

Aiello loves new role

By MARK DANIELL -- For JAM! Movies

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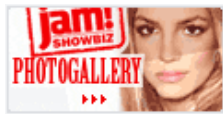
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TORONTO -- Danny Aiello is the first to tell you he doesn't always get offered the kind of roles he likes to play. But when writer-director Kevin Jordan offered him the part of Frank Giorgio in the bittersweet family drama, "Brooklyn Lobster," he leapt at the chance.

"For me it's a European-type movie," Aiello said, while in town to promote the [film](#) at the Toronto International Film Festival. "It's a small story about family and it's these kinds of characters that I most like to portray and I'm not always given the opportunity to do that."

"Brooklyn Lobster," which director [Martin Scorsese](#) loved so much he's affixed "Martin Scorsese presents" atop the credits, tells the story of a passionate, combustible family man - Frank (Aiello) - who's struggling to save his Brooklyn lobster shop.



Actor Danny Aiello, left, stars in director Kevin Jordan's family-inspired drama, "Brooklyn Lobster," which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. (Sun Media photo)

With the bank that loaned him money for a restaurant addition having folded, Frank, his family and motley crew of misfits struggle to save the Brooklyn lobster shop, that says everything about who they are. Part comedy, part drama and all heart, the film manages to pump its "smallish" story full of warm, human characters - the likes of which we don't see much of anymore.

Secondary storylines involving Frank's troubled marriage to Maureen (played by Jane Curtin), his tech-obsessed son, Michael (played by Daniel Sauli) and his girlfriend Kerry (played by Heather Burns) add more tension to a story Aiello called, "truthful."

Based partially on Jordan's own family-run lobster shop in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, the film had its genesis in a short documentary he filmed with his brothers to raise money for the production. His grandfather, known as "the lobster king of New York," started the business in 1938 in Manhattan, before moving it to Brooklyn. The film loosely portrays the Jordan family's struggle to keep their business afloat.

Casting director Phyllis Huffman ("Million Dollar Baby," "Mystic River") got the script to Aiello, who signed on immediately.

"When I saw the script," Aiello said, "I called them that night. I liked it that much. I love this character, I think he's loaded with love. This is a blustering kind of guy who wears his heart on his sleeve. He tells the truth and that's why I love him."

"He's a real person," the Oscar-nominated actor enthused, clearly on a roll. "He's not a phony bastard. I wish all people were like him. I mean maybe not as combustible, but as truthful."

"A character that lets people know where they stand," he said raising his voice, as if he was asking a question. "That to me is a great thing."

Aiello also reflected on some of his other screen highlights. "I know it's silly to say it, but I love 29th Street and I love Jack Ruby Moonstruck I liked but my character was troublesome to



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29th Street and I love Jack Ruby. Moonstruck I liked, but my character was troublesome to me."

When asked what he thought of Luc Besson's recent re-release of 1994's "Léon," which contained additional footage, the actor smiled. "Luc came to New York to sit with me. There were two scenes and I didn't want to do it. But he made the part a little bigger and spent so much time sweet-talking me, I couldn't say no."

Aiello, however, became most reflective when it came time to distill his performance in Spike Lee's "Do The Right Thing" (for which he won numerous critics' prizes and was nominated for an Oscar and Golden Globe.)

"The significance of Do The Right Thing was amazing, because I was a street kid," he reminisced. "But I told Spike, that for me to do it, I would need to rewrite parts of his character. I knew that guy. I knew who he was and Spike let me bring that to the role."

And even though Aiello is the kind of character actor who inhabits every role he takes, the 72-year-old has crossed another love off his to-do list. He released an album of traditional jazz standards titled "I Just Wanted to Hear the Words" and recently hit the road, playing shows in New York City and Los Angeles.

"Brooklyn Lobster," which was acquired for distribution by Shoreline Entertainment after its Toronto premiere, will be in theatres this fall.

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