

QUINZAINÉ  
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT  
CANNES 2017

*marlina*  
*the murderer in four acts*  
*a film by Mouly SURYA*

An Icarus Films and KimStim Release

93 minutes / Indonesia - France - Malaysia - Thailand / Copyright 2017 / Release 2018 / Fiction / Color  
In Indonesian, with dialect from Sumba, with English subtitles / DCP / 24 fps / 2.39.1 / 5.1

DOWNLOAD PUBLICITY MATERIAL

<http://bit.ly/IcarusFilmsPRESS>  
<http://www.kimstim.com/marlina.html>

CONTACT

Mika Kimoto, KimStim \_ [mika@kimstim.com](mailto:mika@kimstim.com)  
Livia Bloom Ingram, Icarus Films \_ [livia@icarusfilms.com](mailto:livia@icarusfilms.com)



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# Synopsis

In the deserted hills of an Indonesian island, Marlina, a young widow, is attacked and robbed of all her livestock by a gang of seven bandits. She then defends herself, setting out on a journey to find justice, empowerment, retribution and redemption. But the road is long, especially when she begins to be haunted by the ghost of her victim. A stunning Scope western set to a Morricone-inspired score, this unique tale of female cinematic revenge takes no prisoners.



# About the Director

Mouly Surya was born in Jakarta, Indonesia, where she currently lives. Considered one of Indonesia's most gifted filmmakers, Surya premiered her award-winning debut, *Fiksi* (2008), at the Busan International Film Festival. Her second feature *What They Don't Talk About When They Talk About Love* (2013) was the first-ever Indonesian film to premiere at Sundance, and went on to many festivals including Karlovy Vary and Rotterdam, where it received the NETPAC Award. In addition to making films, she also teaches directing. *Marlina* (2017) is her third film.



## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MOULY SURYA

### **Where does the character of Marlina come from?**

I was in a jury in 2014 for the Citra awards (The Indonesian Oscars) along with Garin Nugroho, arguably the most prominent director, filmmaker in Indonesia. We had a chat and he said that we should make a film together. He had a story that he would love a woman to direct. He told me the basic premise about a time when he was in Sumba Island, and said "I can't imagine how you are going to visualize this story and I find that interesting." I was intrigued. So he sent a five page treatment the next day titled "The Woman."

My producers and partners, Rama Adi and Fauzan Zidni, fell in love with this story and decided to produce it immediately.

Garin gave me complete freedom to develop the story and told me how much he was impressed with the image of women in Sumba. I didn't know what he meant at that time, so we went on a journey to Sumba: I guess Marlina, her image of mystery, sensuality and persistence, came from all these images of women and impressions I got.

### **How did you cast your actors, especially Marlina?**

My producer and co-writer, Rama Adi, had mentioned Marsha Timothy's name for Marlina even before the script was done, and I was flirting with the idea. She has been in the industry for quite a while and I had worked with her when I was still an assistant director. We met up, she recently had a daughter and she was quite a different Marsha from the one I'd known 10 years ago. She has always been a very intelligent actress, one that has a 'tragic character' aura that fits Marlina perfectly. And she has developed a certain maturity through the years. But the most important thing was that she wanted to play Marlina so much. And she understood that THAT was her audition. I didn't ask her to say any lines, but just to show me how much she wanted the part.

For the part of Markus, I worked with the veteran actor Egi Fedly on my first film and was evident from the very start.

Yoga Pratama as Franz was a recommendation from our casting director. We had a chat and we called him again the next day to confirm that we wanted him for this part.

The only traditional audition that we did was with Dea Panendra. She has had only small parts in films but is an Indonesian Idol and has acted in musicals before. I liked her from her first audition and guided her through rehearsal. But on the set, she really exceeds all expectations.

