

[Click to Print](#)

Oklahoma Gazette

Rod & Reel

R&R Q&A with Louis Gossett Jr.

On the Oscar winner's Oklahoma-lensed 'The Lamp' and long career.

By [Rod Lott](#)

October 4th, 2011

Shot in Tulsa, the drama "The Lamp" is now available on DVD, VOD and iTunes. Co-starring Louis Gossett Jr., Jason London and Meredith Salenger, the film about an endangered marriage is based upon the book by Tulsa businessman Jim Stovall, who serves as executive producer and has a cameo.

I talked with Stovall and Gossett earlier this summer, when the Oscar-winning actor was in Oklahoma City for a charity screening.

OKG: What attracted you to "The Lamp"?

Gossett: I'm attracted to faith-based movies these days. Maybe it has to do with my age or whatever it is, but it's a message or lesson that audiences really need for their lives. This is my fourth straight and it's a very beautiful message. It's my pleasure and a privilege to encourage others to watch this film. It's important for us to see.

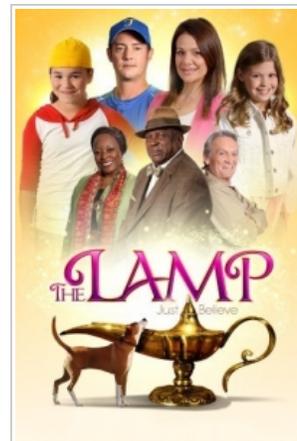
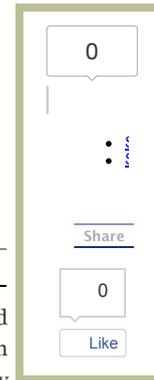
Stovall: I wrote the book originally, and to me, it's all about the message. Stories are there to entertain people and keep their interest, and I've always believed if you can tell a good story, you earn the right to share your message. What attracted me to the movie, to work with (director) Tracy Trost and Mr. Gossett, is nobody tells a story better than they do. I could just see Mr. Gossett playing this character, and myself as a blind person, I could visualize it and trust Mr. Gossett to make it happen on the screen.

OKG: Jim, is there any connection between this and "The Ultimate Gift," because IMDb says you play a limo driver in both.

Stovall: I play a limo driver in every movie! Something just made sense to me about having the blind guy play the limo driver. We made it look like it's in New York. We put in some cameos with some friends of mine, like Steve Forbes. They made it look like Jim's dropping the guy off in New York.

OKG: Jim, do you only work in the faith-based films?

Stovall: I believe in message films and



films that help people build their faith. I'm not one to exclude anyone from the message. I just want something that I can be proud of at the end of the day. It has to be first-rate, it has to be entertaining, and when you work with an Academy Award winner like Mr. Gossett, you know you're bringing the quality, but it's important to have a message behind it. At the end of the day, we all gotta live with what we do.



OKG: Louis, is this your first trip to Oklahoma?

Gossett: No, it's not my first trip. I've been here before. I used to go to the black rodeo. I was invited there quite a few years ago. I like Oklahoma a lot.

OKG: Someone in the office reminded me of this, but in "An Officer and a Gentleman," wasn't one of the soldiers from Oklahoma?

Gossett: Oh, I didn't know whether you were gonna bring that up! It's a famous line: "The only two things from Oklahoma are steers and queers." That's a line somebody wrote, but Marines say stuff like that.

OKG: As great as you were in that, mind if I ask you about some of your other films?

Gossett: Oh, so many other films, there's a pool of about 70. One of my favorite stories was "Enemy Mine," which was filmed over a six-month period, and then of course there's the "Iron Eagle," when I went to Israel and, um, there's some wonderful ones. I got a chance to play Anwar al-Sadat. "Diggstown" was wonderful. "Diggstown" was called "Midnight Sting" in Europe. It's like "The Sting." So many wonderful opportunities. So many different characters over the last 60 years. That's some pretty good stuff. I'm going to kick back and do some message films. Maybe we can help some young people. What we should do at this age is to be a mentor. I've been offered a couple of jobs at some universities to speak, and I speak across the country anyway with my book and my foundation.

OKG: What's your book?

Gossett: The book is called "An Actor and a Gentleman." And the foundation is called the Eracism Foundation. You can look that up at eracismfoundation.org.

OKG: I did, and I have a question kind of regarding that: You worked constantly throughout the '70s, and back then, a lot of black actors could only get cast in blaxploitation films. Other than "J.D.'s Revenge," you really didn't do any. Was that just coincidence or something you specifically didn't want to be a part of?

Gossett: It's not that I didn't want to be a part of it, but it would be better for our young people in the audience to see us intermingling with everything in America. I've played mayors, district attorneys; I'm sometimes the villain, sometimes the hero. We carefully did that in theater, then we did that on television, and wound up doing that on film. I've wound up making friends with people like Jim Garner and David Janssen and Lorne Greene and Eddie Asner. I'm very grateful to cross swords with them in front of the camera, and I think that's what America should be about.

OKG: Being an Oklahoman, I have to ask about Garner. You've worked with him, but you also worked with Chuck Norris on "Firewalker." Everyone thinks Norris is the tough guy, but my money's on Garner.



right, Gossett in "Enemy Mine"

Gossett: Well, Jim is hanging in there. He's not doing too well. But during the heyday, Jim was fast on the gun, so Chuck couldn't get his leg close enough. Jim's family. Jim gave me my break. Our common Cherokee blood, of course.

OKG: You mentioned "Iron Eagle." You made four of those films, so don't you think you should've been asked to be in "The Expendables"?

Gossett: They didn't call me because I'm too tough.

OKG: Given the trend of theaters today, you know that "Jaws 3-D" was 20 years ahead of its time, right?

Gossett: You know what was ahead of its time was "2001."

OKG: But you weren't in that one.

Gossett: No, I wasn't, but you were talking about movies. We've done a couple of movies that were ahead of its time. A couple of television (movies) like "To Dance with Olivia" and "Color of Love." So I'm very proud of the body of work. But the last four movies — even the Tyler Perry movie, "Why Did I Get Married Too?" — otherwise, starting with "Left Behind" series and "The Least Among You" and "The Grace Card" and "The Lamp" are very rewarding feeling to say those lines. Jim's favorite line that I have to say in "The Lamp" is, "Sometimes we get our eye off what is the truth, and we begin to embrace a lie, and the lie becomes the truth, and we wake up one morning, and our entire world is wrapped around a lie." And that's Jim Stovall at his best.

Stovall: Well, I borrowed that line and paraphrased from Adolf Hitler, who said, "If you can tell a lie long enough and loud enough, it will become the truth."

Gossett: That's the truth. I was very proud to say those lines.

OKG: Yeah, but even some of your past projects have been message-based. Even "Enemy Mine." That totally was a racism story.

Gossett: Two enemies become friends. My dream is to have a creative circumstance in our country where we need to rely on one another. We really do. We need it now, more than ever. We need to teach that. We need to get to that promise "one nation under God," we need to promise we're going in that direction, especially with unrest everywhere else. It's essential for us to see ("The Lamp"). When the DVD comes out, buy it and put on your shelf. Pull it off your shelf and show your children something that's pretty good.

OKG: Do you two have plans to work again?

Gossett: I'd love it.

Stovall: I have a book project that is based on a blind detective. I've had two very successful novels on it, and want it to turn it into a movie, and there is a guy who is an elderly sage who kind of pushes the plot and makes it work, and he runs a newsstand on the corner and he interacts with all the characters, and in my mind, he looks just like Louis Gossett.

Gossett: From your mouth to God's ears, Jim.

Stovall: Absolutely, man. —*Rod Lott*