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Producer, songwriter say "Fireproof" relays understandable message

By Jennifer Tramel

NASHVILLE, Tenn., 6/25/09 – Christians sometimes intentionally veer from becoming involved in popular culture out of concerns about exposure to potentially negative influences. But for senior pastor Michael Catt and members of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany Ga., reaching the lost has meant becoming involved in a particularly secular popular arena: Hollywood.

Catt served as executive producer of the film *Fireproof*, and Sherwood Baptist Church members played many of the movie's roles.

"We at Sherwood want to reach the next generation for Christ," Catt said. "A lot of churches and preachers spend all their time cursing the darkness, and we decided to turn the light on. Let's go to where the darkness is and light a candle."

During a recent Inside LifeWay podcast, Catt and John Waller, the artist who wrote and performed *Fireproof*'s theme song, discussed their involvement in the film and why putting a Christian message into film and song is important.

They agreed that reaching the culture requires using mediums the culture understands. In the case of *Fireproof*, film was the medium of choice.

The two men met for the first time in Orlando, Fla., where Waller attended a screening of *Fireproof* after learning his song had been chosen for a key montage toward the end of the film.

"This song fit," Catt said, adding that the production team listened to countless songs before settling on Waller's. Catt said the film needed a song that embodied the "Love Dare" process the main characters undergo. While *I'm Waiting* matched perfectly, though Waller did not write the song with a troubled marriage or any particular relationship in mind.

Waller composed the song several years before the movie was made, while waiting on God's timing to pursue his musical career. "It was a discouraging time in my life," Waller said. "A friend of mine called me and encouraged me to ... keep being faithful. I hung up the phone with him and I wrote about where I was. It took me maybe five or 10 minutes to write the song."

At the time, he never imagined it would be the title song of his album or the theme song for a popular film.

Fireproof has been shown on Turkish airlines and other secular environments around the world, and Catt and

Waller said they hope the film's message continues to reach "a jaded world" in an understandable way.

The men also said they do not want to rely solely on film as a means of reaching nonbelievers. It is important, they said, to pursue other popular mediums, such as iTunes, to direct people toward Christian messages.

B&H Publishing Group, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources, has already helped extend the reach of Fireproof's message with The Love Dare, a New York Times best-seller detailing the 40-day challenge the characters experience in the film.

Now, LifeWay is exploring another popular method for reaching people: Apple's iPhone.

In June, LifeWay launched three iPhone applications based on The Love Dare.

The applications include a digital edition of The Love Dare with pop-up Scripture references and the complete Holman Christian Standard Bible; a "40 Dares" program that lists each day's challenge from the book and allows users to check off the dare when it has been completed; and a daily reminders application with 365 quotations from the book that users can mark as favorites and e-mail to others.

Catt said that Sherwood's leadership team is beginning to consider the next project for Sherwood Pictures. Already, Sherwood has received more than 14,000 confessions of faith from individuals who have seen one of the church's three films, which include Flywheel, Facing the Giants and Fireproof.

This formula of "light[ing] a candle" in a world of darkness seems to be working.

To listen to the entire Inside LifeWay podcast, visit LifeWay.com/InsideLifeWay.

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