**Tell us about the Sumba Island, where you shot? The location is amazing.**

Sumba is an unusual island between the thousands that make up Indonesia. This island has a very peculiar look. Most of Indonesia is full of greenery, but Sumba Island is very dry, a little Texas-like. It is a part of the poorest province of Indonesia, the kind of place in which our modern society can't believe some of the things that happened and are still happening. People carry around sabers as weapons, and a group of robbers can knock on your home in the middle of the countryside, letting you know that they are going to rob you and there is nothing you can do to stop it. You just let them or they will kill you.

But, it is also a place of natural beauty where you can still see centuries of culture and beliefs on its soil and heart.



**In Indonesia, religion holds a central place yet the film seems to speak more of spirituality and beliefs. Is this typical in Sumba Island?**

In general, I've always viewed Indonesia as more spiritual than religious. The way we approached religion is like that as well. It is something that has been there in our culture for the longest time, a lot of it was embedded in our religious ways in bigger cities.

But spirituality in isolated areas has a much purer form, such as the case in Sumba island.

It is a megalithic society, with a strong belief in ancestors, a place where traditional belief defies all logic and the living live alongsidethe dead. They have megalithic burials that cost so much that they usually keep the bodies of dead relatives in the house for months, years, even decades

as they gather money for a proper funeral. Most of the population practices animist Merapu religion. I met a king where we were going to shoot, who would have animal's intestines and hearts read to see the future.

Asking why they do certain things will lead to this one and only answer, "This is what the ancestors do or say." No more questions asked.

### **Marlina is a feminist heroine, struggling to survive, for her independence and her integrity. Is she inspired by the Sumba women?**

I met with several of them. One was Novi, a Catholic priest's helper who was very soft spoken. Another one, who was very educated, came with her children and husband. But her husband keep interrupting her wanting to be the one to give us his perceptions as he carried their baby in his arms. We went to a traditional village and men kept staring at me in a very carnal way and made me very uncomfortable. We also met the village's queen, a very respected widow. She didn't say or smile much but had an air of royalty as she chews her beetle leaves. Then there was this news about a local teacher, named Marlina, who created a scandal with her video dancing disco in her office. It was uploaded to YouTube and she had arguments with reporters who condemned her.

### **What is the place of women in Indonesian society today?**

Indonesia has various cultures. There is one where the woman is the family breadwinner. In big cities lots of women are already very independent: it depends on the person, regardless of culture or religion. We now have a lot of strong women figures in Indonesia, in government, in politics, in history, and a lot of women working as well. The economy is still growing and families may need double incomes to survive. But in others, like in Sumba, a woman's place is the kitchen, from where she should enter and exit the house.

### **There are more elements of a western than of a thriller. Was that a choice from the beginning?**

I had been flirting with the idea of a Western since the first Google Images I'd seen of Sumba Island. I am not much of a Western genre fan: the only reference that came to my mind is Jim Jarmusch's "Dead Man", I saw in a cinema studies class in college. I recalled a black and white Western where they named a Native-American character 'Nobody'. I didn't watch Western particularly for MARLINA. I just had an idea of several elements that I wanted to use in the film, to make my own impression of a Western. It is how I made myself relate to this society, as someone who was born and raised in a metropolitan city such as Jakarta. Also, I wanted to make Garin Nugroho's story mine.

### **How did you work with the Director of Photography regarding colours, light and angles?**

I've worked with Yunus Pasolang, my DoP on my three films, so we know each other quite well : we fought a lot on my first film, didn't fight at all on my second film and kind of had a balance on my third film. I told him from the start that the film would have almost no camera movement at all. And later on the set we decided to have no camera movement at all, as we felt the panning we planned was not necessary. We looked at Caravaggio paintings for lighting ideas, on Judith beheading Holofernes for staging ideas, and baroque paintings for color reference.

What is interesting is how we complete each other. His frames inspired me, and my staging inspired him. It was quite a profound teamwork that we had.

