

INSPIRED BY THE
MUMBAI TERRORIST ATTACKS: 26/11/08



MEDIA KIT

ONE LESS GOD

Because the only thing worth giving up for love...
is everything.

NEW REALMS FILMS PRESENTS "ONE LESS GOD"

JOSEPH MAHLER TAYLOR SUKHAJ DEEPAK MIHIKA RAO KABIR SINGH KIERAN KUMAR NATHAN KAYE MARTELLE HAMMER
REILLY O'BYRNE-INGLIS IGOR KREYMAN JOSEPH LU TAYLOR QUENTIN YUNG JAN LANGFORD-PENNY NICOLE FANTI PHILIP R.K. JOHN



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Winner of both the **Industry Choice Award** and the **Grand Jury Award** at the recent *Dances With Films* festival in Los Angeles, Australian thriller **One Less God** is inspired by the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 2008 and follows the harrowing events from the perspectives of both hostages and terrorists over the course of the devastating three-day siege in Mumbai's Taj Mahal Hotel.

"With 166 people killed, over 600 injured and thousands swept up in the events, it was India's 9/11," said writer/director **Liam Worthington**. "We spent years researching and writing, and once we became immersed in the events and the geo-politics, we knew we needed to get beyond the timeline of events that were filling the news cycles. We wanted to get to the heart of the tragedy, and also beyond it, to the people on both ends of the guns."

Co-producer **Nelson Lau** said: "Conceived eight years ago and filmed and produced over three years, **One Less God** is a truly independent feature largely created by sweat equity and grass roots industry support. "But more than that – it is a feature made by people of many different faiths: Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jews, Buddhists and those of no faith as well. I think together we have made a deeply humanist film that shrinks from nothing, which we believe is vital right now in this divisive political climate," he continued.

The first feature film in the 20 year history of the *Dances With Films* festival to take out the two top awards, **One Less God** was selected from over two thousand entries to compete in official competition during the festival's 20th Anniversary, where the top 16 films vied for honours over eleven days.

Michael Trent *Co-Founder – Dances With Films* said: "One of the most masterful works that we've seen come out of the Australian independent scene, **One Less God** is powerfully relevant considering today's headlines."

SYNOPSIS

Sean (*Joseph Mahler Taylor*), an Irish backpacker, was drawn to India like so many before him, seeking spiritual answers and meaning.

Atiya (*Mihika Rao*) came to Mumbai with her grandfather (*SukhRaj Deepak*), to visit her dying mother in hospital.

Yaaseen (*Kabir Singh*) and **Ahmad** (*Kieran Kumar*) came because they were told their names would be etched in gold. That they would be hailed as great heroes forever more. They were told ... that they were doing 'God's' work.

On the 26th of November 2008 their worlds would collide when ten young members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the "Army of the Righteous" landed on the coast of Mumbai armed with AK-47s and grenades, their primary target, the iconic Taj Mahal hotel.



With authorities overwhelmed, for almost 72 hours Indians and travelers from across the world were swept up into a desperate bid for survival – as the indoctrinated terrorists, coke-addled, fueled by vengeance, and driven on by their ruthless handler would seek to “inflict as much damage as possible” and strike a blow to the heart of all Indians.

Yet this is more than a story of terrorism or of monsters and men, it is an unflinching descent into the psyches of the terrorists behind the infamous 26/11 attacks, and an appeal to our shared humanity at the dark crossroads to which we have now stumbled. Inspired by true events.



KEY CAST

SEAN	Joseph Mahler Taylor
GRADDA	SukhRaj Deepak
ATIYA	Mihika Rao
YAASEEN	Kabir Singh
AHMAD	Kieran Kumar
OZ	Nathan Kaye
CLAIRE	Martelle Hammer
EDA	Reilly O'Byrne-Inglis
SELIM	Igor Kreyman
JOHN	Joseph J U Taylor
YANG	Quentin Yung





KEY CREW

Writer/Director	Liam Worthington
Producers	Maren Smith Joel Hagen Liam Worthington
Co-Producer	Nelson Lau
Executive Producers	Greg Buchanan Nelson Lau
Director of Photography	Ashley Barron
Production Designer	Stephanie Todd
Editors	Liam Worthington Joel Hagen
Composer	Thomas E Rouch
Sound Supervisor	Angus Robertson





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Perched high in the burning Taj Mahal, the young terrorist was being asked a favour by his handler. There was an ambulance parked on the street below that he could see via his news feed, and he wanted the young operative to go to the window and throw a grenade down upon it so he could watch it explode live on his television.

