

KISS *OF
THE* ***CON QUEEN***

PRESS COVERAGE

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Thai film exposes alleged Hollywood 'Con Queen'

Fraud victims get revenge in 'true crime' saga



Eoin O'Brien as Ryan Owens in a scene from "Kiss of the Con Queen," which premieres on April 27 at the Sunscreen Film Festival in St. Petersburg, Florida. © De Warrenne Pictures

RON GLUCKMAN, Contributing writer

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BANGKOK -- Just like a Hollywood fantasy, the dream call came as a complete surprise to Irish actor Eoin O'Brien. On the phone was Deborah Snyder, co-producer of films such as "Man of Steel" (2013), "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" (2016)" and "Army of the Dead" (2021).

A martial arts expert mostly known for his fight scenes, O'Brien had performed in small parts in dozens of movies. But this was different, potentially his big break. "She said she'd seen me in 'The Last Full Measure,' and really liked me," he said. The 2019 film featured a host of stars including William Hurt, Samuel Jackson, Christopher Plummer and Peter Fonda.

More calls followed, with Snyder hinting at possible roles in upcoming films and talking of auditions in Hollywood. "It all sounded too good to be true," O'Brien said. "I never stopped to think, 'Is this real?'"

It was not. The calls were not from Hollywood, nor from Snyder. They were not even from a woman. Instead, said O'Brien, he was talking to Hargobind Punjabi Tahilramani, an alleged con artist with an adept gift for impersonations of Snyder, movie lawyers and other Hollywood bigwigs.

The audition in Tinseltown never happened. Instead, said O'Brien,

he was persuaded to fly to Indonesia, Tahilramani's home country, for fictitious screen tests and tricked into paying bogus film fees and other expenses with promises of reimbursement that never were never honored.



O'Brien in a scene depicting Owens doing commercials while dreaming of his big break. © De Warrenne Pictures

The crushing reality was confirmed by O'Brien's girlfriend in Bangkok. After he expressed doubts as expenses mounted in Indonesia, an internet search quickly led her to firsthand accounts about the "Con Queen of Hollywood" from scores of aspiring actors and film workers. "I was completely devastated," O'Brien said.

But O'Brien flipped the script on the con artist, transforming the costly sting into a golden opportunity. He wrote his sad story as a film script, which has become the latest movie from award-winning Thai Irish director Tom Waller.

"Kiss of the Con Queen" premieres on April 27 at the Sunscreen Film Festival in St. Petersburg, Florida. "It's a great story," said Tony Armer, co-founder of the festival. "We're really excited to show it. It's well-shot, well-acted, and it's incredible that the lead actor and writer was himself a victim. That gives it great authenticity."



On the set of "Kiss of the Con Queen" at Warren Studios in the U.S. city of Nashville. Other locations included Thailand, Indonesia and Ireland. © De Warrenne Pictures

This is not the first time Waller will appear at Sunscreen with a reality-based story from Asia with international appeal. He was the first director to release a film about the famous 2018 rescue of a soccer team of Thai boys trapped in a flooded cave.

Waller's "The Cave" came out in 2019, ahead of a major Hollywood production by Ron Howard as well as a National Geographic film, and it won the award for best international feature at the Sunscreen festival. "We are excited to have him back with another great film," Armer said.

Waller is pleased to be the first to film the true-crime saga. The story was covered widely, most notably by Scott Johnson of the Hollywood Reporter, who wrote a book, "The Con Queen of Hollywood: The Hunt for an Evil Genius," published in 2023. Apple TV+ recently announced that a three-part "Con Queen" documentary TV series will start streaming in May.

Waller's movie followed a tight schedule, filming in Indonesia, Thailand, Ireland and the U.S. Independent filmmakers always struggle for attention and financing, Waller said, yet they can be more adaptable. With budgets running to hundreds of millions of dollars -- "Dune: Part Two" (2024) cost \$190 million, and "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" (2015) more than double that -- blockbuster movies can take five years or more to make.