### **Was the shoot difficult?**

MARLINA was the most challenging shoot I to date, as it was my first time shooting outside of my hometown Jakarta. It was also my first time working with VFX and overall it was a bigger scale film, with higher expectations. We had 17 days of shooting and about a month including the travelling. But we had 3 months of preparation.

**The music is at the heart of the film, who is the composer and how did you work with him?**

As with my cinematographer, I worked with Zeke Khaseli and Yudhi Arfani on my three films. The music has been composed especially for the film. I requested them to do a score reflecting the Western genre.

But I decided from the start that the music shouldn't repeat what was happening on screen. I needed the music to set the tone of the film, giving the scene certain contexts.

Zeke and Yudhi created a couple of samples that Rama Adi, my producer, and I would choose from together. Then they created the rest accordingly. We knew their great potential and we pushed them to outdo themselves from our previous films. After a couple of tries they sent a new version of the opening score that we loved so much. And then the fire scene's score totally blew me away. It really escalates the film to another level.

**This is your third film. Was the Atelier de la Cinéfondation important for this project?**

Yes, it was a very important step. We had meetings with a lot of French and European producers, giving us their insights on this film. One even gave me the reference of Judith beheading Holofernes, which I end up using as one of my visual references. It is always insightful to hear about what people think about our project. It is very important to get an objective point of view, to see it from another perspective especially ones who are not at all familiar with what we are familiar with in our country.

It is also when we decided to work with Isabelle Glachant, our French co-producer. We had known her for a while but in the Atelier we discussed the possibility of working together and we found that Isabelle had certain views that we liked about the production of the film and, I believe, vice versa.

**Are there many women directors in Indonesia?**

There are quite a few women directors in Indonesia that have successful careers. Although in recent years we haven't had more than one or two young and upcoming female directors. There was a rise about a decade ago. And now, we are again, a rare breed.

I used to teach in a film school and mostly the problem for female directors isn't that the industry is sexist (sometimes it is, it depends on people) but that a lot of women are lacking confidence. As a woman in Indonesia usually you don't get to be independent from your parents until the day you are married. So, on a film set, telling everybody (most of the crew are older men) what to do, doesn't come very natural at first. At least for me and from what I've seen.

**Indonesian cinema is mostly known for action/genres films (The Raid, Chasing the devil...). How is the situation of indie cinema in Indonesia now?**

Our industry is very young; we are a young country after all. We also have very limited human resources.

Most commercially successful films in Indonesia are very light and often genre films such as comedies, horror movies and love stories. Love stories usually take a very religious view and background. The most successful films are actually films tailored by Indonesian morals and ways of thinking.

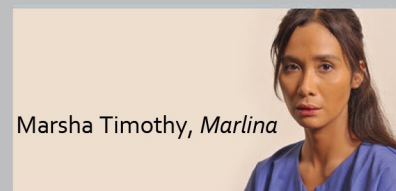
Since we don't have distributors in Indonesia, filmmakers basically have to go themselves directly to exhibitors. So in a way all films are independent. The art-house films which find their way to the big screen, next door to big budget Hollywood films, have little to no success.

We still have very few cinemas, definitely nowhere near enough for 250 million people in our country. But it is growing. There is a great energy from young filmmakers in Indonesia; talents are being born from other cities aside from Jakarta and bringing in new voices to be heard. So it is exciting to see something is beginning.

# Cast

Marsha TIMOTHY  
Dea PANENDRA  
Egi FEDLY  
Yoga PRATAMA  
Rita Matu MONA  
Yayu UNRU  
Anggun PRIAMBODO  
Ayez KASSAR  
Safira AHMAD  
Indra BIROWO  
Ozzol RAMDAN  
Haydar SALISHZ  
Norman R. AKYUWEN

