



A FILM TO HONOR

Erik Matti and John Lloyd Cruz teamed up in 2015's most controversial film *Honor Thy Father*—the film which helped break the barriers between mainstream

and indie audiences in the country, sparked intellectual discussions on social issues, and brought to light the radical changes needed to raise the quality of films being offered to Filipinos

BY MICHELLE ANGELA OROSA CARAG
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After helming successful thought-provoking films the likes of *Prosti* (an explicit look into the world of sex trade) and *On the Job* (a social commentary on police corruption)—Erik Matti, one of the Philippines' most celebrated and notable directors, has once again pushed the boundaries of filmmaking with *Honor Thy Father*.

The movie follows the tale of married

couple Kaye (Meryll Soriano) and Edgar (John Lloyd Cruz) who, after years of financial struggle, have finally struck gold after getting involved in a Ponzi scheme. This illegal scam, promulgated by Kaye's father, works by making payments to old investors using money contributed by new investors. Victims are trapped by the promise of very high returns in a short amount of time. Kaye promoted the scheme to her friends and fellow Pentecostal parishioners at the Church of Yeshua.

When Kaye's father turns up dead and the money disappears, the couple

endure the violent wrath of their fellow parishioners who are bent on getting their money back one way or another.

Honor Thy Father proves to be symbolic for John Lloyd's evolution in the showbiz industry, and his move to break away from the typical 'leading man' role.

Best known for his romantic comedy blockbusters, the *Kapamilya* star decided to defy all odds—and possible controversies—by making a radical move: when he shaved his head for the movie.

In an interview with *Inquirer's*

entertainment columnist Dolly Anne Carvajal, John Lloyd explained his decision to break away from mainstream norms of Filipino filmmaking: "My world has grown bigger. I am not just confined to my home network, ABS-CBN. I want to break away from my usual roles. I refuse to be typecast."

Honor Thy Father marks John Lloyd's first collaboration with Direk Erik, who proudly shared in an interview with *Manila Bulletin* how the actor, who also co-produced the movie, showed so much dedication during production.

"Sobra sa laki ng commitment na ibinigay niya sa movie. Sa sobrang daming ginawa niyang hirap: hindi

skilled direction and the tightly wound performance by Cruz, whose Edgar—disgusted by the greed and hypocrisy he encounters—seems always on the verge of exploding."

Meanwhile, Harry Windsor of *The Hollywood Reporter* described *Honor Thy Father* as "a flinty portrait of inequality and vigilante justice in the modern Philippines."

Windsor also lauded the movie for shedding light on the truth about poverty, family and the church.

In an interview with *The Philippine Reporter*, John Lloyd gushed over the latest milestone in his showbiz career, expressing, "This particular film means

a lot to me. This is my venture to the kinds of films I don't normally do back home. And I am happy, I'm very happy *na si Direk Erik 'yung unang nakatrabaho ko*. Kasi he's very collaborative, and very open, so I have to admit, *nu'ng una, mahirap*, because *para kang naka-blindfold*. And to be

honest, it was a risk. It was a big, big risk for me. And now that I'm here and part 'yung film *namin dito sa TIFF*, it means the world."

He also added that *Honor Thy Father* opened a lot of doors for him, and that he is at the stage in his career where he is "all about collaboration, meeting new directors, meeting new writers. So far so good, I'm enjoying it." ★

mo pa siyang nakitang pumasok sa kweba, gumapang sa kung anu-ano ang pinaggagawa niya, binugbog siya. Sa hirap ng ginawa niya and he pulled it off, he committed fully to it, solved *na ako*. And to think a lot of the things that we did, *bago talaga sa kanya* because first time *niya* to go out and do an independently-produced commercial film."

Honor Thy Father went on to gain international exposure when it had its world premiere in Toronto, Canada, back in September last year. It was screened in the Contemporary World Cinema section of the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

The film's international screening proved to be a success as it earned raves from movie critics, including TIFF's very own Steve Gravestock, who described *Honor Thy Father* as "a suspenseful story of betrayal and retribution, a drama about familial reconciliation, and a commentary on the tenuous nature of newfound wealth."

He also sang praises for Direk Erik and John Lloyd, and wrote, "Holding everything together are Matti's fluid,

John Lloyd with child actress Krystal Brimmer, who won the Best Child Performer award. *Honor Thy Father*—in which she played John Lloyd and Meryll's daughter Angel, was her first movie. She was first seen in the kiddie talent competition I-Shine Talent Camp 2 where she was one of the "singing I-Shiners".

