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CINEMA LIBRE STUDIO PRESENTS A SHAKE THE TREE PRODUCTIONS PRODUCTION A FILM BY MIKKI DEL MONICO "ALTO" STARRING DIANA DEGARMO AND NATALIE KNEPP DAVID VALCIN, LOU MARTINI, JR., MELANIE MINICHINO, WARD HORTON, LIN TUCCI, ANTHONY J. GALLO, JAKE ROBARDS WITH BILLY WIRTH AND ANNABELLA SCIORRA

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIKKI DEL MONICO PRODUCED BY TONI D'ANTONIO CO-PRODUCED BY MIKKI DEL MONICO AND ANNABELLA SCIORRA EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ELLORA DECARLO CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARY COOPER, JUDY DOVE, JOHN YONOVER  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY VALENTINA CANIGLIA, AIC-IMAGO PRODUCTION DESIGNER MARILYN D'AMATO ORIGINAL SCORE BY THOM ROTELLA WITH MUSIC FROM NINI CAMPS, MARILYN D'AMATO, TRINA HAMLIN, ANTIGONE RISING, SCOUT, ACE YOUNG

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SHAKE THE TREE PRODUCTIONS

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Alto

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## PLOT SUMMARY AND LOGLINE

*A lesbian mob rom-com...  
enough said?*

Improbable love, the mob, and family traditions gone awry pave the way for comedy in this character-rich story that ventures into uncharted territory, proving the most surprising discoveries often come when we least expect it, in the midst of murder plots, federal investigations, and oh yeah, lasagna. When unlikely worlds collide, it all comes down to...



Two Girls. One Gun.  
The Mob.

*Because coming out  
to family is hard,  
but coming out to FAMILY  
is funny.*



# ALTO

## SYNOPSIS

Francesca "Frankie" Del Vecchio is headstrong and passionate about two things: her band and good old fashioned Italian-American culture...and by this, we are talking about anything NOT related to the Mob. Still living at home with her mother and sister, engaged to the RIGHT boy from a good Italian family, Frankie's life seems to be going down a very traditional path...until she discovers a dead body in the trunk of a rental car, messing up a perfectly good New Jersey gig. Her sister, Heather, who can't get enough of anything Mafia – including being obsessed with the cult phenomenon TV show MOB HIT – sees an open door, and she's determined to go through it...right to the funeral.

At the wake, Frankie and Heather meet two people for whom the Mafia isn't a television show. Nicolette Bellafusco manages wedding bands and also happens to be the sophisticated daughter of Caesar "The General" Bellafusco, a newly crowned Brooklyn don. Heather is captivated by Caesar, Nicolette is captivated by Frankie, and Frankie can't wait to get the hell away from it all. That, however, is easier said than done. Not only are the Feds swiftly on Frankie, questioning her about her new Mafia friends, but Nicolette shows up at the band's next gig – triggering something in Frankie she never would have imagined.

As Frankie finds herself alienated from her fiancé and – ambivalently – growing closer to Nicolette, she manages to cast herself as a featured player in a full-scale conspiracy against Bellafusco, wherein only she can prove who is really out to get him. Unexpectedly paralleling the very stories she detests on MOB HIT, caught between her planned marriage to Tony and her growing attraction to Nicolette, Frankie is finding out that the most surprising discoveries often come when we least expect it, in the midst of murder plots, federal investigations, and oh yeah, lasagna.



**You got a problem with it?**



DIANA DeGARMO (Frankie) is well-loved not only for her powerful voice and success in the third season of *American Idol* but also for her many theatrical roles in award-winning productions of *Hair*, *Hairspray*, *9 to 5*, and most recently, a national tour of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

