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. In real life, however, it's hard to step out of our own lives and see things as an outsider. It's like how we can point out when a friend is making a mistake, but we struggle to recognize the faults in ourselves. Similarly, it's crucial to reflect on what "side" we're standing on, not in a political sense but in the context of the work we do.

One of the most common excuses people give is, *"You have to do whatever it takes to make a living."* While this may be easy to say in casual conversations or over drinks, I don't fully agree with it. Even if you joke about it, deep down, you should ask yourself: *What kind of work should I pursue with conviction? What is the right thing to do?*

I was particularly struck by an interview with someone connected to a recent political scandal. They said they refused to comply with an order because doing so would have made them complicit, like a collaborator in a Nazi concentration camp. I deeply resonated with that.

It's easy to simply follow orders from above, thinking, *"Well, they told me to do it, so what choice do I have?"* But when we watch dramas, we're quick to criticize characters who make such choices, saying, *"How could they do something like that?"* Yet in real life, if we let our guard down, we can also make those choices just as easily.

Living with conviction isn't easy. It invites criticism—sometimes even false accusations. (Laughs) But you can't go around every day shouting, *"That's a lie!"* There's a certain inevitability to carrying those grievances. Ultimately, you have to

prove yourself through your results, actions, and genuine character. Many people try to evade accountability with lies, so I don't put much trust in words. Words in the moment may be fleeting emotions or not truly reflect someone's core beliefs.

However, the outcomes—the fruits of one's labor—always reveal the truth. Those results reflect the hardships endured, the frustrations suppressed, and the effort poured in. People recognize that. It's a natural law. When someone lives a certain way and produces certain results, it's evident. That's what dismantles falsehoods—not petty, one-on-one debates. Such arguments often feel childish and pointless.

That's why I consider work to be incredibly precious. It's a process of perseverance and self-validation. Humans are born to work in some form. For some, work might mean caring for children or managing a household. That's profoundly important. Regardless of the type of work, I believe what matters most is the sense of mission and responsibility we bring to it.

Chae Jin-sol:

You truly embody the essence of a "Folin linker." Your statement that "work is precious" struck me deeply. In today's world, people rarely talk about work in that way, but it's a perspective worth remembering. Work is indeed precious.

4. A Leader Who Doesn't Interfere with Strengths

Chae Jin-sol:

The next keyword is "motherhood." I came across this term in another interview, and it left a deep impression on me. Director Shin Donggeul referred to you as someone with "motherhood" qualities, which struck me as unique. It seems like you have an uncommon way of building relationships in today's world. Have you been cultivating this approach during your long career in the K-pop scene?

Min Hee-jin:

Oh, that term "motherhood" wasn't something I said—it's actually something Donggeuri (Shin Dong-geul) mentioned. Since Donggeuri and I are close, they know my style, so that's probably why they described it that way. For me, when I think about what a leader is, I just see them as the person responsible for the project. It's not about being above or beside others, but about having a clear vision for the project and the responsibility to execute it with a high level of completeness. That's what leadership means to me.

Maybe Donggeuri said that because of the way I approach work with my team. Over time, I've grown closer to them while working on projects, and I guess that's why they expressed it like that.

I tend to place a lot of pressure on myself when working. But at the same time, I don't want others to feel overly burdened while they work. Some people might say, *"But you're so critical and sharp with feedback,"* and that could be true depending on how each person perceives things.

Still, I make an effort to keep the work environment as comfortable as possible. Since I'm quite direct, I understand that people might feel differently depending on their personality. But my intention is never to create stress. I really dislike working in a way that feels like a test, where someone watches from behind and thinks, *"Let's see how good you are,"* or *"Bring it to me; I'll judge you."* That kind of dynamic just doesn't work for me.

For example, everyone has different talents. When I collaborate with others, I believe in blending those talents together. And in doing so, I think it's important not to meddle unnecessarily with their work. Personally, I don't like being interfered with, so I try not to do that to others either.

That said, there are times when intervention is necessary—like when someone is struggling to find clarity or direction. Leaders need to guide and explain things because they are the ones shaping the project's vision. But if I were to impose my way of doing things too much, I might as well work alone. There's no point in collaborating if everything has to be done my way.

