

## Interview: Gareth Evans Stages Incredible ‘The Raid: Redemption’

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CHICAGO – For a lot of action movie fans, “The Raid: Redemption” is going to be their favorite genre flick in years. It’s an incredibly accomplished martial arts film that feels like something inspired equally by John Carpenter and Jackie Chan. We’ll be back with a full rave review tomorrow but check out this interview with its soon-to-be-famous writer/director, Gareth Evans, as he details the incredible history of the movie, its most difficult stunts, and its inspirations.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Why the title change? When I saw it, it was just called “The Raid.”

**GARETH EVANS:** It came about because we just couldn’t get clearance on the title — a legal reason. So we HAD to change it. But we wanted to keep “The Raid.” We’d done so much awareness of it that we just couldn’t come up with something else entirely. We were talking about the sequel. We didn’t really want to call it “The Raid 2.” So, we were looking at the idea of “The Raid....Something.” That’s where it came from. So then we were looking for things we could tie in — “Part 2 will be this, part 3 will be this.” It’s a bit of a spoiler but there’s an element of redemption in the film.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** I must admit that when it changed I had people ask me if THIS was a sequel.

**EVANS:** Mmm-hmmm. Yep. And there was QUITE the vocal online response when we announced. They announced it and I was on a different time zone and I woke up and my f\*\*king inbox was buzzing constantly. What happened? Aw, shit. Let me write something — I addressed it on the blog. You can hate the title, that’s fine, but it’s FOUR SECONDS of on-screen time out of 121 minutes.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** It doesn’t change the movie.

**EVANS:** Exactly.



The Raid: Redemption

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Speaking of that, once Sony Pictures Classics comes on-board, do they change your vision at all? Do they alter anything?

**EVANS:** No, not at all. They've been really supportive. They didn't want to change a frame. We did change the score but that was a decision that was made before it even got to SPC — when it was Sony worldwide. We sold to Sony when I was still shooting the film and the score conversation happened back then.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** How'd you pull that off?

**EVANS:** I was two months into the shoot. We edit on-location and I was sending our sales agents clips back and forth and they asked for four clips that they could take to Cannes. Our plan was just to have people acknowledge the film existed so they could sell at Toronto or AFM. Then Sony saw it and liked what they saw and responded to it and they wanted it then. It was based off offline edits.



The Raid: Redemption  
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** That had to be REALLY unexpected.

**EVANS:** Yeah. If I could go back to where we were — we were doing a film that was about 50% lower budget than our previous film. We were making a movie because we couldn't make the film we really wanted to make — this was our "Plan B." So, we were shooting on a low budget, plan B project, and working every hour of every day. We had no idea where the film was going to go or how it was going to be treated. Suddenly, we get a call from Cannes and our agent is like "We need you to speak to Sony." "What? Are you kidding me?" I was on the phone and there was straight away the discussion about doing the score with someone on their label. They hadn't heard the original. It was an immediate business decision. I was open to it.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** But that's it? Do they change your budget at all?

**EVANS:** Nope. Not at all.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** But it probably gives you a bit more...emotional stability.

**EVANS:** If anything, it was great for my crew. It was a morale boost. The only thing is that for about a day or two afterwards it had a certain effect on me. The two months leading up to that, I was making it for no one. Then suddenly it was for Sony. I started questioning too many decisions. And then after two days, I was like "F\*\*k it, just carry on making it the way you did before."

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** What was the original score?

**EVANS:** There are similarities. When I worked with Mike & Joe, I had just finished working with my guys in Indonesia. So when it came to Mike & Joe, I just let them tell me what they wanted to do. They wanted to treat it as a score, not as a section of songs, find the right moments to drive the scene or support the scene. I said, "OK, I'm not going to give you any notes. If I did, it would be the same shit I gave my guys and I would have the SAME score." They were really great. They would send the score and I would send back notes. They were very receptive. It's one of those things that sounds horribly diplomatic — I really like both scores almost equally. In a perfect world, I'd take from both.





The Raid: Redemption

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** You should do an alternate audio track for the Blu-ray.

**EVANS:** Yeah, we should actually.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** You do all of this work and then the finished project plays in Toronto.

**EVANS:** One week after we finish shooting.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** And the response. I heard about it. Can you talk a little but about the rapturous response?

**EVANS:** When my producer and I finished the film, we were really pessimistic about it. We were so into it at that point that all we could see were the problems. Instead of being there watching the fight scenes, you'd be looking at the background. We were questioning everything. We came away hoping for some decent quotes. What kind of blew us away at Midnight Madness...when I sat there, it was crazy. It blew my mind. It was one of those screenings where no one knew what they were getting. There was no trailer. No footage. No one had a clue what was coming. So every one of those little action beats — stab, hit, shot to the face — no one had any point of reference on it. The reaction from the audience just elevated it.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** So, no one outside of the production had seen it?

**EVANS:** Only Colin, who was programming TIFF. And he only saw the offline cut. We finished shooting on June 8th and I had to hand in the first cut on June 21st.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** 13 days.

**EVANS:** But I had a wrap party first. (*Laughs.*) It was insane. I did a 44-hour shift on it. I had to do all of the subtitles and render it, author a DVD, and upload it because there wasn't enough time to ship it. It was a horrible situation. We were working the audio just so there were a minimal amount of times you could hear me in the background. (*Laughs.*) We were so lucky that they took a leap of faith on it.



