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MOVIES

Funnyman makes funny movie

Amanda Stefaniuk talks to comedian John DeBellis about The Last Request
Amanda Stefaniuk

John DeBellis knows comedy. He was a part of the New York stand-up scene in its heyday, alongside Larry David ("We used to go down and watch Larry bomb because he was so funny when he bombed - he would yell at people."), and his writing skills were honed on shows such as Saturday Night Live and Politically Incorrect. In DeBellis' movie, *The Last Request*, which hits DVD on April 22, Danny Aiello plays a dying stand-up comedian whose sole wish for a grandchild is left unfulfilled when one of his sons literally dies trying to accomplish the request. This leaves his only other son no other choice but to drop out of seminary school to make pop happy.



"The whole design was to do a real simple story, and just make you laugh. Anytime we've seen it with a full audience, it's exploded."

He's also proud of his ensemble, which includes Barbara Feldon and Joe Piscopo: "We got lucky. Buddy Mantia, the producer, knew most of the actors, so we were able to get great cast."

Shooting on a tight budget in 19 days could have been daunting, but DeBellis says he had a good crew. "Our director of photography, Dan Karlok, was amazing. He shot on video, but it looks like film - you could never tell the difference."

When they realized they needed a top notch editor to fine tune the movie in postproduction, they were helped by no less than Woody Allen.

"Woody recommended Bob Reitano, who had done *Sleepless In Seattle* and a whole mess of big films. Bob did it for half of the money he gets because he liked what he had seen, and he did a great job.

"I don't believe in that whole thing 'it's a film by'. It's never that, it's a group effort. It takes a good group of people to make a film," he continues. "The real ego is the film, everything else is secondary. If you have a good dp, a good editor, and good writing, you basically need a bad director to screw it up."

With wins for Best Film at The New York Independent Film And Video Festival and Best Director at The Drake at the International Film Festival in Naples, DeBellis couldn't be more happy with the movie.

"The whole design was to do a real simple story, and just make you laugh. I feel like we've succeeded. Anytime we've seen it with a full audience, it's exploded."

Upcoming Releases

April 15 - Juno; Before The Devil Knows You're Dead; Aliens Vs Predator Requeim; Lars and The Real Girl; Woody Woodpecker Collection: Volume Two

Amanda Stephaniuk is a freelance writer who literally grew up in a video store.

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