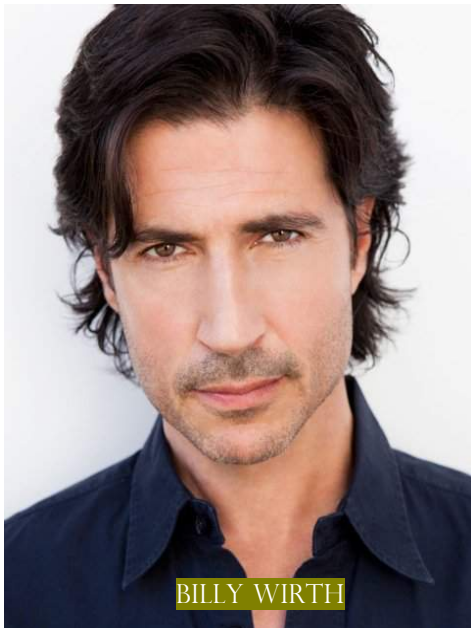
NATALIE KNEPP (Nicolette) has appeared in numerous films and had guest starring and recurring roles on hit TV shows like *Orange is the New Black* and *The Good Wife*. She recently starred in the Mel Brooks executive-produced feature film, *Sam*, to be released soon.



DIANA DEGARMO



NATALIE KNEPP



BILLY WIRTH



ANNABELLA SCIORRA



WARD HORTON

BILLY WIRTH (Caesar Bellafusco) is known for his breakout role in *The Lost Boys* as well as his career as a model discovered by photographer Bruce Weber. Wirth has appeared in numerous films and TV movies and has had recurring roles in the TV shows *Wiseguy* and *Chicago P.D.* as well as appearances in shows such as *Major Crimes*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *CSI*, *Sex and the City*, *Charmed*, and *Tales from the Crypt*. He has also directed and produced the feature film, *MacArthur Park*, and executive-produced *A Single Shot* as well as the upcoming *Man Down*.

ANNABELLA SCIORRA (Sofia Del Vecchio) emerged in the film scene with an Independent Spirit Award nomination for her role in the film, *True Love*. Other film credits include *Jungle Fever*, *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, *What Dreams May Come*, *Mr. Wonderful*, *Cop Land*, *The Addiction*, *The Funeral*, *The Cure*, *Find Me Guilty*, *Romeo is Bleeding*, *Mr. Jealousy*, *Reversal of Fortune*, *12 And Holding*, and *King of the Jungle*. In addition to her role on *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, she has also appeared in *The L Word*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Good Wife*, *CSI*, and *Taxi Brooklyn*. She also has extensive credits in the theatre, most recently in *A Month in the Country* at CSC.

WARD HORTON (Special Agent Laughlin) starred in New Line Cinema's box office standout, *Annabelle*, which grossed over \$250 million worldwide. He followed that up with the romantic comedy, *My Bakery in Brooklyn*, and was cast in director Steve McQueen's HBO pilot, *Codes of Conduct*, starring Helena Bonham Carter. Ward has appeared in many other feature films as well as TV shows such as *Royal Pains*, *CSI: Miami*, *White Collar*, *Body of Proof*, and *Law & Order: SVU*. He is also well-known for his recurring roles on *One Life to Live*, *Guiding Light*, and *All My Children*.



DAVID VALCIN



LOU MARTINI, JR.



LIN TUCCI

DAVID VALCIN (Mike Del Vecchio) is best known for his recurring role as Scarface in the hit CBS drama, *Person of Interest*. He is also known for his recurring role in *Two of a Kind* with Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. He has appeared in numerous films such as Garry Marshall's *New Year's Eve*, and TV shows such as *Just Shoot Me!*, *The Practice*, and *Law & Order*.

MELANIE MINICHINO (Heather Del Vecchio) has worked on TV shows including *The Sopranos*, *Law & Order*, and the Comedy Central pilot, *The John Roberts Show*, directed by Michael Showalter. She has been the female voice of Disney Junior since 2010 and has been a featured voice in *Kung Fu Panda* and in hit video games like *Halo 5*.

LOU MARTINI, JR. (Louie Chinzano) has appeared on the hit TV shows, *Law & Order*, *Orange is the New Black*, and *The Americans* but is perhaps best known for his role as Anthony Infante on *The Sopranos*. Not only is Lou a prolific film actor, but his latest script, *Honor*, is slated to shoot this fall, with Joe Bologna directing.

