



The Last Request

By IFQ Critic Todd Konrad

In life, one is often saddled with seemingly impossible requests from loved ones. Whether it be from family or close friends, sometimes you are forced to do whatever you have to do in order to meet such challenges, less being forced to face the worst thing one can suffer from someone you care about, disappointment. This simple idea is played out to its illogical extreme in John DeBellis's comedy, *The Last Request*. A fun, crazy comedy, *The Last Request* follows the exploits of one man's desperate attempt to please his father in perhaps the most extreme manner possible.

The tale chronicles the exploits of Jeff (T.R. Knight), a young priest who is summoned home by his polite yet psychotic mother (Barbara Feldon) in order to learn some terrible news. Jeff's father, Pop (Danny Aiello) has only months left to live and as his last request he commands that one of his sons, either Jeff or his brother Tom (Nick Scotti) settle down, get married, and have a child in order to carry on the family line after Pop's passing. While brother Tom more than ably takes up the charge and indeed gets himself hitched, an unexpected tragedy on his wedding night takes him out for the count, leaving only Jeff to fulfill his father's request.

Leaving the priesthood behind and attempting to throw himself at any woman who will have him, Jeff has a tough time to say the least. In between he works at a rest home for retired actors led by the over the top Mr. Oliver (Mario Cantone), and assisted by Cathy (Sabrina Lloyd), a sweet

social worker whom Jeff has conflicting feelings for. As he is bounced from one horrendous hook-up attempt to another, Jeff seeks guidance from his therapist Angelo (Joe Piscopo) who works out of his brother's shoe repair store and has plenty of shoe analogies to spare. As time grows ever shorter for Pop, Jeff becomes increasingly desperate to fulfill the last wish of his beloved father to ever more hilarious effect. Teeming with deliciously crude sight gags (a crucifix telephone anyone?) and absurd situations that are both politically incorrect and hysterical, *The Last Request* is a refreshing romantic comedy with plenty of subversive edge.

Anchoring the film are the dual performances of both Knight and Aiello as the beleaguered son and cheerfully optimistic father. Knight infuses Jeff with a wonderful sweetness as a rather innocent guy uninitiated to the worlds of sex and seduction, simply trying to make his way through the briar patch of insane women in order to do right by his dad. Aiello, on the other hand, gives one of his best comic performances as the dying father. Constantly cracking jokes and pranking those around him with his imminent demise, his portrayal of Pop is as a man who has enjoyed his life to the fullest and does not feel any sense of betrayal or sadness over his passing. His gallows humor towards his own death is both offensive and funny in the best sense. With top notch support by solid character actors like Mario Cantone, Joe Piscopo, Barbara Feldon, Sabrina Lloyd, Vincent Pastore, Frank Vincent, and legend Tony LoBianco, *The Last Request* is funny, poignant, and an all around great gem to sit back and enjoy.