

## “MICHAEL CLAYTON”

Michael Clayton (George Clooney) is an in-house “fixer” at one of the largest corporate law firms in New York. At the behest of the firm’s co-founder Marty Bach (Sydney Pollack), Clayton, a former prosecutor from a family of cops, takes care of Kenner, Bach & Ledeen’s dirtiest work. Clayton cleans up clients’ messes, handling anything from hit-and-runs and damaging stories in the press to shoplifting wives and crooked politicians. Though burned out and discontented in his job, Clayton is inextricably tied to the firm.

At the agrochemical company U/North, the career of in-house chief counsel Karen Crowder (Tilda Swinton) rests on the settlement of the suit that Kenner, Bach & Ledeen is leading to a seemingly successful conclusion. When the firm’s top litigator, the brilliant Arthur Edens (Tom Wilkinson), has an apparent breakdown and tries to sabotage the entire case, Marty Bach sends Michael Clayton to tackle this unprecedented disaster and, in doing so, Clayton comes face to face with the reality of who he has become.

Warner Bros. Pictures presents, in association with Samuels Media and Castle Rock Entertainment, a Mirage Enterprises/Section Eight Production, “Michael Clayton,” starring Academy Award winner George Clooney (“Syriana”), Oscar nominee Tom Wilkinson (“In the Bedroom”), Tilda Swinton (“The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe”) and Sydney Pollack (“The Interpreter”).

The film was written and directed by Tony Gilroy (screenwriter, “The Bourne Identity,” “The Bourne Supremacy”). Sydney Pollack, Jennifer Fox, Steven Samuels and Kerry Orent served as producers, with Steven Soderbergh, George Clooney, James Holt and Anthony Minghella serving as executive producers.

Joining the director behind the scenes were director of photography Robert Elswit, production designer Kevin Thompson, editor John Gilroy and costume designer Sarah Edwards. The music is by James Newton Howard.

“Michael Clayton” will be released domestically by Warner Bros. Pictures, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company, with international territories handled by Summit Entertainment.

“Michael Clayton” has been rated “R” by the MPAA for “language including some sexual dialogue.”

[www.michaelclayton.com](http://www.michaelclayton.com)

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## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

George Clooney stars in the title role of Michael Clayton, a “fixer” at Kenner, Bach & Ledeen, a top Manhattan law firm. A former criminal prosecutor from a working-class neighborhood, Clayton is an anomaly at the white-shoe firm; in spite of his 15-year tenure, he has not been promoted to partner and probably never will be. His boss, Marty Bach, sees Clayton as an invaluable asset to the firm, but only in his “niche,” one that is relegated to cleaning up the firm’s sticky situations quickly and quietly.

“While Michael is great at solving other people’s problems, the film catches him at the apex of dissatisfaction with his career,” says Clooney, who also serves as an executive producer on the film. “He started out with ambitions of becoming a trial lawyer, but along the way what he really becomes is a bag man.”

“Michael Clayton is a 45-year-old attorney who feels that he hasn’t done everything that he could have done with his life; he’s starting to think he should have done something else, or could have done better,” says writer-director Tony Gilroy. “He’s made some bad choices and a lot of compromises. He has come to the point in life where his next few decisions will determine everything about him.

“How we make those choices—how fear, comfort, inertia and self-preservation bend us to the wheel—that’s the fuel for the story,” offers Gilroy.

In the midst of his discontentment, Michael Clayton is sent to defuse Arthur Edens, Kenner, Bach & Ledeen’s chief litigator. The defense architect for the U/North case, Arthur suddenly suffers a crisis of conscience after finding a “smoking gun” memo that exposes the client’s moral turpitude. The character is played by Oscar nominee Tom Wilkinson, who notes, “It is very much a ‘road to Damascus’ moment. Arthur’s an expert lawyer who has been at the top of his game for years, but comes to a realization that he’s been defending a cancer.”

“Given the infinity of destructive moral choices that are made every day by people who know what they’re doing is wrong, it’s always amazed me that there aren’t more whistleblowers. When you consider how much is wrong, how deep that wrong is, and how much of it’s done by people who go home and pay their taxes and love their children, isn’t it astonishing how few actually go off the deep end?” says Gilroy. “Tom’s character is one of those magnificently intelligent madmen who can convince any judge, jury or plaintiff to drop or settle a case. It’s why he’s so good at what he does and makes the kind of money he makes. But at the end of the day, what’s the real cost?”

## **GENESIS OF THE SCRIPT**

The original inspiration for “Michael Clayton” came to Gilroy during visits to New York law firms when he was doing research to write the screenplay of “The Devil’s Advocate.” Gilroy recalls, “Wandering through these giant New York law offices, I was struck by how much goes on behind the scenes. Every firm had vast, back-of-the-house departments running twenty-four hours a day to keep them afloat.”

In developing the script, Gilroy spent time talking to a gamut of law office personnel, including attorneys, paralegals and partners. Gilroy notes, “I heard a story about a firm involved in a huge corporate litigation that had gone on for almost a decade. The case had been essentially settled, and the firm had prevailed. The settlement was over a billion dollars. Things were so far down the line that the firm had begun clearing out the document rooms that had housed all the filings and paperwork. Two days before the final signing, at four o’clock in the morning, a third-year associate found a document that had never been placed in discovery. It was a very bad document, which would’ve meant a complete reversal of the case. The document never saw the light of day, and that associate had the fastest partner promotion in the history of the firm.”

“I wanted to know what kind of person is up at four o’clock in the morning protecting the firm,” continues Gilroy. “Who fills those gaps and makes those calls? What else do they have to do? How far could that go? What would it do to you to have that job? The answer to those questions turned into ‘Michael Clayton.’”

“Tony’s script was interesting to me right off the bat,” says producer Sydney Pollack, who was one of the early producers attracted to the project and also stars in the film as Marty Bach. “It is relevant and gets to the heart of the matter without lecturing, and it tells a story which has genuine suspense independent of moral issues.”

Gilroy emphasizes, “‘Michael Clayton’ isn’t an issue film. There’s no ideological debate. There’s no dark overlord arguing for some greater good. You’ve got a choir of fear and self-preservation on one side and the lone voice of a manic, un-medicated virtuoso on the other. Michael Clayton represents the rest of us in the middle. What will he do?”

Producer Steven Samuels remarks, “I enjoyed Tony’s realistic approach to telling the story. It’s a reflection of our world today. The main characters in ‘Michael Clayton’ have chosen career paths that come with certain rewards and compromises. It takes tremendous courage for someone to risk losing everything in order to do the right thing.”

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