JAKE ROBARDS (Tony Cappelletti) has appeared in numerous films, most recently *Lucky Them* with Toni Collette and Johnny Depp. He performed alongside Paul Newman in the Broadway production of *Our Town*, and has appeared in this season of Amazon's *Alpha House*.

LIN TUCCI (Lina Cappelletti) is a recent SAG Award winner for Best Comedy Ensemble for her recurring role as Anita DeMarco in *Orange is the New Black*. She has appeared on stage alongside Joann Worley and Phyllis Diller. Her film roles include *Showgirls*, *Brooklyn Rules*, and *How to Seduce Difficult Women*.

ANTHONY J. GALLO (Sonny Gagoots) has starred in films such as *Brothers* and *Live from Studio B* and had supporting roles in *Men in Black III*, *My Brother's Keeper*, and *The Intruder*. He has also appeared on *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Lipstick Jungle*, and the pilot episode of *White Collar*.



MELANIE MINICHINO



JAKE ROBARDS



ANTHONY J. GALLO



Stills from Alto©



Nick Giangliulo and Lin Tucci



Melanie Minichino and Diana DeGarmo



Natalie Knepp

INT. SLOPE FITNESS -- DAY



Melanie Minichino, Annabella Sciorra, David Valcin

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY



Lou Martini, Jr. and Billy Wirth



Ward Horton and Toni D'Antonio





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**MIKKI DEL MONICO** (Writer-Director) works out of a true passion for the craft of storytelling. Winner of both an Alfred P. Sloan Screenwriting Award and Production Grant, he has also served as a film editor, book editor, and a digital media assistant on a ship that sailed the Atlantic Ocean. *Alto* is his directorial debut.



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**TONI D'ANTONIO** (Producer) has had a twenty-year career both in front of and behind the camera. It's harder to find a job she hasn't done than one she has. With a diverse knowledge of and immense respect for the creative process, her "get it done" mentality is unstoppable.



**ELLORA DeCARLO** (Executive Producer) is known as the "everybody wins" girl and has worked as an actor, singer, and producer in NYC for fourteen years. She is also a tireless international advocate for children living outside the love and stability of a permanent home.



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**VALENTINA CANIGLIA, AIC-IMAGO** (Director of Photography) is an award-winning cinematographer with a style that translates each story's unique concept into breathtaking moving images. Amongst her many spots for TV and commercials, she has lensed numerous films including *Fred Won't Move Out*, starring Elliot Gould, and is about to begin shooting *Il Ragazzo della Giudecca*, starring Giancarlo Giannini and Franco Nero.



**DAWID PYPEC** (Associate Producer) has used his love of film and humanity to work on films such as *Secrets Never Told: Stories from the Foster Care System*. He is an integral member of the creative team of Shake the Tree Productions, LLC, and continues to produce shorts and features both independently and with the team.



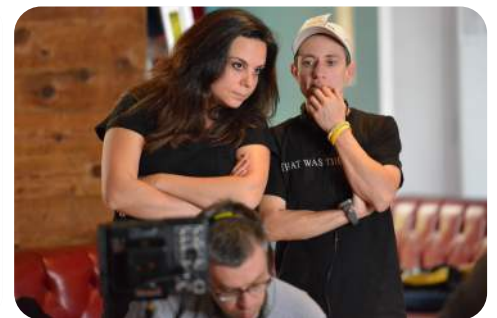
**GRAZIANO BRUNI** (Line Producer) has worked for nearly a decade in indie film and TV for clients such as MTV, TLC, A&E, Spike TV, and Discovery. Drawn to compelling stories, his collaborative spirit allows him to communicate the needs and desires of the creatives into a plan that translates across the project.



**THOM ROTELLA** (Composer) has performed or recorded with the likes of Norah Jones, Stevie Nicks, Phil Spector, Ronnie Spector, Darlene Love, David Foster, Donna Summer, Cher, The Beach Boys, Lionel Richie, Bette Midler, Luciano Pavarotti, and Frank Sinatra. He has composed music for television and commercials and has played on numerous soundtracks.