Top: Thai Irish director Tom Waller on the set of "Kiss of the Con Queen" with assistant director Touchapoom Nirunwongwan. Bottom: Popular rapper and Thai movie star Nay Myo Thant, also known as "Day Thaitanium," chases Ryan and another victim of the scam as they try to escape Jakarta. © De Warrenne Pictures

In contrast, "Kiss of the Con Queen" took two years to make and cost about \$2 million despite having such recognized actors as Patrick Bergin and the brilliant Ravi Patel in the lead role as the scam artist.

Waller had cast O'Brien in previous films, including "The Cave." "He came to me with this script he'd written, and told me the story, which I'd heard from another person who had been scammed. I was intrigued. It was a total page turner," Waller said.

Waller especially liked the story's fairy tale-like twist. "It was poetic justice to show a bit of comeuppance, of this con artist being taken down by a victim," he said. "Eoin really turned his nightmare into a dream scenario where he actually stars in a film, just like he was promised." O'Brien is also an executive producer of the film.

Not that it was easy for O'Brien to bring to the screen. The initial script was written within a month, he said. "It just poured out of



Ravi Patel, bottom center, as the wannabe food blogger, who becomes the master impersonator known as the "Con Queen of Hollywood." © De Warrenne Pictures

The fast-paced film largely tells O'Brien's actual story, although some details have been changed to improve the flow.

O'Brien, who boldly includes his own embarrassing phone-sex audition scene, said he learned in scriptwriting classes to hold nothing back, since the best stories are true. Other victims reported being coerced into risqué sex scenes over the phone, with Tahilramani, impersonating Snyder, offering seductive encouragement along with telephoned kisses.

Tahilramani, who is in prison in the U.K. after being arrested in 2020, is portrayed in the film as a demented genius with kinky desires. He is contesting extradition to the U.S., where he faces charges of wire fraud and identity theft.

There is an undeniable cathartic quality to the film, which also features another victim of the scam, Mike Swick, who runs a gym in Phuket and appeared in the 2010 martial arts film "Beatdown." In 2016, he was lured to Indonesia, where he was fleeced of \$25,000.



Top: O'Brien as Ryan and Mike Swick as best buddy Jay, sparring in Bangkok before getting the call from "Hollywood." Bottom: The late veteran actor Yuyu Unru as local Indonesian driver Toni, who turns on Ryan as he grows suspicious and confrontational during Ryan's con tour in Jakarta. © De Warrenne Pictures

"I made it my life goal to find this guy," Swick said. The film details how the Con Queen was tracked through travel agencies, leading to his arrest. Much of that was due to Swick's investigation, although the search was initially frustrated by Tahilramani's alleged presentation of himself as female. Swick passed his documents to a group of other victims, and his paper trail was eventually instrumental in the arrest of Tahilramani.

"It's great that they got this guy. He's scum of the earth," said Swick, who appears in the film. Like O'Brien and others, he is astonished at how much creativity and effort went into the scam.

Waller said victims were scattered around the world, but many lived in Thailand. "It is close, and easy to get people to fly to Indonesia." Thailand also has a sizable film industry, and the new third season of the hit TV show "The White Lotus" was filmed there.

"Kiss of the Con Queen" stands out not only for being the first film to portray this "true crime" story, but also for turning tragedy into triumph for its victims.

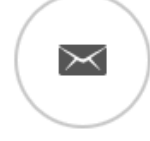


Got A Tip?

‘Kiss Of The Con Queen:’ First Look At Ravi Patel In True Crime Thriller Inspired By Alleged Notorious Hollywood Scammer – Filmart

By [Zac Ntim](#)

March 11, 2024 9:29pm



Ravi Patel in 'Kiss Of The Con Queen.'
De Warrenne Pictures.

EXCLUSIVE: Here’s your first look at actor Ravi Patel (*Wonder Woman 1984*, *Animal Patrol*) suited up in *Kiss Of The Con Queen*, the true crime thriller inspired by the life of accused fraudster Hargobind Tahilramani dubbed the “con queen of Hollywood” after allegedly impersonating movie executives in an elaborate and high profile fraud scheme.

