WONL GOD FORGIVES

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY NICOLAS WINDING REFN

RYAN GOSLING  KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS  VITHAYA PANSRINGARM

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

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SYNOPSIS

Julian, an American fugitive from justice, runs a boxing club in Bangkok as a front for his drug business.

His mother, the head of a vast criminal organization, arrives from the US to collect the body of her favorite son, Billy. Julian’s brother has just been killed after having savagely murdered a young prostitute. Crazy with rage and thirst for vengeance she demands the heads of the murderers from Julian.

But first, Julian must confront Chang, a mysterious retired policeman - and figurehead of a divine justice - who has resolved to scourge the corrupt underworld of brothels and fight clubs.
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 behavior, 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.
Kristin Scott Thomas is totally transformed and extremely Machiavellian? How did you work that?

We are so used to seeing crime and violence as being the work of male characters that the very notion of seeing a woman embody absolute evil - and a mother to boot - it was great fun to write. I had Kristin in mind for the part of Julian’s mother early on. We met in Paris and I thought it would be very interesting to do a combination of Lady Macbeth and Donatella Versace...

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.

What were your influences for this film?

There were a lot of different influences that led to different ideas. One of the main ones was the work of Richard Kern and his obsession with violent images, in particular his short movie The Evil Cameraman (1999).

And there was also my obsessive desire to tangle with Greek mythology, with Bangkok as the backdrop...

How do you relate Only God Forgives to your other films?

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 understand 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 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**

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>1992</td>
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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, D.C. 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.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

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
2009  THE HANGOVER PART II by Todd Phillips
2009  MINDFULNESS AND MURDER by Tom Waller
2009  THE PRINCE & ME: THE ELEPHANT ADVENTURE by Catherine Cyran
Nicolas Winding Refn was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1970, and is renowned for his modern and radical, innovative style.

He has already received two lifetime achievement awards, one from Taipei International Film festival in 2006 and the second from Valencia International Film Festival in 2007. He was the winner of the Emerging Master Award from the Philadelphia International Film Festival in 2005.

At the age of only 24, he wrote and directed the extremely violent and uncompromising Pusher (1996). The film became a cult phenomenon and won him instant international critical acclaim. He wrote, directed and produced Pusher II (2004) and Pusher III (2005), as a result of his first movie’s growing cult following. The subsequent success of Pusher II and III, along with the first, created the internationally renowned Pusher Trilogy, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2005. His other films have always enjoyed the support of the leading international festivals: Bleeder and Valhalla Rising screened at Venice in 1999 and 2009 respectively, while Fear X and Bronson screened at Sundance in 2003 and 2009. Drive is Refn’s most commercially successful film to date. Premiering at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011, it won the Best Director prize and was a contender for the Palme d’Or.

Shot in the Chinatown district of Bangkok, Thailand, Only God Forgives marks the second collaboration between Nicolas Winding Refn and Ryan Gosling.

Refn is currently writing his next film, I Walk With The Dead, co-produced with Wild Bunch and Gaumont, and is also turning his attention to television to develop Barbarella.

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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.
CAST AND CREW

RYAN GOSLING
KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
VITHAYA PANSRINGARM
RHATHA PHONGAM
GORDON BROWN
TOM BURKE

Written & Directed by
Nicolas Winding Refn

Producers
Lene Børglum
Sidonie Dumas
Vincent Maraval
Ryan Gosling
Christophe Riandeé
Brahim Chioua
Tom Quinn
Jason Janego
Michel Litvak
David Lancaster
Gary Michael Walters
Matthew Read
Thor Sigurjonsson
Yves Chevalier
Jessica Ask
Jacob Jarek
Johnny Andersen
Larry Smith
Matthew Newman
Beth Mickie
Cliff Martinez
Des Hamilton and Raweeporn S. “Non” Jungmeier
Wassichaya “Nampeung” Mechantkul
Pattara “Best” Puttisuraset
Kristian Selin Eifnes Andersen
& Eddie Simonsen
Martin Madsen

Associate Producers
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Kristian Selin Eifnes Andersen
& Eddie Simonsen
Martin Madsen

Co-producers
Line Producer
Johnny Andersen
DP
Larry Smith
Editing
Matthew Newman
Production Designer
Beth Mickie
Original Music
Cliff Martinez
Casting
Des Hamilton and Raweeporn S. “Non” Jungmeier
Wardrobe
Wassichaya “Nampeung” Mechantkul
Make-up
Pattara “Best” Puttisuraset
Sound
Kristian Selin Eifnes Andersen
& Eddie Simonsen

SFX supervision
Martin Madsen

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in association with Bold Films

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