**POST FACTORY<sup>NY</sup>** (Post Production Services) is a NYC-based full-service post-production facility. Digital Intermediate Producer Cristina Esterás-Ortiz coordinated the post for *Alto* with Digital Imaging and Color Science by Terry Brown, Digital Intermediate Color by Ben Perez, Re-Recording Mix and Sound Design by Keith Hodne, and End Crawl by Seth Buncher.



**MARILYN D'AMATO** (Production Design and Original Music Coordinator) has worked as a production designer, art designer, and music producer, who cut her teeth in the industry as a singer/songwriter signed to Geffen Records and Warner Chappell. She has lent her talents to the Grammys, *The Sopranos*, *Celebrity Apprentice*, *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, *School of Rock*, and John Turturro's *Romance & Cigarettes*.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Alto was always intentionally a movie to make people laugh, and through humor, help heal the wounds that separate us, particularly from those we love.

This is the point at which Alto begins: la famiglia...for many Italian-Americans, a source of great pride and responsibility, as well as a repository for all the complicated emotions evolving from that. Admittedly, I was thinking of my family from the first draft. Their hard work and sacrifice, through generations, made my life possible.

My use of the Matia in this film was as intentional as the use of comedy. While I see the shadow Cosa Nostra casts on the many Italian Americans who have no part in it, I wanted to acknowledge that something besides its criminal element has cemented its place in the American psyche: the idea that in a culture that venerates the individual, there is a way to celebrate family and find a secure place within it—a sense of belonging—while still leaving the question mark of uniqueness enough room to materialize.

I know what it's like to step outside the everyday world and play by my own set of rules. The path to making this film involved my coming out as transgender, something I'd felt completely unprepared to discuss for many years. I have a great family, but I wasn't prepared for their acceptance. I'd tied myself in knots because I didn't want to hurt them. Instead they gave me the gift of any great family: their love.

In the end, I wanted to make a film that would break through the differences between people and encourage authentic lives. When I considered what I'd written—a character whose planned life disintegrates when she questions what she'll do to stay true to herself—it felt impossible to explore the story thoroughly without acknowledging the creative pressure inside me to do so, and it felt impossible to explore that creative pressure without letting it push me into the world. Through directing this film, I found a voice willing to expand beyond what I previously found comfortable.

As an Italian-American, I was taught that my life experiences are not all about me. It just so happens, some of those lessons are the stuff of comedy. Alto is, first and foremost, a love letter to the people who made me: for the hours they dedicated to my upbringing and to the communities in which they lived. Through them, I learned that what matters in the world is simple but getting there is not. Alto emerged from a place that knew both. It emerged from family.

— Mikki del Monaco



photo credit: Mikiodo

Writer-Director Mikki del Monaco and Producer Toni D'Antonio on location, NYC



photo credit: Gary J. Cooper

Bek Markas, Diana DeGarmo, and Melanie Minichino on location, Brooklyn



photo credit: Mikiodo

Jake Robards, Diana DeGarmo, Nini Camps, and Gerard Renison, production still





# Alto Music Highlights



Ashen Keilyn / Scout



Diana DeGarmo



Trina Hamlin

full bios available at [www.altothemovie.com/music](http://www.altothemovie.com/music)



Ace Young



Antigone Rising

(L to R) Cathy Henderson, Dena Tauriello,  
Nini Camps, Kristen Ellis-Henderson

## Tech Specs

Total Run Time:  
101 minutes (NTSC)

Production:  
Manhattan, Brooklyn (NYC)  
Hoboken (NJ)  
Nanuet, Sea Cliff (NY)

Aspect Ratio: 16:9 | 1.78

Shot On:  
RED Epic Dragon 5K RAW

Exhibition Formats:  
BLU-RAY  
DCP (NTSC) with 5.1 PCM audio  
(advance notice required)