Directed by Tom Waller (*The Cave*, *The Last Executioner*), the pic follows the story of an actor based in Bangkok, Thailand, who is led to believe that a powerful female Hollywood studio executive wants to consider him for a leading role in an upcoming DC Origins show, and is lured to Jakarta, Indonesia for an audition, only to find out that the whole thing is an elaborate scam when he is forced to front thousands of dollars in cash for flights and permits, on the promise of being reimbursed by the studio. However, after uniting with other victims and identifying the true identity of the criminal mastermind behind the long-running scam, the actor ends up conning the Con Queen into giving him exactly what he wants – the breakthrough role he was falsely promised.

Production on the pic took place last year in Jakarta, Bangkok, Dublin, and Nashville under a SAG-AFTRA Basic Agreement just before the strike. The film is a multi-territory co-production between Thailand (Tero Entertainment PCL), Japan (Yaman Films), Cambodia (Westec Media), the US (Hawkins FilmWorks), and Ireland (De Warrenne Pictures). Producers are Waller, Michael Pritchett (The Last Executioner), and Takahiro Yamashita (December, Gensan Punch).

De Warrenne Pictures is set to host a screening in Los Angeles for alleged victims of Tahilramani's scam before a world premiere in Florida next month.

“Over 300 innocent victims in the film industry were targeted over the course of 7 years before the suspect was finally caught, so this wild story is a must-see cautionary tale,” said Waller.

De Warrenne is a two-part outfit. Part of the company, based in Thailand, is best known for handling production services on international film shoots like the Jason Statham-starrer *Mechanic: Resurrection* in Asia. The company is also responsible for local productions like *The Cave*, a narrative feature about the Thai Cave Rescue. The other half, based in Ireland, is a straight production company.

Also starring in *Kiss Of The Con Queen* are Patrick Bergin, Eoin O'Brien, and popular Indonesian actor Yuyu A.W. Unru (*The Last of Us*) who died in December. The pic is one of his last performances.

Hargobind Tahilramani, the real-life “con queen of Hollywood,” last appeared in a UK court in June 2023 when it was ruled the 43-year-old could be extradited to face charges in the US. Tahilramani is accused of conning more than 300 victims, including actors and screenwriters out of more than one million dollars during a multi-year scheme.

Authorities arrested Tahilramani in late November 2020 in Manchester, northern England. Since then, he's been held at a prison in London. He is accused of impersonating several prominent Hollywood figures, including producer Megan Ellison and executive Amy Pascal in phone calls, emails, and text messages. Prosecutors say Tahilramani, an Indonesian native, would convince US industry professionals to travel to Indonesia at their own expense for non-existent projects before charging them a raft of fees and expenses, which were never repaid.

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Irish actor tells how he was scammed into 'performing simulated sex acts' by 'Con Queen of Hollywood'

DUBLINER Eoin O'Brien, 45, said he was left 15,000 dollars (€14,000) out of pocket by the alleged mastermind of a 1.0 million US dollar (€930,000) scam against more than 300 victims between 2013 and 2020.

NEWS By Henry Vaughan
15:30, 8 JUN 2023

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A scene from Tom Waller's "Kiss of the Con Queen" currently in production showing Irish actor Eoin O'Brien.

An Irish actor has told how he was "coerced into performing simulated sex acts" in a fake Skype audition by the "con queen of Hollywood" - who was posing as a female film producer.

Hargobind Tahilramani, 43, is facing extradition to the US accused of being the mastermind of a 1.0 million US dollar (€930,000) scam against more than 300 victims between 2013 and 2020.

He is said to have used fake accents and altered his voice to sound like female film executives to fool industry professionals, including actors, screenwriters and photographers.

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Actor and writer Eoin O'Brien, 45, said he was left 15,000 dollars (€14,000) out of pocket after he was contacted by someone posing as Hollywood producer Deborah Snyder - who is known for working with her director husband Zack Snyder on films including 300 and Watchmen.