His request was soft, falsely casual, and it only made his desire the more apparent. This was clearly a man who wanted to heighten his own experience, to feel the extension of his power and see his will enacted. A man who wanted to serve god, or a man who wanted to feel like one?

But to the handler's great annoyance his request was ignored by the young militant. For in tones better suited to a wide eyed Jack freshly returned from his beanstalk, the young operative was too busy trying to describe the opulent world he'd found himself in – so sure that if he could just describe the wonder of his surrounds, the handler would undoubtedly share his awe. The rebuke the young terrorist received landed heavily, as though chastened by a beloved father ... or perhaps more than even a father, for this was a man he believed spoke for God.

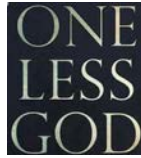
It was 2009 when I first heard the intercepted communications between the Lashkar-E-Taiba terrorists and their handlers back in Pakistan. Within the sweeping scale and enormous tragedy of the events, it was the hidden doorway I'd long been seeking. Here were two men that had managed to stop the world, in the midst of one of the most audacious terrorist attacks in history ... with a level of disconnect that bordered on the outright comical.

Co-Producer Nelson Lau and I both had friends who lost people close to them in the attacks, so we certainly felt a strong personal connection to the material, but recognised that that in itself does not mean you are going to communicate anything of value.

I'd spent years researching and writing early drafts, but as I became ever more deeply immersed in the 26/11 attacks and the geo-politics surrounding them, I knew we had to get beyond the timeline of events that were filling the news cycles. I wanted to get to the heart of the tragedy, and beyond it, to the people on both ends of the gun.

Early drafts of the script oscillated between a wide array of survival stories, but they always felt wrong. The number of stories about courage and resilience were vastly overwhelmed by those of pain and loss, and it seemed an emotional betrayal of the true character of the events to frame them as yet one more tale of man's triumph over adversity – with terrorists being the new tidal wave or towering inferno.

I wanted to craft a story that walked the line between demonisation and apologetics, and that would be a genuine movement towards greater humanism and compassion.



One that might aspire to promote healthy discussion afterwards, as opposed to the discourse that takes place in the emotionally charged wake of an actual terrorist attack and rarely achieves anything except to heighten fear and increase the polarisation.

This terrain was even more perilous than it was tragic, but there was clearly something important in the darkest corridors of the siege and it was a dimension I felt unlikely to be approached by larger budgeted pictures. The timeline and specifics of 26/11 like with all terrorist attacks had been endlessly covered, and I did not want to make a re-enactment film – and that approach seemed better fare for documentaries. Fortunately the territory I was most interested in seemed to be where for whatever reason, no one else was focused.

I wanted to capture the emotional authenticity of those who suffered in the attacks but counter pose that with a genuine exploration into the psyches of the terrorists. Then use those two conflicting yet parallel journeys as a means to evoke broader questions around man's inhumanity to man and the nature of belief. I feel there is no more relevant time to explore questions surrounding ideas and behaviour than in the middle of a terrorist siege. You're seeing people at the edge, under the most extreme kind of pressure, where character most truly reveals itself.

To this end we dug in hard. The actor's rehearsal process was long and arduous. It was truly harrowing at times. There was a great degree of emotional bravery and sacrifice that I think we all made in truly committing to the material and seeking to honour the tragedy of the events, and I'm very proud of that, as I think it clearly shows on the screen.

I think if submerging yourself into this material does not leave you feeling battered inside and out, and just wanting to rail at the sky, then there is probably something a bit wrong. And I think there is actually great worth in making people feel that emotional overload, and the subsequent impulse of just wanting to scream at the heavens ... we must be able to do better than this.

That was the emotional goal for the film that I worked hard to try and achieve. I think that's tragedy at its best. Only true devastation offers catharsis. And I'm not a great fan of the flat empty feeling so many Indie's seem happy to impart as their exit emotion. Film is an emotional medium, and I want to feel the widest gamut of emotions I can. And I want that emotional tapestry to take the audience to places they may not be expecting.

The lead terrorist character **Yaaseen** (*Kabir Singh*) was loosely based on the one surviving terrorist from the Mumbai attacks, Amjal Kasab. Amjal had been picked up by recruiters off the streets of Lahore. He was taken to a camp, indoctrinated, trained and was told "he would be celebrated". That he would be "hailed as a great Muslim hero".

