

PRESS KIT

TOUCHED

A short film by Warren Vanders & Matt Valenti



FLESH AND SPIRIT CLASH ON DEATH ROW

USA • 2004 • Digital • Color • 47 mins
www.touchedmovie.com

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TOUCHED

Synopsis – 1 Line

A death row prisoner and fallen preacher collide over women, seduction, god and the nature of the universe.

Synopsis – 3 Lines

An angry young death row rapist on the eve of his execution is compelled to meet with a persistent older visiting preacher. They collide over the power of women, seduction, god and the universe, ultimately discovering they're opposite sides of the same coin. A revealed past secret forces them to change.

Synopsis – Short (100 words)

An angry young death row rapist on the eve of his execution is compelled to meet with a persistent older visiting preacher.

In their strange perceptions they confront each other in adult language over women, sex, God and nature of the universe.

Intimidated, the preacher is coerced into confessing his sexual liaisons with women in his church. Their intense confrontation ultimately exposes them as opposite sides of the same coin.

Reluctantly, the preacher must reveal a startling secret dramatically altering their relationship. Inadvertently, they find a unique way to experience a different kind of redemption.

“Faith, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen”.

TOUCHED

Synopsis – Long (350 words)

A death row prisoner, twenty-four hours before his execution, has angrily rejected a variety of religious figures visiting his cell attempting to prepare him for death. The multiple rapist prisoner has demanded a Holy Roller, but none can be found.

Instead, he's now compelled to meet with an aging preacher, who, though strongly rejected by the prisoner, manages to briefly gain his confidence. The unrepentant prisoner tells why he's on death row, blaming his victim. The preacher sympathizes, unintentionally revealing a personal interest in women.

Suspicious, the prisoner probes, accusing him of seducing women in his church. The preacher denies it, pushing his spiritual agenda. They heatedly confront each other with very different beliefs sometimes cloaked in dark humor over the flesh and the spirit.

"I tell ya there's nothin' like the feelin' of a woman, discoverin' the power of the spirit through her flesh.

In edgy adult language, the prisoner reveals his radical perceptions of the sexual powers of women and how they relate to God and the nature of the universe. The persistent preacher ingratiates himself, enduring the prisoner's accusations and threats that he will have to leave.

Undaunted, he determinedly finds ways to keep pushing his unique church. He admits to recently receiving a letter from the prisoner's mother, adding he'd counseled her decades ago. She'd asked him to help her son through his ordeal. Not seeing her in years, the briefly vulnerable prisoner reveals some of his dark past.

The prisoner demands to know how women get "touched." The preacher evades the issue, finally being forced to admit how he's seduced church women including the prisoner's mother. Under more pressure he admits never being "touched" himself, claiming the closest he gets to a personal spiritual experience is in helping women discover the spirit through their flesh.

Relieved he's not alone in his destructive lust, the prisoner says a final goodbye only to be stunned when the now desperate preacher is compelled to confess to something that significantly changes their relationship.

Inadvertently creating unique circumstances, the preacher and other nearby prisoners help make a would-be Holy Roller "happening" on death row allowing the prisoner to become "touched."

Confessing his devious ways, the preacher tries to cut a deal with God offering his own soul if the prisoner's soul is accepted. Both find redemption in their needs for forgiveness.

TOUCHED

Statement Of The Director - Warren Vanders

In preparing for my short film, TOUCHED, the words, "What's it all about?" often rattled around in my thoughts. If life's supposed to be the best teacher I should have learned something over my many years about life forces. Seems I'm a slow learner. So many failed relationships are a reminder that I just didn't get it. In leaving skid marks on life's road, I take some small comfort that I'm still managing to hang on in the curves.

"I believe we're
guided to
eternity in ways
we don't
understand"

In cockeyed disorder, it's the flesh rising first to the occasion; women, seduction, sex. The spirit drifts around later in a would-be attempt to integrate us. For eons it's been the eternal battleground for most men. In my case I've had an on-going wrestling match with my flesh and spirit, sometimes I'm on top, usually on the bottom. Neither position fails to fully satisfy. Trying to examine and understand these powerful forces has led me here.

TOUCHED, is an attempt to continue the search for answers of, "What's it all about?" The two main characters pursue the question with sometimes outrageous perceptions and self-centered motives. They flounder around between their spirit and flesh often with dark absurd humor.

After much procrastination on my part mixed with intimidation and inspiration from professional peers, I changed my perceptions and with the help and support of family and friends I chose to just do it. With the very invaluable assistance of talented newcomer in young Australian actor, Mathew Valenti, we jumped into the deep end, thrashing about in our ongoing production problems. We now have a deep appreciation for all independent filmmakers who've preceded us over the years.

"Preacher: Flesh
is but a moment.
Eternity's forever.

Prisoner: Yeah,
but they're some
moments."

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News and Reviews

TOUCHED

Bios

Warren Vanders

Director/Writer/Actor/Producer



Initially trained as an actor Vander's has been seen in over two hundred TV and film productions. As a colleague of multi award winning director, Daniel Mann, he was encouraged to direct based on their years of shared experiences in their actor/director classes. Vander's screenplays have won national awards including TOUCHED. He has other features being considered by production companies.

