SEVERED WAYS
THE NORSE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

107 minutes, Old Norse & Abenaki, DV, Color, Stereo, Unrated
www.severedways.com

“A Must-See” - LA WEEKLY

“Severed Ways” a visionary work from one of the most promising new American narrative filmmakers in recent years.” - INDIEWIRE

“Gerry Meets Pathfinder” - VARIETY

Contact: Visit Films – info@visitfilms.com - +1.718.312.8210
SHORT SYNOPSIS

In 1007 AD on the mainland of North America, two stranded Vikings search against all odds to find their way home. As they struggle to survive in the vast forests of the New World, their paths diverge as one pursues a spiritual quest and the other reverts to his primal instincts. An inward adventure set entirely in the Northern American Woodlands.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The year 1007 AD, the place Vinland named by the arriving Vikings, is a North America inhabited by the Abenaki Indians. The beach is littered with dead Vikings, members of an expeditionary force now beyond the horizon, killed during a skirmish with the Skraeling, the Viking word for Indian. Deeper inland are two abandoned scouts, Orn and Volnard, now left behind in the panic of escape.

After witnessing the aftermath of the battle, the two decide to withdraw into the forest and head north, their only faint hope for survival. They set up a temporary camp to gather their strength, eat fish copiously and plan a route. The noise of the camp's construction is a sharp, nearly musical sequence as the sound of steel on timber is heard for the first time in the New World. The next day they discover signs in the earth that seem to guide them. In a distant homeland reminiscence, Volnard recalls his slaying of his sister's lover, a Christian thrall enslaved by the Norse.

As they make their way north, they discover two Irish monks, formerly enslaved by the Norse, and their primitive log church. Instinctually, the Christians furiously run away, but the Vikings soon catch their prey. One is dispatched unceremoniously by Orn. The other is let go, unbeknownst to Orn, having been chased by Volnard. The memory of his Christian sister's suicide is affecting his violent reflexes. Back at the clearing, they kill chickens and feast, and in a rage, they burn the church to the ground.

They move onwards and the lone Christian follows at a distance. Volnard secretly includes him in the journey. The priest begins to show his savior the mysteries of Christianity. Their discussion leads them into introspection and they disappear into the forest, the journey postponed. Orn sulks and in searching for fish, he spots a Skraeling/Abenaki woman by a pool of water. He rushes down to kill her, but when he rounds a large boulder, he finds her gone. She has moved only yards away, invisibly watching him.
She watches both Vikings, witnessing their separation: Orn becomes her obsession as the monk’s conversion of Volnard intensifies. She continues to watch the abandoned Orn, leaving him fish as he dreams of his berating wife, his links to home are only memory.

As the Christianization of Volnard continues, the Abenaki now leaves Orn a berry mixture that renders him unconscious. She drags him into a boat and paddles him through a dark granite gorge to an abandoned birch shingled wigwam. She confers with another Abenaki, who tells her to dispose of Orn and he begins a pursuit of Volnard. She ties Orn, disrobes him and rapes him. She leaves him there, where he awakens and stumbles back to his camp.

After this Orn continues on his hopeless journey and picks up Volnard’s track. He kills his Christian companion by axe and the two Vikings battle in brotherly fury. After a reconciliation of sorts, Volnard contemplates his situation. Brandishing a knife at his sleeping friend he walks away from camp. The Abenaki man sees Volnard and fires an arrow into his chest. As the two face each other, the Abenaki turns to see Orn and receives Orn’s ax in his chest. As Volnard takes his last breath, he raises his sword to the sky, ensuring his passage to Valhalla.

On a flaming pyre, Orn sends his dead companion down the river on his passage to the netherworld. As he continues north, the snows have come, killing his only hope for survival or Valhalla. The last Viking on the mainland of North America breathes his last, covered by a carpet of snow.

**DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT**

In grade school, rumor had it that the Vikings discovered North America in 1000 AD, and hidden in that rumor was the reality that it had been discovered long before. Native Americans were already here amongst an untarnished landscape. Resources were endless or so it seemed. Motivated by a fearless belief system, the Vikings had conquered large sections of coastal Europe by the 9th century, traveled deep into Russia and as far south as Morocco. As the first millennium passed, their reign was in decline and their attempted
settlement in America was unsuccessful. The Vikings and Native Americans clashed as trading went awry and conflicts arose. A well trained arrow on either side was equally deadly as two culturally diverse “pagan” populations faced off. These invading Europeans did not yet have the technological advantages, such as firearms, that they would have when returning in 1492. One can only imagine if the Vikings’ attempted settlement of North America had been more successful. Long lasting settlements might have been established and word of this new land would have spread through a poorer Europe during the Middle Ages. A Viking-Native American merged culture could have been born, changing the future of this continent forever.

While **Severed Ways** is a fictional film, it is drawn from The Vinland Sagas which tells the mythic story of the Norse exploration of America, initiated by Leif Ericson. One of the film’s locations, Leifsbudir, (now named L’AnseAux Meadows by the conquering French), is where evidence of a Norse settlement was unearthed in the 1960’s. Leifsbudir was a Viking base camp at the very northern tip of Newfoundland, the gateway to North America. Archeologists date the on and off occupation of the camp at a maximum of 20 years, and hypothesized the Vikings used this as a base and explored “beyond any season of snow”, which one could deduce was possibly as far south as Virginia. Our film’s pilgrimage to Leifsbudir was the pinnacle of my understanding of the Norse discovery of America. The isolation that Newfoundland still embodies and its unaltered grandiose coastal landscape offered a genuine connection to their experience.

I was able to sketch out a story that formed the core of the film and as shooting progressed, subtler story elements emerged. The weather changes and light cycles played a guiding roll. The isolated wilderness living conditions and physical demands of the production educated the motives of the characters. The film became a record of a specific journey through the ancient American landscape and I kept one eye on the environment as an Abenaki and the other as a Viking. The film weaves its balance by forces both seen and unseen, left for the viewer to discover. Some will see simplicity, others, complexity, which is what is so unusual about nature and ourselves in it. The symptoms of conflict are not just that we are in conflict with each other, but with nature itself. This film is seeking an audience curious about this strange cycle.

The majority of the film was shot on my family’s land in Vermont. Although I grew up in New York City, I consistently spent three months out of the year there, isolated in the wilderness. In the mountains, off the grid and fueled by solar power, this land remains much the way it was when my father originally got it in 1969. Those woods were the backdrop to a huge part of my childhood’s imaginary world. I know them inside and out, and they naturally lent themselves to be the core location of my first feature film. When I was a kid, my friends and I used to run around these woods, building forts, making fires, and pretending to kill each other and as you can see, not much has changed.
Severed Ways: TNDOA, was filmed on a DVX-100, and shot during two falls and one winter. Locations: New York, Vermont, Maine, and Newfoundland, at the Norse settlement of L'Aanse aux Meadows. Filmed using only natural light: moonlight, sun and fire. Original anthropological resources were employed whenever available. Dialogue in Old Norse and Abenaki, all structures built to specifications of the era. Crew 5, Cast 9.
CREDITS

Directed, Produced, Written, Edited by  
TONY STONE

Executive Producer  
AMY HOBBY  DAVID RAYMOND

Co-Producer  
CLARE AMORY

Associate Producer  
NANCY BARBER

Cinematography  
NATHAN CORBIN  DAMIEN PARIS

Assistant Director  
JOHN ROSENTHAL

Additional Cinematography  
NICK NEHEZ  CLARE AMORY  JEREMY GIBSON

Special Effects  
MARK BERO

Set Design and Building  
TONY STONE  BOB BRAINE  BILL STONE

Costumes  
CLARE AMORY  KETUTA MESHKAVALI  PEGGY WALDMAN

Hair  
MATT YEANDLE

Assistant Editor  
NATHAN CORBIN

Post-Production Supervisor  
JODI GIBSON

Mastering and Titling  
GLUE EDIT

Re-Recording Mixer  
EVAN BENJAMIN
CAST

Volnard                          FIORE TEDESCO
Orn                              TONY STONE
Monk 1                           DAVID PERRY
Orn’s Wife                       GABY HOFFMANN
Abenaki Woman                    NOELLE BAILEY
Abenaki Man                      JAMES FUENTES
Volnard’s Sister                 CLARE AMORY
Viking Thrall                    NATHAN CORBIN
Monk 2                           SEAN DOOLEY