There are moments when I'm fine, but I notice that someone on the team is feeling lost or overwhelmed. People inevitably encounter difficulties or discomfort while handling their responsibilities. In those moments, I think it's better to avoid pushing them too hard. I try to wait patiently or offer solutions to help them move forward. I see leadership as playing that role—helping to untangle problems and sharing the burden of concerns.

Ultimately, even if I'm the leader, everyone's name gets included in the credits. At some point, the work becomes a collective effort—a shared project. Being in the spotlight isn't what matters, because everyone has their role to play.

For a project to be successful, it should make everyone involved feel a sense of pride in their contribution. As a leader, I hope the projects we work on together end up being meaningful additions to their portfolios—ones they feel proud of.

From the perspective of someone overseeing the big picture, I want to motivate those who are piecing the puzzle together. That doesn't always mean a grand gesture; it varies depending on each person's style. Even when I speak directly, which I do because it's more efficient to correct things quickly, my aim is to share the problem-solving process with them.

I think that's why Donggeuri appreciated it. When they were feeling a bit down, I shared the burden with them, talked through it, and supported them. Later, I realized how much that meant to them. Hearing that made me feel comforted when I was struggling. It's nice to know someone thinks of you in that way.

For those of you who are also leaders, you probably understand that leadership isn't always a glorious position. While leaders might receive recognition, they're also the ones who bear all the responsibility. If something goes wrong, they're the ones criticized. It's a role of extremes, full of highs and lows, light and shadow. It can be lonely and tough. So when colleagues or team members share their appreciation, it really means a lot. It's something I'm truly grateful for.

Chae Jin-sol:

It seems like you pay close attention to how your team works and adapt accordingly. I found your phrase, "*I try not to interfere*," particularly interesting. Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?

Min Hee-jin:

Ah—well, um, I say I don't interfere, but I probably do. (Audience laughs.) That's because personalities can be so different. Some people might think, "*I didn't interfere with you*," but I might feel like they did. It's all very subjective. So when I say I don't interfere, I mean I try not to in my own way.

For example, when I've been micromanaged in the past, I've thought, "*I really don't like this*." I try to avoid doing the same to others whenever possible.

Or... hmm... I don't know. For me, it's more about not interfering with what someone does best. It's less about leaving their personality alone and more about respecting their strengths. Everyone has something they excel at, and I don't see the point in unnecessarily meddling with or trying to change those things. Even if I want to guide the team in a specific direction, I still want to preserve what they're truly good at. It's important to let people retain what they excel at—that's my perspective.

Otherwise, there's no need to collaborate. If I'm going to fix everything to match my style, why bother working with others? People have strengths that I lack, and those unique skills are valuable. My idea of *not interfering* is about preserving those strengths as much as possible.

Chae Jin-sol:

On that note, what do you think you're particularly good at? What's one thing you'd want others to trust you with, where you'd say, "Please don't interfere with this—I've got it"?

Min Hee-jin:

That's such an interesting question! I think my strength lies in crafting the big picture. I'm quick to map out a roadmap, identify milestones, turning points, and critical moments to focus on. It's almost instinctive for me—I sketch out the vision like a rough croquis and then build on the details from there.

I don't like interference when it comes to setting the direction or defining the vision. That's also why conflicts sometimes arise. (Laughs) But it's a process I enjoy because it allows me to see the whole and shape the journey ahead.

5. Crossing Boundaries to Envision the Bigger Picture

Chae Jin-sol:

Understood. Our theme for this series is *Women Who Became Genres*. One thing I noticed while planning this series is that all of the women we've featured share a commonality: they've crossed boundaries. They've broken out of certain molds and found their own unique style, their own genre. I wanted to explore this commonality and hear your thoughts on it.

Today's keyword is "boundaries." Looking at your career, you've been crossing boundaries and expanding your work since your time at SM Entertainment. You started with design, moved on to directing music videos, and eventually took on leadership roles. In companies, roles and boundaries are usually quite defined. Each time you crossed one of those boundaries, I imagine it must have been extremely challenging. How did you manage to overcome those challenges?

Min Hee-jin:

Oh, it was incredibly tough. Initially, there were things I never even thought I'd be responsible for, but I ended up having to do them. To ensure the quality of the work, there were tasks I had no choice but to take on. Some things simply had to be done. Depending on the situation, my role kept evolving, but I realized that when stepping into areas outside my usual responsibilities, I needed to surpass the level of expertise of those originally in charge; otherwise, I wouldn't be taken seriously.