Matt Valenti

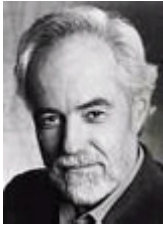
Actor/Producer



Valenti is a young, up and coming, Australian actor who makes his film debut in TOUCHED. Having trained extensively with Warren Vanders he has gone on to other independent film and TV projects and has performed in numerous plays since his arrival in LA.

Neil Travis

Overseeing Editor Emeritus



Travis is an Oscar winning editor for DANCES WITH WOLVES. Most recently he edited TERMINATOR 3. Travis has been a prolific talent in the film industry for many years with numerous major features to his credit. After reading TOUCHED he offered his services. His interest in a short film is an indication of his passion for storytelling and reveals his generous spirit of sharing his professional gifts with others.

E. Franklin Tulloch

Editor/DP Camera B



Early has worked in all aspects of Film production. He currently shoots for ESPN/CSTV, covering the worlds top yacht races, while working freelance as a DP, Editor and Director in feature films, commercials and music video projects. Future projects include BIRDFOOT, an Earthbound Studios Production, and LIVING IN THE PATH, a look at the Caribbean hurricane season.

Jordan Valenti

Director of Photography



For the last decade Jordan has been honing his skills as a Los Angeles based lighting designer enjoying a varied range of US and international productions including feature films, commercials, music videos and commercial still photography with the late Herb Ritts. This diverse and experience-rich background was crucial in creating a solid foundation of experience with which to pursue his passion for cinematography. Jordan is currently a freelance Director of Photography specializing in image creation for commercial, music video and short film production as well as owner of ROO Productions INC, a motion picture equipment rental company.

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Bios (continued)

Andrew Kopetzky

Sound Designer



Andrew "Andy" Kopetzky became a member of the Touched team after seeing a rough cut of the short film. His feature film credits are extensive. They include, X-MEN, ARMAGEDDON, BEHIND ENEMY LINES, CON AIR among many other outstanding feature films. That a gifted major player like Andy would take a personal interest in a short film is another example of a generous professional sharing his expertise.

Leah Curtis

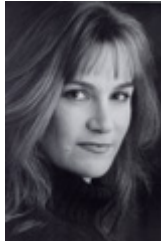
Composer



Leah Curtis is an award-winning composer for film, theatre and the concert hall. She is a graduate of the Australian Film Television and Radio School, the University of New South Wales Sydney and UCLA Extension in music and motion picture scoring. Her commissions include the Tasmanian and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, as well as many dramas, documentaries and animations, displaying her adaptability in style and genre. Recent accolades include the ASCAP Film Scoring Workshop and being named the BMI UCLA Jerry Goldsmith Film Scoring Fellow for 2002.

Debra DeLiso

Directors Special Assistant / Associate Producer



Debra is a critically acclaimed director, choreographer, actor, and playwright. She has worked in film as an actress and in production with Academy Award winning filmmakers. She was awarded a California Arts Council Artist in Residency at a prison for three years, teaching playwriting and acting to the inmates. She currently teaches acting and playwriting at USC, the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and Dance at CSULA.

Dale Franz

Script Supervisor / Associate Producer



Dale V. "Colonel" Franz, a retired Air Force pilot, works primarily as a script supervisor. By using his industry contacts, he brings valuable assets to any production beyond his keen eye and attention to detail. Ever one to work to see that the production is completed on time and budget; he is a valuable asset to the production team.

Leon Erickson

Production Designer



Erickson has worked extensively with Robert Altman, Francis Coppola and other leading film directors on films such as the original MASH, MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER, THE RAIN PEOPLE, CINDERELLA LIBERTY, BREWSTER MCCLOUD, MEDIUM COOL, BARBAROSA and other major films.

TOUCHED

Production Notes

TOUCHED, a tough, contemporary film of forgiveness and redemption was written and directed by WARREN VANDERS. Essentially trained as actor, he had been moved decades earlier by an idea in an acting workshop scene pitting two men from very different backgrounds with driving needs for women and sex. His own life struggles compelled him to embrace the theme. He was intrigued that both men, opposite sides of the same coin, had taken separate paths inadvertently bringing them together in a death row cell on the eve of one man's execution.

Vanders had sold a few things to television and had two full-length screenplays optioned, one winning a national screenwriting award. He continued to tinker with TOUCHED over the years in between acting jobs. Encouraged by industry colleagues, he submitted it to a national screenplay contest and won an award. He later turned it to a short play where it won special recognition by ALAP (Association for Los Angeles Playwrights). "The theme of coping with flesh and spiritual needs had a universal appeal", says Vanders.