Dialogue/Languages:  
English | Italian dialect



/ althothemovie



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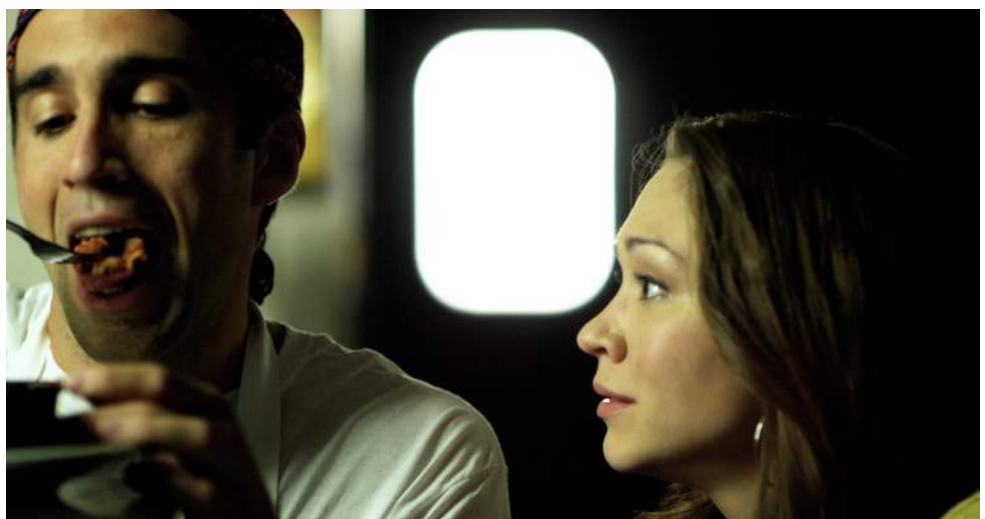
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# ALTO

## FAQs

IS THIS THE FIRST ROMANTIC MOB COMEDY DIRECTED BY A TRANSGENDER MAN?

As far as we know, yes.

HOW DO WE HOPE THE AUDIENCE WILL RECEIVE THE FILM?

We want people to laugh, of course, but beyond that, we want them to feel like they have a stake in how the film is received, meaning we hope they'll want to watch the film again and tell others to watch it, too. We want our audience members to join *la famiglia* and to let us get to know them. We want people to have fun, but we also hope they'll use the film to build connections. Maybe it encourages you to have a viewing party instead of sitting home alone. Maybe it helps ease a conversation with a parent or other family member. Maybe it makes you think about your own family's immigration stories...or maybe it just makes you laugh, and that's OK, too.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO COMPLETING THE FILM?

You'd get a different answer from everyone involved, but if you factor out money—because that's obvious—the hardest part was not burning out on the material. In independent film, you have so many jobs and the deeper into the process you get, the number of people to whom you can delegate tasks dwindles while your to-do list does not. I'd say the toughest thing to remember was to slow down enough to enjoy the process. We know we are very lucky. We got to make a movie.

HOW MANY DAYS DID WE SHOOT?

Initially, eighteen, and then we went back in for three days of pick-ups, for a total of 21 days.

WHY DID WE USE KICKSTARTER AND WAS THAT OUR ONLY SOURCE OF FUNDING?

It was coming close to the start of a new year. A time to reevaluate and move forward with your strengths. The producer hadn't found traction with the script and was about to let the material go, but something inside her said no. So we were down to our last attempt, and that took the shape of a Kickstarter campaign. The producer said, "if we make our goal, we will make the film." On the strength of that campaign, we were able to secure private investors for the rest of the budget. I'd say if you're trying to make a film, find a producer who believes in the project even more than you do.

FOR ANSWERS TO MORE QUESTIONS, SEE THE DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT, P. 8

RUNNER-UP, AUDIENCE FAVORITE



WINNER

AUDIENCE FAVORITE  
OFFICIAL SELECTION



### VISIONFEST AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS

WINNER, AUDIENCE FAVORITE

WINNER, OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN PRODUCTION DESIGN, MARILYN D'AMATO

NOMINEE, JACK NANCE BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE, DIANA DEGARMO

NOMINEE, OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE, FEMALE, NATALIE KNEPP

NOMINEE, BEST PRODUCTION, TONI D'ANTONIO, MIKKI DEL MONICO, ELLORA DECARLO, ANNABELLA SCIORRA



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Official Selection  
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New York  
**2015**





CLOSING NIGHT SELECTION

