

# ONLY GOD FORGIVES

A FILM BY NICOLAS WINDING REFN









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## GAUMONT, WILD BUNCH AND NICOLAS WINDING REFN WILD SIDE IN ASSOCIATION WITH LE PACTE

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# RYAN GOSLING KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS VITHAYA PANSRINGARM ONLY GOD FORGIVES WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY NICOLAS WINDING REFN

1H30 / DENMARK / FRANCE / 2013 / 1.85 / COLOR / 5.1































## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

The original concept for the film was to make a movie about a man who wants to fight God. That is, of course, a very vast obstacle but when I was writing the film, I was going through some very existential times in my life - we were expecting our second child and it was a difficult pregnancy - and the idea of having a character who wants to fight God without knowing why very much appealed to me.

With that as the concept, I elaborated by adding a character who believes he is God (Chang), obviously the antagonist, with the protagonist being a gangster who is looking for religion to believe in (Julian). This itself is, of course, very existential because faith is based on the need for a higher answer but most of the time, we don't know what the question is. When the answer comes, then, we must backtrack our lives in order to find the question. In this way, the film is conceived as an answer, with the question revealed at the end.

With hindsight, I am able to see the similarities between Chang and One Eye in Valhalla Rising, and Driver in Drive - all are rooted in fairytale mythology and have difficulties living in the everyday world. I can see that technically, there is a resemblance in their stoic behavior, silence, and fetishistic portraits even though they live in different times and are portrayed by different actors. In Valhalla Rising, One Eye is enigmatic - we don't know his past but he is defined by his name. In Drive, Driver is defined by his function. And in Only God Forgives, Chang is first of all defined by his enigmatic behaviour, to such an extent that he becomes a disembodied character, an 'it', defined not by his name but solely by his image.

In a way, *Only God Forgives* is like an accumulation of all the films I've made so far. I think I was heading toward a creative collision, full speed ahead, in order to change everything around me and to see what would come after. I have always said that I set out to make films about women but I end up making films about violent men. Now that everything is colliding, it may end up turning things upside-down for me. This collision is exciting because everything around me becomes so uncertain and we must not forget that the second enemy of creativity, after having 'good taste', is being safe.

**NICOLAS WINDING REFN** 



## A CONVERSATION WITH NICOLAS WINDING REFN

After the great success of Drive, why did you decide to make a medium budget film in Thailand?

Medium budget is an understatement. It's more a very low budget film. It all started with my two-picture deal with Wild Bunch and Gaumont. *Only God Forgives* was going to be our first collaboration. Then *Drive* came along so I decided to make it and postpone *Only God Forgives*. But the film was so firmly rooted in me that I had to make it. So even while I was making *Drive* I was preparing *Only God Forgives*.

Having revisited the American crime picture you wanted to revisit the martial arts genre. Is this a general love of genre movies?

I've always loved martial arts films but thought it would be extremely difficult to make one, particularly since I wanted the actors to learn Muay Thai and fight for real. It takes a lifetime to learn the art of Muay Thai and I wanted the actors to learn to fight in 8 weeks. Just that was a challenge in itself.

#### You had many offers from major studios. Why did you turn them down?

I was indeed offered some financially very interesting propositions that I seriously looked into but *Only God Forgives* had haunted me for too long, I had to get it out before I could seriously consider other projects.

Your film begins as a gangster movie then gradually turns into a strange revenge film. Can you tell us where this story - very reminiscent of Greek tragedy - came from?

I've always wanted to make a film about a mother/son relationship and its conflicts. I wanted the film to begin in one genre and gradually transform into something else as the final showdown between mother and son approaches.

Only God Forgives marks the second time you've worked with Ryan Gosling.
Can you describe this new collaboration? How would you describe his character?

Another actor was supposed to play Julian but pulled out close to shooting. Now I consider this a blessing because it allowed Ryan and me to continue our collaboration. Oddly, I'd written the screenplay before I made *Drive* and Julian had been conceived as a very silent character. When Ryan and I started to work on the script after *Drive* this language of silence came naturally, which was very useful since Julian is an extremely tortured character - he never goes towards others but withdraws into himself. With hindsight I can't imagine another actor playing this role. But again, Ryan and I are practically one.

## For the part of the strange policeman/avenger you chose Vithaya Pansringarm. Can you talk about your collaboration?

Casting in Thailand was extremely complicated because actors there don't really have a theatrical training. They tend to be people who have decided to become actors while holding down another job. I was very lucky that during this open casting (itself a real challenge in a city of 12 million inhabitants) Vithaya miraculously appeared at the beginning.