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That he was doing “God’s work”. Afterwards as the sole surviving terrorist, he was tried, hung, and the Muslim community would not grant him burial.

Their position is more than understandable, his actions were not just deeply offensive and non representative of their practice of Islam – they were gravely damaging. And yet, I think there is inherent tragedy in this also. When you factor in the relationship dynamics with the handler and the indoctrination they all received – while I cannot weep for the men they became, my hope is we still can for the boys they all once were – for only in that do I see the commonality and humanism required to walk any road towards peace.

Kasab’s story really caught me. How does a 14 year old boy, once famed for his love of standing in front of a TV shop and acting out movies, end up six years later on the streets of Mumbai firing an AK-47 into a crowd of screaming people? I think the world wants to know that answer and is grappling with it right now.

But the answers are complex, dynamic and function on a spectrum, and as often as not have much more to do with what it means to be human than any inherent psychopathy or extreme religious belief. I think like what many of the best Muslim advocates are saying, that these people are wrong, that this is not Islam, yet still recognise the fundamental problem we face in not being able to control their interpretation. If they believe themselves religiously motivated, then unfortunately at that point they become so. And our opinion that they are wrong is of little or no help. We can’t control their minds.

It all just illustrates how important it is that we don’t think around these issues in such binary ways, and also why though repugnant to some, I felt it was deeply important for the audience to also feel – even if unwanted – a human connection with the terrorists and glimpse the healthy internal conflict that hopefully creates. There are many ways we strove to achieve this; from predominantly using soft-light whenever we lit them, to the fact we do not connect their faces with any of the initial shootings and killings, so that the first time you see a close up of **Yaaseen**, you are not looking into the eyes of a monster, but of another human being.





The reality we face now is that we live in a time where terrorist attacks are increasing, this is turbo charging the popularity of xenophobic nationalist parties, social media enflames everything, the political divide widens, bigotry rises, people are increasingly victimised and feel aggrieved ... this symbiosis between the extremes feeding each other is very disturbing. It's a scenario where only extremist recruiters from both sides truly prosper.

This being the case it is critical for those of us in the western world to understand that Muslims are the ones who suffer first and foremost at the hands of Islamic terrorists – as it demonstrates that there are deep fissure lines in the Islamic world, and that this is not at all about Muslims as any monolithic block or cohesive whole.

So as important as it was to make a film that does not shy from the issues surrounding religious extremism or the atrocities committed by the terrorists, it was equally important that our terrorists not be dehumanised or were also the sole representation of Muslims in the film. And so in **Eda** (*Reilly O'Byrne-Ingilis*) we sought to craft a Muslim character that we felt truly exemplified the very best traits of her faith, or indeed any faith, as well as that of broader humanism.

This film was made by people of many different faiths: Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jews, Buddhists and those of no faith as well. I think together we have made a deeply humanist film that also shrinks from nothing, and that that is vital right now in this divisive political climate.

Ultimately though, everyone will decide for themselves what **One Less God** means to them, but for my part, that's what I would like **One Less God** to be about. Not terrorism, tragedy and pain, and certainly not inciting further xenophobia, but instead asking in the light of such continued suffering, is there truly anything more important than finding the courage to let go of the things that separate us from love ...

I think that holds true of all thoughts and all ideas, no matter what they are, where they are, or even how sacred we may hold them. Because I think the answer to the question that I hope the film makes people want to rail at the sky ... is yes, we can do better. And I think our children and our children's children deserve that.

Liam Worthington
Writer, Producer & Director



LIAM WORTHINGTON

Writer, Producer & Director



Liam is the lead writer, director and producer at New Realms Films and the artist in residence at RYSS Youth Arts Central Coast 2017.

Liam's career began with the study of acting and directing at the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) in 1992, then continued at the University of Wollongong and the University of Western Sydney Nepean. Liam went on to work as an actor and circus performer, receiving parts in TV drama, film and theatre, before co-founding and becoming the director of his own

theatre company. The company performed widely, conducted suicide prevention workshops and were awarded several grants before Liam was selected for ATYP's *Young Director Mentorship Scheme*, where he went on to write and direct *Good Soul Blues* for the 1998 season at The Wharf Theatre in Sydney.