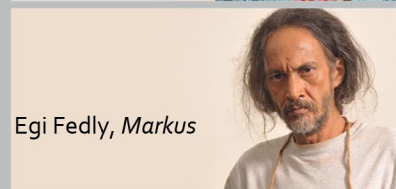
as Marlina  
as Novi  
as Markus  
as Franz  
as Yohana  
as Raja  
as Ian  
as Paulus  
as Topan  
as Umbu  
as Roni  
as Niko  
as Bing



Marsha Timothy, *Marlina*



Dea Panendra, *Novi*



Egi Fedly, *Markus*



Yoga Pratama, *Franz*

# Crew

Scénario/ *Script*  
D'après une histoire de/ *Story by*  
Directeur de la photographie/ *DoP*  
Montage/ *Editing*  
Musique/ *Music*  
Directeur artistique/ *Art Director*  
Maquillage/ *Make Up*  
Costume/ *Costume*  
Son/ *Sound Design*  
Effets visuels/ *Visual Effects*  
Casting/ *Casting*  
Directrice de production/ *Line Producer*  
Productrice artistique/ *Creative Producer*  
Producteurs associés/ *Associate Producers*  
Producteurs exécutifs/ *Executive Producers*  
  
Co-Productrice/ *Co-Producer*  
Produit par/ *Produced by*  
Production/ *Production*

Mouly SURYA, Rama ADI  
Garin NUGROHO  
Yunus PASOLANG  
Kelvin NUGROHO  
Zeke KHASELI, Yudhi ARFANI  
Frans PAAT  
Didin SYAMSUDIN  
Meutia PUDJOWARSITO  
Khikmawan SANTOSA  
Danny S. KIM, Teguh RAHARJO  
Sapto SOETARJO  
Gita FARA  
Maria RUGGIERI  
Giovanni RAHMADEVA, Tutut KOLOPAKING  
Willawati, Najwa ABU BAKAR,  
Peter BITHOS, Rama ADI  
Isabelle GLACHANT  
Rama ADI, Fauzan ZIDNI  
Cinesurya, Kaninga Pictures, Shasha & Co  
Production,  
Astro Shaw, Hooq Originals, Purin Pictures

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Du Cinéma Et De L'image Animée -  
INSTITUT FRANÇAIS - NEXT MASTERS  
SUPPORT PROGRAM  
Asian Shadows

# Technical Details

Film title	<i>Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts</i>
Original title	<i>Marlina si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak</i>
A film by	Mouly SURYA
Running time	93 minutes
Country of production	Indonesia / France / Malaysia / Thailand
Year of production	2017
Year of release	2018
Image	Color, DCP, 24 fps, 2.39.1
Sound	5.1

# Selected Festivals

Cannes International Film Festival	Toronto International Film Festival
Neuchatel International Fantastic Film Festival	New Horizons Film Festival of Poland
Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival	Palm Springs Film Festival
AFI Fest	Philadelphia Film Festival
San Diego Asian Film Festival	First Look, Museum of the Moving Image
Portland International Film Festival	Cleveland International Film Festival
Florida Film Festival	Seattle International Film Festival

# In the Press

**"Austere yet stylish... A starkly told tale of a determined and strong female character who is mad as hell and is not going to take it anymore... THE BOTTOM LINE: KICKS ASS."**  
—Boyd van Hoeij, The Hollywood Reporter

**"AT ONCE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED AND SIMMERING WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY, [Marlina] is a gorgeously lensed, atmospherically scored and moves inexorably toward a gratifying payoff... A revenge fantasy rooted in Indonesia's gender conditions, complex regional culture and the stark beauty of its landscapes... At the age of 36, Indonesian director-writer Mouly Surya has made the first Satay Western."**  
—Maggie Lee, Variety

**"THE FEMINIST WESTERN YOU NEED TO SEE... Satisfyingly deadpan, viciously vengeful and full of surprises... one of the most ravishingly beautiful films at Cannes."**  
—Tara Brady, The Irish Times

Downloadable publicity material

<http://bit.ly/IcarusFilmsPRESS>  
<http://www.kimstim.com/marlina.html>

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