This is because it could easily come across as overstepping boundaries, meddling unnecessarily, or even being intrusive. In such cases, the work often goes astray before it can be completed, becoming irreparable. To avoid this, I had to present my involvement as offering valuable suggestions rather than overstepping. Half of it involved hiding my presence, and the other half was about presenting good ideas.

If I explain it like this, it might be a bit abstract. To give a concrete example, there was a significant moment during Red Velvet's career. At that time, the company was planning to release a specific song as the title track, chosen by the person overseeing everything back then (you probably know who I'm referring to). But in my opinion, it wasn't suitable as a title track for that moment. I felt strongly that a different song was necessary.

So, I went to the head of A&R and said, "This one doesn't feel right. Among the other demos, we need to choose one of these instead." The demos had been shared sporadically, not all at once, so I discussed the ones I thought were better. I said, "This is the direction we need to go with this album if we want it to succeed." However, the head of A&R said they couldn't convince the senior executive in charge—they were too intimidated and told me to do it instead.

So, I went directly to them and said, "This isn't the right choice. It will be a big problem if we go ahead with this. Let's change it." While they seemed to sense the issue, their pride appeared to be hurt. They suggested we conduct a poll among the staff to see whose choice was better. I agreed enthusiastically, saying, "Let's do it!" (Audience laughs.) We conducted the poll, comparing the song I had in mind with the one they preferred. My choice won first place. (Laughs.)

The song that came out as a result was "*Russian Roulette*." (Audience reacts.) Following that, "*Rookie*" was released. I believed these two songs needed to come out in that order. Interestingly, the song that didn't make it at the time was "*Zimzalabim*." (Audience reacts again, laughing.) So, yeah... Is it okay for me to talk about this? (Chae Jin-sol reassures her: "It's fine!") Well, it's the truth, and there are people who were part of the vote back then.

I was incredibly nervous waiting for the poll results. (Laughs.) What if it didn't work out? But I was fairly confident it would. This isn't about one song being inherently better than another; it's about timing and context. From a creative director's perspective, there's a particular visual or overall impression that needs to align with a song at a given moment.

For me, the song is a major part of that impression. It amplifies the emotional impact of the visuals, creating an overwhelming and memorable experience. This is what planning and conceptualizing mean to me. At that time, I had a specific image in

mind for each album, and I was adamant that this image should not be compromised.

Thankfully, the process went well, and the sequence I envisioned (*“Russian Roulette”* followed by *“Rookie”*) solidified a cohesive image. It naturally led into *“Peek-A-Boo”* and established a consistent impression for the group.

This kind of coherence is crucial for artists. If something feels off, it could cast doubt on everything that came before. People might dismiss the previous successes as mere coincidences. Even though casual listeners might not notice, creators have a sense of perfectionism.

Ultimately, being able to voice a different opinion comes down to presenting a solid argument. It’s not just about saying, “I like this song better.” You need to provide a logical, compelling reason that aligns with the bigger picture. In my case, I had a well-thought-out plan that helped me persuade others effectively. This allowed me to challenge decisions with confidence.

One common question people ask me is how to express dissent. (Audience laughs.) There’s no universal solution, as it depends on the person you’re dealing with, but the key is to communicate your ideas convincingly. You need to build a strong case, provide justification, and ensure your suggestions are appealing both logically and practically. If you fail to deliver results after advocating for your approach, it undermines your credibility. That’s why I made every effort to ensure my projects succeeded once my proposals were accepted.

6. And don't you know HOW SWEET it tastes

Min Hee-jin:

So, in a way, music videos are something that amplify the song, right? Then, when it comes to music videos, how do we approach them... It’s really fascinating, you see. When we released the song *“How Sweet”* earlier this year, I specifically told people to listen to the song first and then watch the music video. Normally, the music video is released first, right? But the reason we released *How Sweet* this way was because, well, we—the team—always listen to demos first and know all the sources beforehand. But you, the audience, experience everything as it’s presented to you.

So, I wondered, “What if they experience the music without any imagery first?” Because when you listen to raw music, without any pre-supplied imagery, your

impression of it changes significantly. The experience of listening to a song with visuals versus just listening to the song alone is quite different.