Convinced he was in the running for a "breakthrough role" in a DC Justice League film, Mr O'Brien, who is from Dublin, said he was pressured to "go all out" in a one-way video audition.

"I was coerced into performing simulated sex acts over Skype by the con queen in the guise of an audition," he said. "When I discovered it wasn't who he claimed and also a male I felt violated."

Mr O'Brien flew to Jakarta at his own expense having been promised a 5,000 dollar fee before handing over thousands of dollars for "shooting permits", which he was assured would be reimbursed.

But after four days of being driven to remote locations, Bangkok-based Mr O'Brien realised he had been scammed and fled Indonesia in the middle of the night.

He has now written an upcoming film, Kiss Of The Con Queen, based on his experience, which is currently in production. Directed by Tom Waller, Mr O'Brien stars alongside Sleeping With the Enemy star Patrick Bergin and Ravi Patel as the con queen.





📺 A scene from Tom Waller's "Kiss of the Con Queen" currently in production showing Irish actor Eoin O'Brien. The actor has told how he was "coerced into performing simulated sex acts" in a fake Skype audition by the "con queen of Hollywood" - who was posing as a female film producer. Hargobind Tahilramani, 43, is facing extradition to the US accused of being the mastermind of a 1.0 million US dollar (£800,000) scam against more than 300 victims between 2013 and 2020. Issue date: Thursday December 8, 2022. PA Photo. See PA story COURTS Entertainment. Photo credit should read: De Warrenne Pictures/PA Wire NOTE TO EDITORS: This handout photo may only be used in for editorial reporting purposes for the contemporaneous illustration of events, things or the people in the image or facts mentioned in the caption. Reuse of the picture may require further permission from the copyright holder.

"This guy would just crush people for fun and sexually harass people, including myself, for his personal gratification," said Mr O'Brien.

"Posing as a female Hollywood producer, the con queen used my dreams as bait, defrauded me of thousands, coerced me into simulated sex acts over Skype in the guise of an audition, and got me to sign an NDA (non-disclosure agreement).

"Ironically, by overcoming this experience I've earned what he used as bait - my dream of playing a lead role in a big film."

Tahilramani was arrested following an FBI investigation in November 2020 in a £60-a-night Aparthotel, in Manchester, where he had allegedly claimed to be a "writer for Netflix" and said he needed 10 rooms because he was working for The Bourne Identity director Doug Liman.

He faces an eight-count indictment in California including conspiracy to commit wire fraud, two counts of wire fraud, which each carry a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment, and five counts of aggravated identity theft, carrying a maximum penalty of two years each.



📺 A scene from "Kiss of the Con Queen" showing the foodie fashion shoot scene with Ravi Patel (centre) as the Con Queen.

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Actor tells how he was scammed by ‘con queen of Hollywood’

Eoin O’Brien said he was left £12,000 out of pocket after being tricked by Hargobind Tahilramani who is facing extradition to the US.



An extradition hearing into Hargobind Tahilramani was heard at Westminster Magistrates' Court (Alamy/PA)

By [Henry Vaughan](#) |

Trending

An actor has told how he was “coerced into performing simulated sex acts” in a fake Skype audition by the “con queen of Hollywood” – who was posing as a female film producer.

Hargobind Tahilramani, 43, is facing extradition to the US accused of being the mastermind of a 1.0 million US dollar (£800,000) scam against more than 300 victims between 2013 and 2020.

He is said to have used fake accents and altered his voice to sound like female film executives to fool industry professionals, including actors, screenwriters and photographers.

Actor and writer Eoin O’Brien, 45, told the PA news agency he was left 15,000 dollars (£12,000) out of pocket after he was contacted by someone posing as Hollywood producer Deborah Snyder – who is known for working with her director husband Zack Snyder on films including 300 and Watchmen.