I met him a year and a half before shooting and knew he was the one. I can't tell you why exactly because his tests weren't remarkable but there was something in him - his kindness and his calm - yet I knew he would be unpredictable, which I always find interesting.

In all my films, the actors always play a large part in the creation of the characters, they really are part of their DNA, and Vithaya quickly understood that his character was judge, jury and executioner in one - a man with the ability to decide what is good or what is evil. He was able to bring to the character exactly what I was looking for, the ability to control a kind of karmic justice. For each bad thing you do, something bad will come to haunt you in return and he is the one who decides to haunt you or to forgive you.



And of course Kristin was delighted to be acting a part in which she could go all out playing the ultimate bitch. Yet it was very important that we made her character larger than life, she

needed that to be able to play this domineering and diabolical mother.

Everything I do comes from the need to challenge myself, every time. Of course there are

connections with my other films and characters, but years ago I decided to stop trying to under stand why I do things so I could follow my instinct: what do I want to see when I go to the movies?

### RYAN GOSLING (JULIAN)

Born in Canada, a musician and singer with his group Dead Man's Bones, Ryan Gosling began his career as a child actor on television, appearing alongside Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake in "The Mickey Mouse Club".

In 2001, Gosling came to international attention with a blistering lead performance in the highly controversial *The Believer*, winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize. Nominated for a Best Actor Academy Award® for his role in *Half Nelson*, then for a Best Actor Golden Globe for both *Lars and the Real Girl* and *Blue Valentine*, Ryan Gosling also delivered remarkable performances in *The Notebook*, *Murder by Numbers*, *The Slaughter Rule*, *The United States of Leland*, *Fracture* and *Stay*.

In 2011, he demonstrated his talent for comedy (*Crazy, Stupid, Love,* which secured him another Golden Globe nomination), drama (*Drive, The Ides of March* and most recently *The Place Beyond The Pines* which saw him co-starring with Eva Mendes and collaborating once again with director Derek Cianfrance), and action (*Gangster Squad*). Ryan Gosling will next be seen in the new feature from Terrence Malick (winner of the Palme d'Or in Cannes for *Tree Of Life* in 2011), alongside Michael Fassbender.

Following the critical and commercial success of *Drive*, which won the Best Director prize at Cannes in 2011, Ryan Gosling rejoins Nicolas Winding Refn on the mean streets of Bangkok for *Only God Forgives*.

2013 also sees Gosling making his feature film directorial debut with *How To Catch A Monster,* based on his original screenplay and starring Christina Hendricks and Eva Mendes.





Kristin Scott Thomas is an English actress who gained international recognition in the 1990s for her roles in *Bitter Moon, Four Weddings and A Funeral,* for which she won the BAFTA Film Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and *The English Patient,* for which she received a Golden Globe nomination as well as an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress.

Her subsequent films include *Gosford Park, Mission: Impossible, The Horse Whisperer, Keeping Mum, Nowhere Boy, Easy Virtue* and *Tell No One.* In addition, she received many accolades for her performance in *I've Loved You So Long,* including BAFTA and Golden Globe nominations for Best Actress. In 2009 she starred in *Leaving,* earning a nomination for Best Actress at the César Awards and winning Best Actress at the Evening Standard British Film Award.

Recent credits include *Sarah's Key, Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, Bel Ami* with Robert Pattinson, based on the 1885 novel by Guy de Maupassant, and the film adaption of Douglas Kennedy's novel, *The Woman in the Fifth*, directed by Pawel Pawlikowski.

In early 2007, Kristin Scott Thomas played Arkadina in a London West End production of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, for which she won a Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actress. She returned to the West End to star as Emma in Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* directed by Ian Rickson. Recently, she has also been performing on stage in Pinter's *Old Times*.

2013 will see her teaming up with director Ralph Fiennes for The Invisible Woman.