MUSIC

DIMMU BORGIR
POPOL VUH
BURZUM
BRIAN ENO
MORBID ANGEL
OLD MAN’S CHILD
QUEENS OF THE STONEAGE
JUDAS PRIEST
BIOGRAPHIES

Tony Stone (director) was born and raised in New York City. He graduated from Bard College, studying with filmmakers Adolfs Mekas, Peggy Ahwesh, and Peter Hutton. He has made numerous short films, including White Flow starring Adrian Grenier and Reel Blood with Gaby Hoffmann. Stone has also worked as a special effects technician on a number of films, including Angels in America and Stay. Severed Ways is his first feature. Stone is currently completing a fantasy rock film with musician Melissa Auf der Maur entitled Out of Our Minds.

Amy Hobby (executive producer) has a filmmaking career that spans over 15 years as a producer, director, and cinematographer. As a producer, she was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for producing Secretary, starring James Spader and Maggie Gyllenhaal. Released by Lion’s Gate, Secretary won the Special Jury Prize at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and an independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay. Among her other producing credits are Love, Ludlow which made its world premiere at Sundance in 2005; Thirteen Conversations About One Thing starring Matthew McConaughey and John Turturo, released by Sony Pictures Classics; Hamlet, starring Ethan Hawke, Sam Shepard and Bill Murray, featured on numerous critics’ Top 10 List for 2000, distributed by Miramax Films; Sunday, winner of the 1997 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize and selected for “Un Certain Regard” at Cannes and New Directors/New Films in New York; and Nadja, executive produced by David Lynch and released by October Films. Amy is currently producing Steven Soderbergh’s new documentary film Spalding Grey: The Last Monolog about the life of monologist Spalding Grey. Third Girl from the Left based on the acclaimed novel by Martha Southgate. Amy is also directing her second feature film Sweet Flame, with Mira Sorvino, Meagan Good, and Jeremy Sisto shooting summer of 2007 in New York.

David Raymond (executive producer) is a maverick in the world of arts and media. In the film world, Raymond tends to choose projects that have an edgy message to share. Presently he is in the process of launching a web and television venture to broadcast auctions live from global auction houses. In the art world, Mr. Raymond is renowned for his collection of vintage photography from the 1920’s-1940’s as well as contemporary photography. In the March 2005 issue of Art an Antiques, he was selected as one of the top one hundred collectors in the United States. He was a dealer in the art and photography world for over twenty years. In the 1998-99 edition of the Art Market Guide, he was chosen as one of the top ten private art dealers in the United States. Last year, he was chosen as the artistic director for Magnum Photos at Paris Photo. This last year alone, he has lent over 60 works to exhibitions at the Hamburger Kunstalle, the CCCB in Barcelona and the Museo Bella Artes in Bilbao in addition to a show that traveled to five major museum venues in the US on surrealism and Julien Levy. All the photographs in the show were from his collection. He presently serves on the board of Performa, which produces New York’s prestigious performance art biennial. Raymond’s filmography includes: executive producer for The Big Bad Swim (completed) and A Simple Love Story (in development); North American Producer Los Dioses de Lata (pre-production in Argentina).
FILM FESTIVALS

Los Angeles Film Festival 2007 – Official Competition

Woodstock Film Festival 2007 – Official Competition

Leeds International Film Festival – Golden Owl Award Winner

PRESS CLIPPINGS

INDIEWIRE - LAFF '07 CRITICS NOTEBOOK 2 | Mixing Politics and Religion with the Usual Ups and Downs

by Michael Lerman (June 28, 2007)

...one fantastically daring piece of work that stands out above all. Tony Stone's "Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America," is a cheaply produced, full speed ahead Viking epic complete with full Nordic ballads and plenty of headbanging. At times echoing the best of early Herzog, Stone's film is mostly an original venture, and one that needs to be seen to be believe (the defecation scene alone has had the entire festival talking for days), but the widescreen impact of the film is one that simply cannot be ignored. The beautiful imagery achieved through sheer craftsmanship when paired with the uniqueness of its conception makes "Severed Ways" a visionary work from one of the most promising new American narrative filmmakers in recent years.