When I first heard *How Sweet*, the song gave off this very... how should I put it? That pop-like sensation. Do you remember that candy from back in the day? The one that crackled and popped in your mouth? What's it called? Was it 아이셔 ? Or is that too old? (Audience laughter) You know what I mean, right? Like something sparkling and strange that pops in your mouth. That's the feeling I got when I first heard the song.

But music videos, while they're part of my job, are also the director's work. So, I can't always create something that's 100% aligned with my vision. Even though the music video turned out as we discussed, there are naturally parts that differ from what I originally envisioned—because the director also has their own artistic perspective.

Still, I felt this song should be experienced purely as a song first. That's why we released it maybe an hour or so earlier—I can't remember exactly, whether it was an hour or six hours... or was it a day? (Laughs) My memory isn't great these days. Anyway, we didn't leave a full day gap between the song and the music video. I thought experiencing the song first might change how people perceived it. And it probably did. After listening to the song and then watching the music video, you might have thought, "Oh, this is what the song is like." And then seeing the choreography layered on top of that, "Oh, this is what it's about."

I personally hope that listeners can experience a sequential sense of pleasure or an intensely amplified sense of excitement all at once, depending on the situation. That's why I made that decision. To me, it was a kind of consideration. Or maybe, to put it another way, it was about creating fun.

But when I make decisions like this, people in marketing start saying things like, "Oh, this will dilute the momentum," or, "It will scatter the impact." There's always some sort of complaint or concern. But honestly, does it really matter? Like, does momentum always have to be the most important thing? It's important, sure—it's nice to have it all. But I think the essence of entertainment, as one of the questions earlier touched upon, lies in enjoyment. I'm always thinking about how to make things more interesting and enjoyable in diverse ways.

That said, if I swing too far with these experimental ideas, fans don't like it. They'll say, "Hey, this hurts our chances of winning first place—we could've gotten first if it weren't for you!" That can happen. And while I was being symbolic earlier, the market does have its rules. If you stray too far from those rules, you become an outlier—a total outsider—and then people stop paying attention entirely.

So, I think that in popular culture, when you're pursuing fun and trying to do something new, you have to carefully navigate that line each time. It's about striking the right balance.

7. Starting Ideation with "Why Are We Doing This?"

Chae Jin-sol:

Hearing what you just said, it struck me that, as a planner, you approach giving experiences to fans not in a shallow, superficial way, but by layering them, step by step, inviting people to really feel them. I found that mindset very impressive. We're running out of time quickly, so I think we need to address some real-time questions now. (Yes, yes, yes.)

Since today's event involves guest participation, there seem to be a lot of questions for you, Hee-jin, coming in live. Online, Kim Soo-jin asked:

"Ms. Hee-jin, you've collaborated on so many projects and likely spent a long time in positions where you had to make decisions. In organizations filled with people of varying perspectives, how do you make good decisions, persuade others, or establish your own criteria?"

Min Hee-jin:

I think this is somewhat similar to what I answered earlier. For me, the most important criteria are always fun and whether something is low-quality or not. Now, what do I mean by that? (Laughs) Everyone's definition of "low-quality" is different, so I can't say what others might consider low-quality—but for me, I always have this desire to create something high-quality. And this has nothing to do with cost.

It's simply that I don't want to feel ashamed of what I put out. I want to be able to sleep well at night without regret. That's just my personality. So, if there's one thing I consistently pursue, it's maintaining a certain level of quality. I make every effort to ensure that happens.

Chae Jin-sol:

Understood. There's also been a lot of curiosity here at the venue about your planning process. Specifically, how do you generate impactful concepts? Where do you get your ideas from, and how do you approach this?

Min Hee-jin:

You'd have to work with me to really understand that. (Audience laughter) No, seriously! (Laughs) Someone who worked with me recently said, "Oh, so this is how you map out your ideas. I see."

This isn't something I can fully explain in words. It's not like I have a strict framework. Instead, no matter what I'm working on, I always start by asking, "*Why are we doing this?*" Why am I doing this project? What's the purpose? This is something I value deeply, and it serves as my starting point.

Once you focus on the purpose, it's like unraveling a thread. It's not about throwing ideas around aimlessly or obsessively searching trends like, "*What's popular these days?*" Instead, I ask myself: *What music am I working on now? What album needs to be created?*

For example, I've mentioned before that an album's concept can change depending on circumstances. Let's say we planned something earlier, but then an unexpected event happens, and we have to delay the release. Using the old concept as is? That doesn't exist in my playbook. That's a dead plan—it's over.

