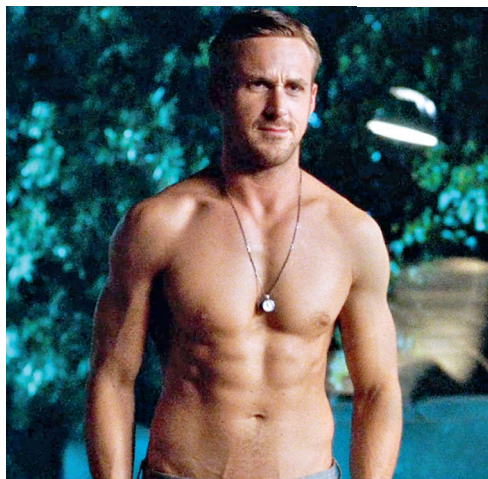




▲ **STAR TURN** (from top) With *Lost River* actors Christina Hendricks and Reda Kateb at 2014's Cannes Film Festival; in action directing *Lost River*; in *The Notebook* with Rachel McAdams; showing his pecs appeal in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*.



▲ **HOT PROPERTY** (above) Gosling and Eva Mendes, pictured in 2012, are a fairly private couple by usual celeb standards; (right) suited and booted at 2011's *Drive* premiere in Cannes, 2011.



Today, Gosling's here to talk about his directorial debut, *Lost River*, which he also wrote. It's a dark tale about a single mother (Christina Hendricks) doing what she has to do to survive in a decaying community. It also stars Ben Mendelsohn, Matt Smith, Saoirse Ronan, Mendes and newcomer Iain De Caestecker.

Gosling is explaining why he decided to film in Detroit, a city struggling with unemployment, lack of infrastructure and a high crime rate after the downsizing of the auto industry.

"I'm from Canada and I think, like everyone growing up anywhere else in the world, you are very aware of America – it sort of looms large in its legend, and so did Detroit," he says.

"I had a lot of romanticised ideas of what Detroit was like, but I didn't get there until I was 30 and it was very different than I had imagined it."

What he discovered when he finally visited inspired the setting for his film, which has an eerie, dreamlike quality.

"There are miles of abandoned neighbourhoods, and within those neighbourhoods there are occasionally families sort of trying to hold on to their lives [while] the neighbourhoods around them are being burned and torn down," he continues. "In some cases they don't get water, and in some cases they don't get power to the streetlights, so I wanted to make something about that. I didn't want to make a literal film about Detroit, because it felt like what they were experiencing was more universal than that. I wanted to find a way everyone could relate to it. And just focus on the emotional landscape of that. So, the fairytale format became the best way, I felt, to do that."

It's a very dark world Gosling has created, something he seems to gravitate towards with his film choices. Where does this affinity for stories about outcasts in sinister environments come from?

"You know, when I was a kid, I had a single mom [Gosling's parents divorced when he was 13] and she was very beautiful," he says. "And to me, as a young man, all men felt like wolves and there was a very threatening, predatory tone to the world in general, not just to specific people. It felt like life could become a nightmare at any second."

This recollection goes some way to explaining how, no matter how many brooding silent types Gosling plays on film, his image as a smouldering-yet-sensitive dream boyfriend prevails. Just look at the blogs and memes devoted to him – memorably beginning with the Tumblr F\*ck Yeah! Ryan Gosling, followed by the Hey Girl meme and the Feminist Ryan Gosling Tumblr. I mention there was a study done recently at the University of Saskatchewan that found men who viewed pictures of him with feminist text written over them were more inclined to support feminist statements.

How does he feel about being the poster boy for feminism?

"Well, I don't know," he laughs. "There are certainly worse things you can be a part of. I mean, look, I have very strong female characters in my life. I grew up with strong women and the amount of them grows exponentially as time goes on, in my world. And that's my reality. So, I just tend to gravitate towards stories with strong female characters. It's not a conscious thing. I didn't make those [memes], you know? It's not by design.

But I do have a little girl now and it's important to me. These things are becoming... not more important to me, but more important in general, I think. There are lots of great women