Official Press Kit for:

Behind the veil of the sex industry

NEFARIOUS: MERCHANT OF SOULS

TECHNICAL INFORMATION:
Approx. 96 Minutes, Color
Exhibition Format: HDCam
Production Format: HD
English, USA, 2011

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“Modern slavery,” It sounds like a paradox. Hasn't humanity progressed? Didn't we leave slavery dead on the battlefields of the American Civil war? Didn't social reformers like Lincoln and Wilberforce legislate against such cruelty over a hundred years ago? So we had thought. But, with over 27 million enslaved people across the world, human trafficking is still the battlefront of the century.

Regardless of nationality, victims are systematically stripped of their identity, battered into gruesome submission and made to perform humiliating sexual acts on up to 40 strangers every night. Most are held in makeshift jail cells, forced to take heavy doses of illegal drugs and monitored very closely. On average, victims are thrown into such ghastly oppression at age 13. Some are abducted outright, while others are lured out of poverty, romantically seduced, or sold by their families.

Nefarious: Merchant of Souls, is a hard-hitting documentary that exposes the disturbing trends in modern sex slavery. From the very first scene, Nefarious ushers you into the nightmare of sex slavery that hundreds of thousands experience daily. You'll see where slaves are sold (often in developed, affluent countries), where they work and are confined. You’ll hear first-hand interviews with real victims and traffickers, along with expert analysis from international humanitarian leaders.

From initial recruitment to victim liberation—and everything between—the previously veiled underworld of sex slavery is uncovered in the groundbreaking, tell-all Nefarious: Merchant of Souls.
How did you first become aware of the global sex slavery epidemic?

On February 3, 2007, my wife and I met with a friend who unfolded the human trafficking scenario to us. As she described the horrors of young girls who were forced into lifestyles of prostitution, we were shocked by the gruesome details. In the following days and weeks, I could not escape the overwhelming conviction that I must take a stand against this injustice. The more I uncovered tragic, monstrous stories of such injustice, the greater my burden for the issue became. I am deeply passionate about seeing others, like myself, moved from oblivion to action.

How was Nefarious: Merchant of Souls conceived?

In the fall of 2007, a team from Exodus Cry took a trip to Southeast Asia to explore the world of sex slavery. We visited dingy karaoke bars, remote villages, massage parlors and high-end beach destinations finding one steady consistency—the exploitation of young women. Throughout our trip, we had cameras documenting the sights we saw and interviews we conducted. It was this trip that stirred us to produce the Nefarious films.

Where was Nefarious filmed?

We have been to 19 different countries to gather content for Nefarious; spanning from North and Central America to Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

During the filming of Nefarious, were there any stories that stood out as particularly poignant?

Each and every girl’s story is valuable, as real lives were ruined—and often taken—by the lust and greed of wicked men. There is, however, one story that I will mention as it seems to illustrate the deep effect trafficking can have on a person... In 2009, I spent several hours talking to a former victim of sex trafficking at a coffee shop in Amsterdam. The details of her story were so horrific that they seemed unbelievable, except she bore the authentic scars from her experiences in her eyes. As she reached the pinnacle of her story, at a loss for words with tears welled in her eyes, she offered a raw synopsis of her time in prostitution: “I could not love,” she said, revealing immense, unthinkable pain. It was as if her humanity had been stolen from her, robbed and left as a hollow shell. Stories like these stand out to our team in a significant, life-changing way.

Have there been any positive developments related to the sex slavery industry since you began working on Nefarious?

Yes—thank God! Significant strides have been made in the way of awareness and coverage. Also, legislative changes have been made in many of the countries where we filmed.

What was your most shocking discovery about sex slavery while filming and producing Nefarious?

Before we began this project, I believe my attitude toward the abolition of trafficking was far too idealistic. But, as we began to travel, I was faced with the reality of entire cultures—religious, social and governmental—feeding the sex slavery industry. Seeing the trafficking problem from this vantage point was extremely difficult.

What does it mean to you, both personally and professionally, to have the opportunity to work on a project like Nefarious?

Professionally, Nefarious is nothing to me. I have no time to ‘professionally’ solve sex slavery. This is all personal and deeply meaningful to me. I approach this issue with a desire for justice, not credential or fame.
Benjamin Nolot - Director, Producer, Writer
Benjamin Nolot is the Founder and President of Exodus Cry, a human trafficking abolition organization. He devotes his time to abolition work for the ending of slavery and the exploitation of the vulnerable. Benjamin’s greatest passion in life is to love God and see His creation set free from the tyranny of oppression.

Matthew Dickey - Director of Re-enactments, Associate Producer, Editor, Cinematographer
Matthew Dickey is the founder of Empyrean Films, producer of the highly acclaimed short film, 22 Weeks. A graduate of Savannah College of Art and Design’s Motion Graphics and Animation school, Matthew is a prolific filmmaker skilled in editing, animation, and cinematography. He combines technical skill with creative vision to bring his projects to life in unique style and powerful cinematic qualities.

Kenny Miracle - Editor
Kenny Miracle is a freelance editor, motion designer, and project manager. For the past 7 years, Kenny has worked for various studios & non-profit organizations creating documentaries, TV shows, live concert DVDs, and commercials. Storytelling is a passion that is expressed through video. His desire is to merge this expression with meaningful messages.

Jesse Koepke - Editor
A native Montanan born in the beautiful Rocky Mountains, Jesse Koepke graduated from the University of Montana with degrees in English Literature and Digital Filmmaking. A video editor and filmmaker for almost ten years, he has worked on projects ranging from short films to live concert DVDs to documentaries.

Steve Willis - Photographer, Cinematographer
Steve Willis is the founder of Underpin Photography, a portrait photography company based in Kansas City. While a portrait photographer by trade, Steve expresses his passion for social reformation through his photojournalism work. His images are used extensively by International Anti-Trafficking Organization, Exodus Cry.

John Samuel Hanson - Composer
John Samuel Hanson is a credentialed cinematic composer whose ambition is to develop unique and relevant sound canvases in all his work. Projects he has been involved in include The Book of Eli, Lost, 16 Blocks, Constantine, among others.

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Executive Producers
Michael Beer
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