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# GOLDEN KINGDOM

A FILM BY BRIAN PERKINS



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# GOLDEN KINGDOM

A FILM BY BRIAN PERKINS

DCP • 4K • 2015 • USA • 103MN • COLOR • DRAMA

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: BURMESE  
SUBTITLES : ENGLISH, FRENCH



EYE ON FILMS





# THE STORY

With their monastery nestled in the jungle mountains of Myanmar, life cycles peacefully for four young Buddhist monks. One day the head abbot, Sayadaw, learns he must depart on a journey through the mountain pass--a journey that may never see his return.

Alone and exposed, the four young boys, led by the courageous 'Witazara', must now fend for themselves. Strange days filled with

ghostly phenomena and jarring events shake the boys to the core, dramatically influencing their understanding of this world and beyond, as Witazara must choose whether to follow the master into the pass.

Shot entirely in newly-opened Myanmar with non-actors, the film bridges spirit, cinema, and traditional Burmese storytelling to open a view onto an unseen world.



# BACKGROUND

After a military coup in 1962, the country of Burma, then Southeast Asia's wealthiest, a glittering jewel of sophistication and treasure, became synonymous with corruption, poverty, repression and violence. Only within the past three years have the first political and economic reforms begun, at times fitfully.

Throughout these decades of turmoil, the Buddhist monks have remained a prominent feature in society. The monasteries serve a vital function in a society that has seen over 50 years of

continuous civil war and military misrule, often taking in children who have been orphaned by disease, natural disaster, or war. Filmed on location in the Shan State of Burma, Golden Kingdom is the first international feature film shot in Burma, also known as Myanmar, since its recent opening to the outside world.

The film not only tells a remarkable story, but also gives audiences a gripping view onto life in a land that is transforming by the moment.



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The origins of **GOLDEN KINGDOM** date from my first contact with the Swel Tal monastery in Myanmar. Encountering the young boys there—often orphans—living as monks, I was overwhelmed. I had never met anyone with such radically opened hearts. And these were children, living largely self-sufficient amongst each other (yet still up to the tricks of children), with no possessions, no family present. All against the compelling backdrop of a nation in radical transformation, convulsion, and often violent self-discovery.

The story at the root of **GOLDEN KINGDOM** came to me. I shepherded that idea, and the characters of the boys, as I waded further into the

Pali Buddhist scriptures and a dense web of local folkloric tales to give body and form to the story of these boys left alone: the distinct poetics and formal possibilities of cinema perfectly suited this story and meditative experience. I needed to honor the structure and form of their lives, spirit, and Buddhist traditions, and I found in film a willing partner.

These characters are young children, yes. But some even doing the hard spiritual work required for true freedom-in-the-world. And this amid violence, disorder, upheaval and loss. The seeming contradiction—a common one in modern Myanmar—obsessed me and lit my way.



# BRIAN PERKINS



American filmmaker Brian Perkins has traveled extensively through the remote parts of Asia and India. After creating a network of relationships in the monasteries and villages of Myanmar – picking up conversational Burmese along the way – he was in a unique position to bring GOLDEN KINGDOM to audiences.

While a graduate student at UC-Berkeley, Brian received the Eisner Prize in Film and Video, and was recipient of numerous acknowledgments during his studies at New York University.

Born in 1980 in Portland, Oregon, USA, Brian currently lives in Berlin and Asia.

Golden Kingdom is Brian's debut feature film.



# TEAM

## DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY – BELLA HALBEN

Bella Halben is a feature film director of photography living in Hamburg, Germany, often working with such directors as Oscar-winner Caroline Link and award-winning filmmaker Hans Steinbichler. Some selected feature films as DoP include: BAADER (2001), HIERANKL (2002), IM WINTER EIN JAHR (2007), DAS BLAUE VOM HIMMEL (2011) and EXIT MARRAKESH (2013).

## PRODUCER / 1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – MATT O'CONNOR

Matt O'Connor's credits range from Kelly Reichardt's award-winning MEEK'S CUTOFF (2010), to David Sedaris' C.O.G. (2013) as 1st Assistant Director, as well as producer on many projects.

## SOUND DESIGN AND EDITORIAL AND MUSIC – DAVID C. HUGHES

Veteran sound designer David C. Hughes has worked on dozens of projects, and is a longtime collaborator of David Fincher. Some credits include: GONE GIRL (2014), HER (2014), MINORITY REPORT (2002), and FIGHT CLUB (1999). David's work has gained numerous Academy Award nominations and MPSE Golden Reel Sound Effects wins along the way.

## EDITOR – SEBASTIAN BONDE

German editor Sebastian Bonde has cut numerous films, including collaborating with director Christian Alvart on PANDORUM (2008) and the feature film BANKLADY (2014). Sebastian also has served as editing mentor for Tom Tykwer's training initiative in Nairobi, Kenya, One Fine Day Films.

## PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER – ALEX ALTMAN

Washington native Alex Altman has worked as a production sound mixer with acclaimed director Harmony Korine on his last two films, SPRING BREAKERS (2013) and TRASH HUMPER (2009), and has also toured around the world for projects as varied as National Geographic and Taylor Swift's tour documentary.

## VFX SUPERVISOR – MILES LAURIDSEN

Currently residing in Vancouver, BC, Miles works as a Senior Compositor for such companies as Image Engine and MPC. With credits ranging from TRON: LEGACY to the forthcoming Neill Blomkamp film CHAPPIE, Miles helps create the magical world that the young boys inhabit in GOLDEN KINGDOM.





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