Why? Because it wasn't created with the new circumstances in mind. The flow has changed. The situation is different now. Our perspectives have evolved, the way we express things has changed, and so has the audience's mindset.

I don't cling to past ideas and think, "*Oh, let's use that next time.*" Instead, I reflect on the current reality: "*What story should we be telling now?*"

This approach ensures the artists can resonate with the project and engage in meaningful discussions. For example, if I say, "*This is what we should talk about now because this is what we're experiencing and where we are,*" the team naturally aligns. On the other hand, using a recycled plan from the past? That feels outdated, and audiences can sense it right away.

So, I put a lot of effort into avoiding those kinds of mistakes.

Chae Jin-sol:

It seems like your planning process always begins by asking, "*Why are we doing this now?*" You start with the essence. Is that right?

Min Hee-jin:

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

8. Trends Are Created by Confident People

Chae Jin-sol:

While preparing for this interview, I spoke with some people who've worked with you

to get a sense of who you are. One thing they told me was, “*Oh, she probably doesn’t know much about current trends. She’s more about...*” (Audience laughter) But this wasn’t a jab. They said you’re someone who places a lot of importance on the essence of things rather than being trend-focused. You dive deep into questions like, *What do I like? Who am I?*

Given that the entertainment industry is so fast-paced when it comes to trends, I’m curious—how do you stay grounded in such a rapidly evolving environment?

Min Hee-jin:

It’s not about *staying grounded*, nor is it about only liking things from the past. Even when I was younger, I didn’t really care for what was trendy at the time. I preferred things that were even older. But it’s not that I think “old things are better”—it’s just that what I consider *good* tends to remain consistent.

What I mean is, older content often has a higher level of completion compared to what’s currently on the market. Since it’s already stood the test of time, the examples of great works are plentiful, making it easier to identify and select high-quality material compared to the new things coming out now.

Over time, content evolves, transforms, and adapts to the changing tastes of each era—whether it’s the 1910s, 20s, 30s, or later decades. There’s a constant cycle of influence, improvement, decline, and resurgence.

When you look at these examples, it’s not that everything old is great, but timeless gems do exist. And those make me wonder, *Why are they good?* What makes this exceptional? This kind of analysis naturally leads to deeper insights.

As for trends, I’ve often said to people close to me—and even mentioned it in a talk I gave at Samsung, to their design team (it wasn’t public)—that when analyzing trends, I do have my own set of frameworks and algorithms. However, it’s not just about following these frameworks rigidly.

I believe that stepping away from trends and confidently saying, “*This is what I need to do,*” is what creates trends in the first place.

For example, say wide-leg pants are the current trend, and everyone’s wearing them. Then, someone steps out in sleek, slim-fit pants paired with gorgeous boots—and they carry themselves with confidence. That person might look so striking and self-assured that others start to think, “*Should I try that too?*” That’s how trends begin.

In a broader sense, industries like fashion and art, with their power structures, often orchestrate trends. It’s a kind of artistic propaganda. The general public might not

realize this, but major brands and designers build trends based on their accumulated portfolios, which earn them a kind of loyalty. When they release something, people just follow.

For instance, if Hermès launches something, people think, *“It’s Hermès, the pinnacle of luxury, so it must be good.”* Or if Chanel releases something, they assume, *“This is trendy now.”* This is almost instinctual. But at the core of it, what makes people follow is confidence—confidence paired with density and high quality that leaves no room for doubt.

When confidence is paired with impeccable execution, people can’t argue with it. They might say, *“It’s not my taste, but I can’t deny it’s great”* or *“I can’t fault the quality.”* This repeated validation is how brands become icons of luxury.

No luxury brand starts out claiming, *“We’re a luxury brand.”* Instead, they earn that title through a steady build-up of trust. People think, *“They rarely fail. Even if I don’t love what I buy, it’ll still be decent.”* This reputation solidifies over time.

That’s why I don’t place too much importance on trends. I don’t actively use platforms like Instagram or Twitter, and I don’t really browse others’ social media. When I do check Instagram, it’s mainly to reply to DMs, and I only skim what the algorithm shows me to get a general sense of what’s happening in the world.