#### **SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY**

2013	THE INVISIBLE WOMAN: THE STORY OF NELLY TERNAN AND CHARLES DICKENS by Ralph Fiennes
	SECONDS OF PLEASURE by Neil LaBute
	ONLY GOD FORGIVES by Nicolas Winding Refn
	VATICAN, LE CHRIST HABITE CHEZ LES BORGIA by Laurent Herbiet
2012	AVANT L'HIVER by Philippe Claudel
	BEL AMI by Declan Donnellan & Nick Ormerod
	CHERCHEZ HORTENSE by Pascal Bonitzer
	IN THE HOUSE by François Ozon
2011	SALMON FISHING IN THE YEMEN by Lasse Hallström
2009	CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC by P.J. Hogan
	LOVE CRIME by Alain Corneau
	LEAVING by Catherine Corsini
2008	I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG by Philippe Claudel
2007	THE WALKER by Paul Schrader
2005	MAN TO MAN by Régis Wargnier
2003	PETITES COUPURES by Pascal Bonitzer
2001	GOSFORD PARK by Robert Altman
1998	THE HORSE WHISPERER by Robert Redford
1996	THE ENGLISH PATIENT by Anthony Minghella
1993	FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL by Mike Newell
1992	BITTER MOON by Roman Polanski





#### **VITHAYA PANSRINGARM (CHANG)**

Vithaya Pansringarm (nickname Pu) was born in Bangkok, Thailand in 1959. Growing up in the 1960s in a middle-class Thai family, he was exposed to western music and films. One of his father's jobs was to translate and voice-over American Westerns shown on large outdoor screens at festivals.

Passionate about the arts, he went to New York City and graduated in graphic design with honors from the New York Institute of Technology in 1985. After working as a graphic designer for a number of years, he moved back to Bangkok in 1987 with his wife, an American ballet dancer. Together, they founded the Rising Star Dance Studio, one of Bangkok's foremost academies of dance.

His acting career started almost by accident when he was discovered by Australian cinematographer/director Wade Muller, who asked him to act as Police Lieutenant Somchai in the short film *Second Chance*. Wade later recommended Vithaya Pansringarm to the casting director of the Hollywood production *The Prince and Me: The Elephant Adventure* shooting in Thailand. He was cast in a main role as King Sarayu, thus making his international film debut in 2009. This led to director Tom Waller asking him to play the lead role of Father Ananda in the controversial Thai film *Mindfulness and Murder* in late 2009. This role earned him Best Actor at ThrillSpy International Film Festival in Washington, DC in 2010. When the film was finally given permission to be shown in Thailand in 2011, he was nominated for Best Actor at the Thailand National Film Awards 2012. After roles in several international productions shot in Thailand including *Largo Winch 2, The Hangover Part II*, and *Trade of Innocents*, he was cast by Nicolas Winding Refn in the leading role of Police Lieutenant Chang in *Only God Forgives*, opposite Ryan Gosling and Kristin Scott Thomas.

He is currently preparing for the lead role in *The Last Executioner*, directed by Tom Waller.

Vithaya is an active environmentalist and member of the Executive Committee of the Wild Animal Rescue Foundation of Thailand (WARF). He is a martial artist holding a fifth degree black belt in Kendo (Japanese fencing). He is the President of the Thailand Kendo Club.



2014 THE LAST EXECUTIONER by Tom Waller

2013 ONLY GOD FORGIVES by Nicolas Winding Refn

2012 TRADE OF INNOCENTS by Christopher Bessette

2011 LARGO WINCH 2 by Jérôme Salle

THE HANGOVER PART II by Todd Phillips

2009 MINDFULNESS AND MURDER by Tom Waller

THE PRINCE & ME: THE ELEPHANT ADVENTURE by Catherine Cyran





#### LENE BØRGLUM

#### **PRODUCER**

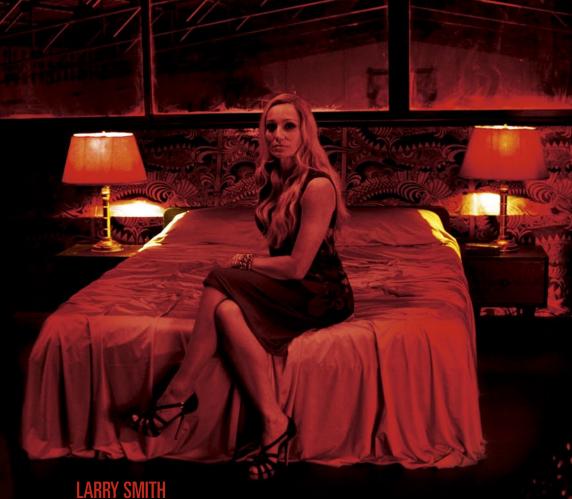
Lene Børglum was born in 1961. From 1986 to 1990, she was employed at the Danish Film Institute Workshop, the Film Institute's department for experimental film and video production, where she organized the Copenhagen International Film and Video Workshop Festival in 1988 and 1990.

Between 1989 and 1996 she produced several independent film and video productions, including By The Dawn's Early Light (directed by Knud Vesterskov in 1993), one of the first feature films shot on a small digital format and transferred to 35mm film. It was screened in the Panorama section of the Berlinale in 1994.