Liam was then commissioned in 1999 to make a **Star Wars** fan film starring young people suffering from psychosis. Liam fell in love with film, and began transferring his theatre directing and writing skills, going on to study part time at AFTRS, Metro Screen and under many renowned international teachers such as Judith Weston. In 2003, on the back of his award winning short film **Shayalor** Liam co-founded the film production company New Realms Films. Over the next twelve years, Liam has worked as a producer, director, writer, editor and director of photography, honing his skills on short films, music videos, POCs, circus and theatre, while writing and co-developing a slate of feature film scripts and properties for New Realms Films.

Liam's debut feature film **One Less God** was recently honoured with the **Industry Choice Award** and **Grand Jury Award** at the *Dances With Films* festival in Los Angeles.



MAREN SMITH

Producer



Maren is a film and broadcast producer who joined New Realms Films as production manager and producer of **One Less God**. Maren has previously produced narrative short films **Window** (winner of *Best Film* Olympus Challenge St. Kilda Film festival 2016, BOFA Tasmania 2016, Dungog Film festival 2016), **Qupid** (No Gloss Film festival Leeds 2016, Great Lakes International Film festival 2016), **Yang** (A Night Of Horror Film festival, 2015, runner up at Best in the West 2016) and strives to create visually stunning, performance-driven drama with a social conscience. For over four years, Maren has also produced and presented radio about cinema and the arts on Sydney's *Eastside Radio*.

Maren is alumna of University of Technology Sydney (*Media Arts Production & International Studies 2011*), studied at Technische Universität Berlin on exchange in 2010, and received *Honours in Film Studies* at University of Sydney 2012.

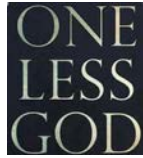
JOEL HAGEN

Producer & Editor



Joel Hagen graduated from the University of New South Wales with a *Bachelor in Digital Media*. From there he entered film festival production having worked for Tribeca Film festival, Doha Film festival and Los Angeles Film festival.

He has produced the feature film **One Less God**; music videos for Sony Music: Guy Sebastian *Set in Stone*, Cyrus *Keep Talking*, Tonight Alive *How Does it Feel*, Rival Fire *Riot*; Guineafowl *Little Fingers*; VICE documentary **Miro Dreams of Footy**; and short film **Jordan** (2011). He collaborated on *Tension Sets*, Kusum Normoyle's multimedia art piece at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art; and worked on content for Toyota, Toshiba, Roxy, Aldi and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Joel has produced commercials, online and branded content for Netflix, Hasbro, Network Ten, MTV, CBS, Mamamia, ACON, IGEA, RIDBC, Microsoft and Samsung.



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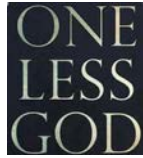
Co-Producer & Executive Producer

Nelson Lau is a filmmaker, doctor and photographer who has written and directed several short films and documentaries, including producing **Upside Down**. He met Liam Worthington while they were studying together at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) together.

Since joining New Realms Films, Nelson has worked together with Liam as a co-writer and co-director on several feature film projects, winning second place in the national Australian Director's Guild

pitching contest with their film **Riot-eous**, inspired by the explosive Cronulla Race riots in Sydney in 2005. Nelson created the story of **One Less God** with Liam almost eight years ago after they were both rocked by the tragedy of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. His vision is to create compelling hard-hitting drama tackling controversial themes that are relevant for the global market.

Nelson is executive producer and co-producer on the feature **One Less God**, recently winning the **Industry Choice Award** and the **Grand Jury Award** at *Dances With Films*. His behind-the-scenes photos from the filming of **One Less God** was exhibited in Sydney's 2015 HeadOn Photo festival. He is also currently involved in the development of films in VR.



ABOUT NEW REALMS FILMS

New Realms Films is an independent film production company founded on the Central Coast of New South Wales Australia.

Formed in 2004 by Greg Buchanan, an experienced business executive, and Liam Worthington, an emerging film director with a strong background in theatre and performance, New Realms holds the firm belief that there is a great wealth of untapped as well as existing talent within Australia.

New Realms Films are determined to find, support, and marry that talent with local and international partners in order to both help nurture the future of the Australian industry, and produce powerful, relevant and compelling cinema that can genuinely compete on the global stage.

We care about our audience. We care about story. We care about people and relationships. The journey matters to us ... yet so does the destination.

We are keenly focused on quality over quantity, substance over perception.

We are very proud to have produced our award-winning first feature film **One Less God** through to post production and are excited by the future projects and opportunities that lie ahead.