For someone who’s been working in this field for a while, it only takes a few glimpses to understand the prevailing trends and predict where things might go next. It’s like, *“Oh, this is popular now, so what’s coming next?”* Experience gives you that perspective.

Ultimately, I see trends as something created by confident individuals who pair that confidence with exceptional execution. It’s not just confidence alone—it’s the kind that’s backed by undeniable quality.

9. My Love Rides the Southern Wind

Chae Jin-sol:

As I listen to you, I’m curious—do you see a different flow emerging in K-pop? Can you predict how things might develop?

Min Hee-jin:

Well, when we released NewJeans, I had that confidence. That’s why we went ahead

with it. Of course, there were people saying things like, *“This isn’t edgy enough; international fans won’t like it,”* and so on—lots of unsolicited advice. (Laughs) But that’s fine; everyone has their own taste.

What I based my confidence on wasn’t the idea of *“This hasn’t been done before, so it’ll work,”* but rather the belief that good things are always good. It wasn’t about my personal taste either. It’s not about me thinking, *“I like this, so others will too.”* It’s about identifying something that is simply *good*—well-crafted and universally appealing.

For instance, take well-produced music, carefully thought-out planning, and meticulous attention to detail. These elements resonate with people because quality is undeniable.

A good example is NewJeans’ performance of *“Blue Coral Reef”* at the Tokyo Dome, which received such a great response. Initially, the rehearsal styling was completely different. The stylist—who’s excellent at creating street and hip-hop-inspired looks—seemed to miss the mark with the retro aesthetic I had in mind. When I saw the rehearsal outfits, I immediately thought, *“This isn’t it.”* This was just a day before the performance.

So, I told them, *“You need to redo the outfits quickly.”* (Laughs) I gave clear directions: *“Go to Saint James, get striped tops, white skirts, and absolutely no stiletto heels. It has to be something like kitten heels.”* Finding kitten heels these days isn’t easy, so we had to scour vintage shops within a day.

Later, when the outfits debuted, people noticed the small details—like the unique heel design—and appreciated them. I thought, *“People do notice and recognize these things.”* That’s why I make those last-minute changes—because it has to stand up to scrutiny.

Artists, too, put in immense effort. They pay attention to their gestures, how their outfits move, and how every little action on stage can evoke emotion and leave an impression. When artists understand these subtleties, their performances improve significantly. It’s not something you can teach; they have to grasp it themselves, and once they do, their natural expression of it makes all the difference.

In the case of NewJeans, everything came together. Despite the time crunch, the result was cohesive. For the second day, we adjusted the outfits slightly to be more feminine—because repeating the same look could feel monotonous. These subtle changes are what make this job rewarding. Seeing people notice and enjoy those differences makes the work worthwhile.

For example, at the Tokyo Dome, Minji came up with ideas for her solo stage—things like how to style her hair and using props like candy from a bag. She worked with the performance director on this. Some ideas came from me, some from the artists, and others from the team. It's the collective input and individual effort that create a high level of density and completion in the final result.

This is where I think collaboration is key. If I had been too lazy or overlooked something, the outcome wouldn't have been the same. Sure, it might have been hard on the stylist when I insisted on changing the shoes, but I'm sure they felt proud afterward because it turned out better.

No one can excel at everything, but when everyone contributes their strengths, the result is so much more satisfying. That's where the joy of work comes from.

Chae Jin-sol:

A recurring theme here seems to be perfectionism. In earlier interviews, I heard that you often approach your work with a perfectionist mindset.

Min Hee-jin:

The term *perfectionist* makes me cringe a bit—it can sound pretentious or off-putting. I used to reject it because I didn't want to come across as a hysterical or overly intense person.

But over time, I've come to accept it. Perfectionism just means being detail-oriented about things that matter to you. I'm not meticulous in daily life, only when it comes to work that I consider important. So, while the label still feels a bit uncomfortable, I've learned to embrace it. (Audience laughter)

10. If You Live Sincerely, One Day...

Chae Jin-sol:

Yes, while working... Okay, I understand. Actually, there are so many questions right now, but since we're almost out of time, I'd like to end with a final question that's been a common theme in this series. What advice would you give to someone who wants to create their own unique genre?

Min Hee-jin:

"Why would anything be uniquely my 'genre'... Honestly, it's just because I'm here

talking about it that people are calling me a 'woman who created a genre.' But really, everyone has already created their own genres in their lives.