VARIETY - Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America

By PETER DEBRUGE (June 22, 2007)

"Pathfinder" meets "Gerry" in "Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America," a striking and virtually wordless story of two Vikings separated from their tribe and left to stumble through the North American wilderness. Blending heavy metal and opera, first-
time director Tony Stone unlocks a previously unexplored connection between hand-bangers and Vikings, creating what will seem to some an idyllic meditation on primitive man overwhelmed by his surroundings, and to others, the folly of two guys playing dress-up in the woods. Given Stone's emphasis on introspection over action, casual audiences are likely to be bored and confused, severely limiting the pic's prospects.

"Severed Ways" opens with the smoldering remains of a Viking encampment 1,000 years ago. Only two survivors remain, Orn (Stone) and Volnard (Fiore Tedesco), left for dead among the still-breathing corpses -- an early warning of the semi-amateur production values to come. Not much for chit-chat (which is just as well, since the Old Norse dialogue is presented in contemporary-sounding subtitles), they are the Jay and Silent Bob of the New World, long-haired stoner types who conclude, "We're toast if we stay here," before heading for high land.

In the woods, they use their battle axes to chop down trees and build a makeshift shelter, visiting a nearby creek for some good old-fashioned spear fishing. They catch a salmon, eat the "really killer" meal with bare fingers, then excrete it on camera the following morning, gingerly wiping themselves with fresh-plucked leaves. Stone and Tedesco aren't so much acting as re-enacting, like a pair of Viking enthusiasts who've roped a camera crew into recording their experiment in back-to-basics living.

Though amorphous plot and pacing meander for a good hour, the story begins to take shape when Orn and Volnard stumble across a pair of monks who've broken free of their Viking captors and built a makeshift chapel in the woods. Orn kills one monk outright; in an uncharacteristic act of decency, Volnard spares the other (David Perry).

That simple act of compassion introduces a welcome new wrinkle into Stone's Hobbesian vision of early American life -- solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short-- suggesting peace might in fact be possible. However, as history tells us, the Vinland settlement was short-lived, which means it's only a matter of time before the Vikings' warlike nature proves their undoing.

Orn and Volnard eventually part company, leading to the most compelling chapter: "Separation" (each of the film's seven segments is introduced in garish red letters, a punk touch in an otherwise spartan film). Cut off from Orn, Volnard reaches out to the surviving monk, bonding with this Christian stranger in a way that seems almost civilized.

Elsewhere in the forest, an Abenaki woman (Noelle Bailey) fixates on Orn from afar, drugging and raping the Viking stranger. Such behavior seems to contradict the natives' hostility toward these "white beasts," but fits with Stone's bohemian fantasy, in which he is both aggressor and innocent -- and possibly also the unwitting sire of a new Viking-Abenaki legacy.

If only Stone's elliptical storytelling style were as lucid as his eye for the environment. From the moment the Vikings step from the beach into the virgin woods, the jerky camerawork settles into steadier hands, allowing auds to appreciate the characters' majestic surroundings (which include scenes set at L'Anse aux Meadows, an actual 11th-
century Viking settlement in Newfoundland).

By shooting in super-widescreen HD, Stone was able to disappear into the wilderness -- and his character -- with minimal crew. Relying exclusively on natural light, the digital picture sacrifices the finer colors and details that might have appeared on film.

**LA WEEKLY – LAFF from A to Y**

by Ron Stringer (June 20, 2007)

GO> SEVERED WAYS: THE NORSE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA (USA) Werner Herzog meets Monty Python in writer-director-actor Tony Stone's dreamy, deadpan saga set to the thumping strains of Popul Vuh, Judas Priest, Morbid Angel and more - of (mostly) sublimated erotic obsession in the Old New World. Left for carrion on the shores of Newfoundland, a pair of lumbering, heavy-helmeted Viking warriors, identified in the credits as Volnard (Fiore Tedesco) and Orn (Stone), crash their way through to the forest primeval, killing lots of trees and Indians and smaller critters along the way (and, in one indelible moment, practicing the primitive rudiments of hair guitar). Despite some atrocious table manners and a brief if explosive bout with irregularity, all goes swimmingly until, that is, Volnard encounters a pretty-footed Irish monk with conversion on his mind. Sparks fly, swords flash, and, for one hushed moment, the giggling subsides. A must-see.