The Raid: Redemption

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** How much fight choreography is in the actual script? Or is it just "fight"?

**EVANS:** (*Laughs.*) I wish. That would make my job a lot easier. What I tend to do is I kind of give... I put the fight in bullet points. When it came to the fight with the one guy on his shoulder, I would give details to the choreography team on the beats. "Every time you move, there's momentum because of the guy on your shoulder." There's a level of detail. And then it's very washed over — "The fight gets more and more desperate; more and more violent." "He no longer has the guy on his shoulders, he must clear a path to get through. He loses the stick. He loses the knife." I write gun stuff in more detail. As soon as you try to write down, "He swings a left punch," no one can see that but you. No one will understand it like you.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Did you ever visualize anything and realize it wouldn't work on set?

**EVANS:** A couple of times. Some stuff we really had to put a lot of faith into that our online guy and effects guy could fix it. We had moments where practical effects didn't really work and we had to just hope that it worked in post. There's the moment where the guy gets pushed on the floor and stabbed like five times in the chest? We didn't have any practical blood for it? That's all CG blood, including the stain on his shirt. We were so unprepared for that shot. Our online guy had to do it all free-form. It's like artwork. He takes consideration of where the light is. The blood interacts with the shadow. It was moments like that. We were nervous when we were shooting but he's a lot better at his job than I am at mine.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Anybody get injured?

**EVANS:** We had a couple, including some that could have been a lot more serious. We always try to design stunts so they look worse than they are. The worst was the one with the guy who breaks his back on the wall? We did that three shots stitched together. We did one where he lands clean with no wall. And then we do two with wires for either side. The first shot, he still needs a wire. And when he did that flip, the guys with the wire pulled a little hard and he didn't come down in an arc. He went straight across. He slammed his head into the wall above. They lost balance. He fell and missed all of the crash mats and fell five meters on to concrete. That was f\*\*king horrid. I genuinely thought, "This is bad." After ten minutes, the paramedics checked on him and he came to and wanted to do it again and we told him to go to the hospital first. Four days after that he came back.



The Raid: Redemption  
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Was that the toughest part of the shoot?

**EVANS:** You know the location where they go through the hole in the floor? That was the toughest. Not because of what we were doing in the scene. We needed a two-story set to built. We had to use a badminton court. The downside was that it was all tin roof. The sun in Indonesia is unforgiving. The temperature in there went up to 40-42 degrees Celsius, which is VERY high. We were dropping. No one could move. The guys were wearing SWAT gear. They were starting to fall asleep. We had to switch to a night shoot just to get the temperature down a but. We had 28 Air-Con units and they did nothing.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** It's drawn a lot of film comparisons but were you consciously thinking of other films when you made this one?

**EVANS:** In research. I was watching a lot of films which are contained in one location. What are the great films of this type? And then steal from them liberally. "Die Hard," "Escape From New York," "Assault on Precinct 13," District B13," "Rec 1 & 2." The biggest were "Die Hard" and "Precinct 13." The films that build a spectacle and move from set piece to set piece. With "13" it was how to do it on a low budget level. I love that moment when the lights go out and the snipers start shooting. All you hear are the windows popping. It's paper on desks. You don't see a hundred extras outside. You feel them. You don't see them.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Carpenter's a MASTER at that, especially in his early films. What isn't seen is more powerful than what is.

**EVANS:** Exactly. So that's what we wanted to do with this one. You get the feeling that the building is entirely populated by psychopaths, but how many do you see? You only see about 60-80 people TOTAL as bad guys, spaced out throughout the entire film.



**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Were there any martial arts films that inspired it?

**EVANS:** In terms of the way we shoot, Jackie Chan. That sense of getting a clear idea of the choreography. And the thing I learned the most from Chan films was that each shot is relevant to each movement that you're trying to showcase. Every single shot has a very specific purpose. It's like a jigsaw puzzle. In terms of the choreography itself, it wanted to be more aggressive so Sammo Hung and Panna in Thailand. When you watch Chan film in the '80s, you can tell when Hung has been involved in the choreography. It gets more violent and nasty.



The Raid: Redemption  
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** For some reason I thought of the scene in the middle of "Oldboy."

**EVANS:** I'm a HUGE fan of "Oldboy." I love that film to death. It's in the top ten. But, really...

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Didn't think of it?

**EVANS:** No.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** But you have a lot of shots in this movie that are unbroken like that shot and the choreography of that sequence.

**EVANS:** People have commented on it. But the films are so different. "Oldboy" is engaging and emotionally devastating. For me, it is incredible to be mentioned in the same breath but they're so different.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** They're remaking that. They're remaking this. What do you think of the remake? Are you involved?

**EVANS:** I'm involved as an Exec Producer. I didn't want to direct myself. I've done it. I don't know what I could bring new to it. The remake will live or die based on approaching it from a fresh pair of eyes. I didn't have anyone over my shoulder watching it and I'm hoping they have the same thing.

**HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM:** Are you ready to have someone over your shoulder? It's a very common path — foreign directors make hit arthouse action movies and then they get handed "Fast and the Furious Six." Or something. If Hollywood comes to you with \$100 million for a franchise sequel, are you interested in that?

**EVANS:** I'm not interested in the blockbusters, to be honest. I've got to believe in the script and that I'm the right person to do that job. I want people to want MY version. That's why I wanted to do "The Raid 2" first. I want to have something developing, but I want to create a little bit of distance before the hype before I take something like that one.



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