It's not about intentionally trying to create your own genre. I simply didn't avoid the battles I needed to fight, said what I needed to say, and released music whenever I felt like it—even if it meant putting out a music video first if I wanted to. I stuck to my convictions, and luckily, people recognized my sincerity and responded positively. That's probably how I ended up being seen as having my own genre.

In my view, it's not about fame. Everyone who puts in effort, regardless of recognition, has already become a genre in their own right. Of course, I can't say the same for lazy people. (laughs) If you're lazy, you'll reap the consequences of that. But for those who work hard in their own spheres, whether or not they're well-known, they've already created their own genres. The people around them probably already know, and even if they don't, don't feel disheartened. Sometimes the lack of recognition is because the people around you are simply oblivious. If you keep at it, eventually, you'll be recognized.

But you also have to keep in mind that working hard isn't about gaining others' recognition. Think about it: if every morning when I woke up, I saw absurd news articles spreading lies about me, would I feel like life was worth living? Honestly, getting through the day is a challenge for me. It's ridiculous. Every time I see these outrageous things being said, I feel like I'm in a nightmare.

It's like *Groundhog Day*, except instead of the same day repeating, it's a new wave of lies and baseless claims. If I address one thing, people twist that too. What am I supposed to do? Every morning, I wake up and think, 'Ah... damn.' (laughs) Honestly, I'm probably going through more pain than you all. I can confidently say that. (laughs)

But even so, I've spent a lot of time figuring out how to endure this pain. Even when I know I've done nothing wrong, people have made this into a sort of ideological war, like a religious conflict. People believe what they want to believe, even if you tell them the truth. I said this during my first press conference: people believe what they want to believe, which makes it very hard to tell the truth. Over time, people will come to understand what's real and who was right.

But what's hard is getting through the time it takes for that truth to come out. Waiting for police statements or court decisions to be released is excruciating. I just want everything to be over quickly, but time doesn't move according to my wishes. So, I've had to see this period as a process of training myself to endure. It's incredibly painful, but I've realized that the only thing I can do is keep reminding myself of the

core truths: Why did I start this fight? Am I doing the right thing? Would I be happier if I hadn't done this?

It's not about regret; it's about reflecting and looking ahead. I focus on the things I need to do and try to strengthen my resolve. Everyone has struggles in their lives, and we all have to figure out how to overcome them in our own ways.

I've realized that people don't feel my pain as intensely as I do, and I find comfort in that. Everyone's biggest pain is their own, and that's okay. It's a reminder that life isn't just about suffering; there are still good people and good moments. Even when I left my last job, I wrote in my statement that while I experienced the worst people, I also met the best.

Ultimately, life depends on how you navigate it. Because everyone's life is hard in its own way, I think the key is to cultivate a sense of contentment and find happiness within your circumstances. Complaining about hardship doesn't solve anything. Like I often say: 'I live because I can't die.' (laughs) And while I'm alive, I might as well live as earnestly as I can.

If you live sincerely, one day, people will recognize it. I think we just have to trust that things will unfold as they're meant to. Dot, dot, dot. Hehehe."

Chae Jin-sol:

Everyone, let's give a round of applause for our CEO.

(Audience applause)

Min Hee-jin:

Thank you.

Chae Jin-sol:

Unfortunately, our time today has almost come to an end, so it's time to wrap up. Could you share a few final thoughts with us?

Min Hee-jin:

Oh, well, I'm the kind of person who relieves stress by talking, so the timing of this event was really perfect for me in a weird way. To be honest, I thought this event might get canceled—I seriously thought I'd end up under house arrest or something. *(Audience laughter)*

Anyway, I feel like meeting all of you here today was truly meant to be. Sharing these thoughts with you has made this one of the happiest moments I've had in a while. It was great to be able to let go of random worries and just talk openly. Even though I

tend to go on and on, I promise I can be brief sometimes. (laughs) I really tried to keep it short today.

Lately, I've been wishing for my own happiness, and I hope you can all feel happiness in your lives too. Right now, it feels like everyone is so consumed by anger and negativity—there's so much stress everywhere. But wouldn't it be nice if we could all just let some of that go and take it easy? (laughs) That's what I think, anyway. I truly hope you all find happiness. Thank you so much.

(Audience applause)

SSIBAL, I HAVE TO WIN THIS.