“I was coerced into performing simulated sex acts over Skype by the con queen in the guise of an audition. When I discovered it wasn’t who he claimed and also a male I felt violated”

Patrick Bergin, Francis Magee Join Cast of Tom Waller's 'Kiss of the Con Queen'

By Patrick Frater ▾



Irish screen legend and BAFTA-award winner [Patrick Bergin](#) ("Sleeping With the Enemy," "Patriot Games") and Francis Magee ("Kin") have joined true-crime thriller, "[Kiss of the Con Queen](#)," being directed by [Tom Waller](#) ("The Last Executioner," "The Cave").

The pair join real-life victim Eoin O'Brien ("The Last Full Measure") who plays an actor duped by an impersonator into traveling to Indonesia on the promise of auditions for a leading role in a DC origins series. There he discovers that he had been scammed by the infamous Con Queen of Hollywood. [Ravi Patel](#) ("Transformers," "Meet the Patels") plays the fraudster.

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Rosario Dawson, Sam Adegoke Join Cast of Talia Lugacy's 'Dark Days & the Dawn' (EXCLUSIVE)

In the real world, the alleged perpetrator, 41-year-old Indonesian food blogger Hargobind Tahilramani, is accused of pretending to be both male and female Hollywood executives and having swindled hundreds of victims of millions of dollars. He was arrested in 2020 after an FBI manhunt and is currently in prison in the U.K. where he is fighting against possible extradition to the U.S. The U.K. court hearings have been dramatic and disturbing.

The alleged scams saw victims lured to Jakarta by an imposter posing as Hollywood executives, such as Kathleen Kennedy, Deborah Snyder and Amy Pascal, to screen test for roles in upcoming movie projects. Once they were in the city, Tahilramani is said to have used local accomplices to help persuade victims into paying for fake filming permits and other expenses, on the promise of reimbursement by the Hollywood studios.

Production of "Kiss of the Con Queen" in Ireland was completed in recent days. Other segments were filmed in Thailand, Indonesia, Japan and the U.S.

Ravi Patel to star in Thai crime thriller 'Kiss Of The Con Queen'

BY MICHAEL ROSSER | 3 NOVEMBER 2022



SOURCE: STORM SANTOS / DE WARRENNE PICTURES

RAVI PATEL, TOM WALLER

Ravi Patel is to play a mastermind impersonator in *Kiss Of The Con Queen*, a true crime thriller from Thai-UK director Tom Waller.

The casting was announced at the American Film Market (AFM), where the project is being sold by Bangkok-based production company, sales agent and distributor De Warrenne Pictures.

The film is inspired by the experiences of Irish actor Eoin O'Brien who was scammed by Hargobind Tahilramani, an Indonesian food blogger who was arrested in December 2020 following an FBI investigation that uncovered hundreds of cases of alleged fraud and identity theft involving unsuspecting victims in the film industry. O'Brien has written the script.

Shooting is set to begin in Bangkok next month before moving to Jakarta and other countries for location filming early next year. It is a co-production between Waller's De Warrenne Pictures, Japan's Yaman Films, and Film Bangkok, the relaunched film division of Thailand's [Tero Entertainment](#). Producers are Waller and Takahiro Yamashita.

The story follows an actor in Bangkok who is told that a powerful female Hollywood studio executive wants him for a leading role in a TV show. He travels to Indonesia for an audition but discovers the scam when asked to hand over money for flights and permits. However, after uniting with other victims, the actor ends up conning the Con Queen into giving him exactly what he wants – the breakthrough role he was falsely promised.

Patel is known as the subject of *Meet The Patels*, a 2014 documentary he co-directed about his attempts to find an Indian bride, and has acting credits including *Transformers*, *Master Of None* and upcoming series' *Animal Control*, *Three Women* and *Justified: City Primeval*. He is also set to appear opposite Zachary Levi in Sony Pictures' live-action adaptation of *Harold And The Purple Crayon*.

Waller has directed features including Thai cave rescue drama *The Cave*, which premiered at Busan International Film Festival in 2019, and *The Last Executioner*.

Tahilramani remains in the UK, where he was arrested, awaiting extradition to the US to face charges with verdict on his extradition expected next week.