In 1992, she joined Zentropa, right after it was founded by Lars von Trier and Peter Aalbæk Jensen. Zentropa soon became the biggest production company in Northern Europe. Børglum was in charge of legal affairs and international financing on all major films produced by the company, including Lars von Trier's The Kingdom I and II, The Idiots, Breaking the Waves, Dancer in the Dark, Dogville, Manderlay and The Boss of It All as well as several other films.

In 2007, Lene Børglum left Zentropa to work independently. Her first film as a freelance executive producer was Lukas Moodysson's Mammoth with Swedish production company Memfis Film, followed by Nicolas Winding Refn's Valhalla Rising with Nimbus Film. In 2008, she started the production company Space Rocket Nation with Nicolas Winding Refn. The company recently completed production on Refn's Only God Forgives and is currently in development with his next feature film, I Walk With the Dead.





Larry Smith came up under the tutelage of director Stanley Kubrick. Their history was first cemented on the set of Barry Lyndon where he was chief electrician. He then worked on The Shinning. After thirteen years of working for Kubrick, Smith shot over a thousand commercials, working with such renowned directors as Ridley Scott, Doug Liman, Adrian Lyne, Daniel Barber and Paul Weiland. Upon reconnecting years later, Kubrick asked him to shoot Eyes Wide Shut.

Larry Smith has also shot several television programs for Tom Hooper, including Elizabeth I, Prime Suspect 6 for HBO, Love In A Cold Climate for the BBC and Red Dust for BBC Films. Additionally, he won the Dinard British Film Festival Kodak Award for Cinematography for his work on *The Guard*, directed by John Michael McDonagh. He most recently reunited with McDonagh to shoot Calvary.

Larry Smith recently lensed Jerusha Hess' Austenland for Sony Pictures Classics, which premiered in the Dramatic Competition at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival.

Throughout his career, Smith has enjoyed a successful relationship with director Nicolas Winding Refn, collaborating on Miss Marple: Nemesis, Fear X, Bronson, and now Only God Forgives.

#### **CLIFF MARTINEZ**

#### ORIGINAL MUSIC

Cliff Martinez was born in the Bronx, raised in Ohio and moved to California in 1976, landing in the middle of the punk movement.

He joined the Red Hot Chili Peppers as the drummer (playing on the band's first two albums) and later The Dickies. It was during his tenure with the Chili Peppers that Martinez began exploring the new technologies of that era, which would eventually guide him towards the film music world.

A tape Martinez had put together using these new technologies made its rounds, leading him to score an episode of *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*. The same recording also ended up in the hands of Steven Soderbergh and he was hired to score the director's first theatrical release 1989's *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*. Cliff Martinez's longstanding relationship with Soderbergh has continued through the years, and they have worked together on ten theatrical releases including *Kafka, The Limey, Traffic, Solaris* and 2011's *Contagion*. Martinez has been nominated for a Grammy Award (*Traffic*), a César Award (Xavier Giannoli's À L'origine), and a Broadcast Film Critics Award (*Drive*). His scores tend towards being stark and sparse, utilizing a modern tonal palette to paint the backdrop for films that are often dark, psychological stories like *Pump Up the Volume* (1990), *The Limey* (2009) *Wonderland* (2003), *Wicker Park* (2004) and *Drive* (2011).

Martinez recently served as a juror for the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

His most recent credits include Robert Redford's *The Company You Keep,* Nicholas Jarecki's *Arbitrage* and Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (score co-composed with Skrillex).

Only God Forgives marks Martinez's second collaboration with Nicolas Winding Refn, after Drive.

#### **BETH MICKLE**

#### PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Beth Mickle began her career as a production designer when she designed *Madness and Genius*, directed by Ryan Eslinger, in 2002. The film's success led to several more features including the acclaimed *Half Nelson* and *Sugar*, directed by Ryan Fleck, and written by Fleck and Anna Boden. *Half Nelson* won the Best Film prize at the Gotham Awards, and received a Best Actor Academy Award® nomination for Ryan Gosling in 2007.

Beth Mickle was also nominated for a BAFTA award for production design in 2010 for her work on *An Englishman in New York*, starring John Hurt. In 2011, she designed *Drive*. Further credits include *Arbitrage*, *Thanks for Sharing*, directed by Stuart Blumberg, and *2 Guns*, directed by Baltasar Kormakur, starring Mark Wahlberg and Denzel Washington.





