

# Actor steps behind the camera to make 'Dough Boys'

For veteran actor Louis Lombardi, the best things in life always have revolved around his close friends and family. So it comes as no surprise to see that both are topics addressed in his directorial debut.

Telling the tale of two brothers running a local bakery despite one's rampant gambling problem, the recently released DVD, "Dough Boys," mixes the innocence of childhood with the tragedy and responsibility of adulthood.

Making it all the more special for Lombardi, it was filmed in his Bronx neighborhood and featured many of his close friends.

"It was great. Being able to be home in my hometown in New York City, my first feature film, with all my buddies in my neighborhood, it was almost a dream," said the actor and director in an interview with the Tribune from Los Angeles. "How much better does that get?"

The film also stars Andrew Keegan, Mike Starr, Vincent Pastore and James Madio as well as Lombardi, who is best known for his roles as Edgar on "24," and Skip Lipari in "The Sopranos."

In "Dough Boys," Lombardi is Lou, who along with his brother Frank, run Conti's, a real-life Bronx bakery that has been around for more than a century.

To hear Lombardi recall the story of landing the real Conti's as a primary shooting location leaves no doubt that fate played a big part in bringing the film's backdrop to fruition.

"I ended up calling (the owner) and was like 'Hey, can I use your place in the movie I wanna do?' He was like 'No problem, Louie. When do you

need the place?' I was like 'August,' He goes, 'Wow, we're on vacation for the whole month,'" recalled Lombardi, who then had one more request for the owner.

"Then I go 'Well, at the end of the movie, I kind of need to wreck the place,' " he continued. "He was like 'Guess what? We're gonna tear the place down to renovate.' "

"That's when you know it's meant to be," Lombardi said. "They didn't even charge us for the place."

In the movie, Lou gets into trouble with a local mob figure over a personal gambling debt

and has to figure out how to pay the loan before he gets hurt. In the process, he finds himself digging an even deeper hole that will test the bond between himself and his brother.

Interspersed in the story are flashbacks of Lou and Frank learning life's lessons in the bakery with their father, played by Pastore.

"The flashbacks were really heartfelt for me," explained Lombardi. "The character is instilling brotherhood and family. Vinnie as the father is instilling that in the children at that age. That was kind of the way my mother taught me."

Because he wanted the movie to be seen by audiences of all ages, Lombardi resisted the urge to add any vulgar language and excessive violence.

"I didn't put one curse word in the movie," said Lombardi, who also appeared in such films as "Natural Born Killers," "Deuces

Wild" and "Spider-Man 2." "I tried to go back and make a film like the '50s where you could watch it with the whole family and you're not offending anyone. You could watch it with your 2-year-old daughter or your 80-

year-old mother."

Unfortunately for Lombardi, the MPAA gave the film a PG-13 rating based on two references to drugs put in the film to actually dissuade drug use.

"I basically made this movie an anti-drug movie without any vulgar language so you could get this out to kids and families," explained Lombardi. "No matter what rating they give me, I know what the audience feels about my movie, and I'm very proud and happy that it came across the way I initially set it up."

The idea for "Dough Boys" began taking shape more than 12 years ago, according to Lombardi, who persisted in getting it made regardless of the obstacles

he encountered.

"No matter how many TV shows I did. No matter how many movies I've done since then, I've never stopped with the passion and desire to get this thing done," he said. "Never quit and never give up, because once you do, you'll never have that opportunity open up for you (again)."

In addition to showing the importance of family, the message Lombardi hopes people take from "Dough Boys" is that life is going to be tough. It's how you deal with it that makes you who you are.

"Things happen terribly every day. What makes you the person you are is how you handle tragedy, sadness and disease," he said. "I believe you live until the last shovel of dirt is kicked over you. That's when it ends. Until then, you live every day until it's not your every day anymore."

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