

# NJ native's film 'The Court' gets a trial at two festivals

## outtakes

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**B**rooklyn-based filmmaker Paul Bracco, Holmdel High School class of 1990, has in the space of a couple of months had three significant developments in his career: (1) the debut of his first movie, "The Court" at a film festival in Bergamo, Italy; (2) a New Director's Award from the New York International Independent Film Festival, and (3) an invitation to show "The Court" at the Anthology Film Archives, under the aegis of the Angelika Film Center.

The screening is set for 8 p.m. July 1 at 32 Second Ave. at Second Street, New York. Information on tickets is available from (212) 505-5110.

Bracco still was a little breathless from his first trip to Italy with his parents, Paul Sr. and Maria Bracco of Holmdel.

"The most amazing thing was seeing my parents in the back row while people in the hall stood up and cheered my film; it was surreal," Bracco said.

And it's not chopped liver that Bracco's film has been accepted by the Anthology Film Archives' judges. "The Court" passed muster with such independent luminaries as Angelika Film Center founder Angelika Saleh and veteran filmmaker Jonas Mekas.

"They heard about it through the grapevine," Bracco said. "I got a call a couple of weeks ago. They checked it out and a couple of days later, I got another phone call that they wanted it."

Bracco said the series is designed to give new local filmmakers like himself a chance to have the public see their work.

"I plan to be there, sitting in the back and listening for comments," he said.

"The Court" is an urban drama set in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, where Bracco's family settled three generations ago. He

made the film for \$50,000. The film centers on Paulie, a wise guy who becomes a drug addict and drags his young cousin Joey with him, as Bracco said, "on a vicious downward spiral."

When he's told it sounds rather grim, he laughs and says, "Yeah, a real family movie. But my next one is a comedy. I'm starting to raise money for it now."

Bracco stars in "The Court" with Fred Berman, Scott Conte (who portrayed the character whose pen is broken by George on the penultimate "Seinfeld"), Jeff Mackin and Vinny Vella, who played the character who has a heart attack in "Casino."

## Small successes

Take that, "Godzilla!" First-time director Don Roos' film, "The Opposite of Sex" beat the enormous lizard at the box office in their openings over the four-day Memorial Day weekend.

"On a per screen basis, we did \$20,000 and 'Godzilla' did \$16,000," Roos said from his home in Los Angeles.

Such good business has been generated by a movie starring Christina Ricci as a wayward, profane teen-ager who runs away from her highly dysfunctional home, gets pregnant by a gay man and inspires her family and friends toward better things.

During production, the film's distributor, Rysher Entertainment, abandoned its film operations, leaving "The Opposite of Sex," Roos said, "orphaned. But Sony Classics picked us up and they were just wonderful to us."

"Their attitude was, 'We are privileged to bring your vision to audi-

ences.' That is where they are coming from. We're very grateful."

Sony Classics' co-president is Tom Bernard of Middletown Township.

Roos' vision in the film embraces alternative life styles, with gay men raising children abandoned by heterosexual parents.

"I'm not recommending it as a lifestyle, but my life is very alternative as is the life of my friends. I'm gay and I've lived with a guy for six years. Most of my friends are gay or straight people living in unconventional relationships."

"We had problems getting financing because some were offended by her (Ricci's) language. I was personally offended but that didn't stop me! There was a lot of resistance from very well-meaning, left wing, liberal, politically correct friends who felt she shouldn't be saying these things about gays."

"And they didn't like me showing a character who parrots prejudices and stereotypes and who was asking the audience to follow her for two hours. The gay angle didn't help, either."

Roos, who also wrote "Love Field," "Single White Female," "Boys on the Side" and "Diabolique," said, "I didn't want to write a movie with a likable character in the lead, although I do like Christina Ricci's character."

"There's so much nonsense in Hollywood about the lead character needing to be likable. It's so frustrating because you can't write a movie with real people. Thankfully, 'As Good As It Gets' had Jack Nicholson playing someone who was not instantly likable."

"The writing in that helped all of us out here who want to put real characters into movies."

"The Opposite of Sex" is playing at the Red Bank Arts Theatre, White Street. It co-stars Lisa Kudrow, Lyle Lovett, Martin Donovan, Ivan Sergei and Johnny Galecki.