Still, it lay fallow for many months until one of Vanders acting students, an ambitious, young, Australian actor, MATT VALENTI read TOUCHED and spurred his teacher into resurrecting the screenplay version. He insisted Vanders direct and act in it. After decades of acting work, Vanders had been put out to pasture by the film industry and would be an old newcomer to directing, but Valenti's passion for TOUCHED inspired him enough to jump the fence. The rejuvenated old war horse and young colt galloped off together into the fray to make their first film.

Most of the production team signed on because they loved the story. JORDAN VALENTI, another Aussie and Director of Photography was instrumental in bringing a film look and quality to the digital production. E. FRANKLIN TULLOCH, DV editor and DP brought a wealth of digital experience and knowledge. LEAH CURTIS, an award winning Australian composer. CARL VANDERSCHUIT a renowned photographer.

NEAL TRAVIS, Oscar winning editor for DANCES WITH WOLVES, was sent a script and told Vanders he loved the story and characters and offered his imposing talents as overseeing editor. LEON ERICKSEN, production designer, frequent associate of Robert Altman and Francis Coppola read the script and offered his expertise.

After reading TOUCHED, DEBRA DELISO, actress, director, producer pooled her considerable resources. Having taught drama in prisons, she arranged for Valenti to participate in her workshop with "lifers" at San Quentin adding the insight of prison life to his role as the condemned prisoner.

In recalling the first morning of the shoot, DeLiso was told director Vanders, after only a couple of hours directing was flat on the floor in the wardrobe room.

"Believin' in somethin' makes people feel better".

TOUCHED

Production Notes (continued)

“Your flesh kickin’
your spirit in the
ass”.

Alarmed, she went to his aid. Laying there, he told her an old hernia had more than tripled its size in an hour and was getting larger. Seeing her surprised, questioning reaction, he took her hand and placed in on the large hard lump in his groin. Concerned, she asked what it was she had her hand on, adding she didn't believe touching him there was one of her many jobs she'd volunteered to take on. Vanders, between moaning and laughing assured her he had a serious health problem. Within an hour he was on his way to a nearby hospital emergency room and into surgery with a strangulated hernia.

Vanders spent four days in the hospital and the production plug was pulled. “Is this an omen?” said Vanders. “Is god striking me down (in the groin) for making a story about two rogue heretics wrestling with their spirit and their flesh”. Apparently not, since a month later they were back into production with a healthy Vanders in the director's saddle thanks to the support of producers, vendors and crew.

TOUCHED has reached out to many with its hope that the lost and least among us can still find redemption. Vanders and Valenti look forward to expanding TOUCHED into a feature film.

TOUCHED

Production Headlines

Can an older American and young Aussie crack the Hollywood job market?

Their initial association was acting teacher and student. The veteran American actor, Warren Vanders, tutored the young Aussie, Matt Valenti, in the craft of acting. After reading Vander's TOUCHED, an award winning short screenplay and essentially a two character story, Valenti insisted Vanders direct it and act in it with him. Vanders, a working actor for decades, had been turned out to pasture by an unpredictable film industry. Valenti's promising talent and passion inspired Vanders to jump the fence. The old war horse and the young colt galloped off together into the fray.

Vanders, now, followed Valenti's lead as they jumped the many pre-production hurdles. They formed their FLYING KITE PRODUCTIONS while rewriting, rehearsing and bringing together a production crew. TOUCHED is Vanders first film as a director, Valenti's first as an actor/producer.

Did divine intervention end the TOUCHED shoot as it was just beginning?

On the first morning of shooting, Debra DeLiso, Special Assistant to the director, Vanders, was told he was flat on his back in the wardrobe room. Alarmed, she investigated and found him hurting and stunned by what was happening to him. He said an old hernia had quadrupled in size in the last hour. Seeing her confused, questioning look he placed her hand on the hard lump in his groin area. Concerned, she asked what it was, adding that she wore many hats in the production but didn't believe touching him "there" was one of her jobs. Vanders, between moaning and laughing assured her he had a serious health problem. Within the hour he was on his way to a nearby hospital's emergency room with a strangulated hernia requiring surgery and four days in bed.

As a result, the TOUCHED production plug was pulled. While lying in hospital, Vanders wondered if his story of two rogue heretics wrestling with their flesh and spirit had antagonized god to attack his groin. However, the show must go on prevailed and looking back, the hernia was a blessing in disguise providing extra time, which benefited the entire production.

Why an Oscar winning film editor joined the TOUCHED production team?

Neal Travis, a gifted, highly respected editor of many successful major feature films, including, DANCES WITH WOLVES was sent a TOUCHED script by Vanders. Travis, a former acting class acquaintance from decades ago called the screenplay, "Terrific!". He offered to donate his talent because of his interest in the main character's unique problems. Travis said he initially came to editing because he wanted to deal with strong personal character relationships and TOUCHED fit that need. When Vanders told him he could only offer him cold cuts as payment, Travis added he liked cold cuts. That someone of his prolific professional reputation would align himself with a low budget short film production reveals Travis' love of film and passion to tell a good story.

Travis has been an exciting addition to the TOUCHED team. His special insight, contributions as overseeing Editor Emeritus, valued positive support and generous act of giving of his talent have been extremely significant.