

# LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN

*Be cool. Life is cool. You're so cool in Cracktown.*

Written & Directed by Buddy Giovinazzo

## A Lightning Media Release

RT: 100 Minutes, 35 mm color

Rated R for strong violence, rape, drug content throughout,  
graphic sexuality, nudity, and pervasive language

Website: [www.LifeisHotinCracktownTheMovie.com](http://www.LifeisHotinCracktownTheMovie.com)

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Based on Buddy Giovinazzo's best-selling novel, *LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN* shows the gritty, hard realities of a neighborhood, as well as the struggling, proud people who try to survive them everyday.

Marybeth (KERRY WASHINGTON) is a pre-op transsexual working as a prostitute and living with her lover, Benny, a small time burglar. In spite of their lines of work, they live a somewhat normal life as a married couple. Marybeth works the streets in the hopes of saving enough money for her final sex change operation, so then she and Benny can be married.

Manny (VICTOR RASUK) works two jobs: the late shift in an all night bodega surrounded by young junkies, drug dealers and prostitutes, and as a security guard in a Welfare hotel. At home his wife, Concetta (SHANNYN SOSSAMON), takes care of his sick infant son and makes their grimy rundown apartment as much of a home as she can.

Willy, ten years old, lives in the Welfare hotel with his sister, mother (ILLEANA DOUGLAS) and her violent boyfriend. Willy begs on the street so he and Susie can buy some fast food to eat.

Romeo (EVAN ROSS), a street tough, roams the streets with his gang. Upset over the murder of his younger brother, and feeling partially responsible for not being there during the shooting, he terrorizes anyone who comes in his path.

These four stories come together in a powerful climax of love and salvation, showing that despite the obstacles of life in the inner-city, humanity and hope can still prevail.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

*Life is Hot in Cracktown* is adapted from my book of the same title (Thunder's Mouth Press), a compelling, disturbing series of interconnecting stories about a neighborhood under siege from crack cocaine. I tell the main story through the eyes of Manny, a young man trying to live a clean life and thus, the American dream. My film will show the gritty, hard realities of street life, as well as the struggling, proud people who try to survive them day by day. Think of Robert Altman's *SHORT CUTS* on drugs.

The actions are brutal, it's a cruel world, and yet, there's a heart and soul in the characters, a humanity that makes them worth rooting for. Victims of their environment, they don't cry for themselves or beg for our sympathies, they strive to achieve a better life for themselves, because they think it's just around the corner. If they can only survive the next day, then tomorrow will be better. My vision for the style of the film is to shoot it smooth, lush, a sort of street ballet in the movement of the camera, which will nearly never sit still; think Visconti and the neorealists, the merging of portraiture and gritty realism.

I want to compel and shock, and also touch the hearts of the audience, to enlighten through the acting performances, which are the key. It's this combination of fully realized three dimensional, sympathetic characters in the milieu of a drug infested jungle of violence and brutality that makes the story so different, important. And memorable.

As I did in my film *NO WAY HOME*, with Tim Roth, my approach is to find the truth of what it is these characters want, through rehearsal and discussion, and portray that through action and subtext. I mean, basically everyone wants the same things out of life; freedom, friendship, acceptance and love (of course there

are variations), but when an audience can relate to the wants and desires of your characters, they'll follow them through Hell to see how they'll try to achieve them. *Life is Hot in Cracktown* will be such a trip through Hell. On the other side of that Hell, however, there'll be a small piece of heaven.

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

*LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN* began as a book of short stories written while Buddy Giovinazzo was living on the lower east side of NYC in 1992. He'd been haunted by things he saw on the street, mostly the people devastated by drugs, notably crack cocaine and the violence that always seemed to follow the drug. He began to write fictional accounts of what these people might do at home; the hidden lives that people never get to see. Giovinazzo was fascinated by what that might look like.

One year later *LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN* was completed and secured a publishing contract with Neil Ortenberg at Thunder's Mouth Press. Normally that would be the end of it. Previously, when Giovinazzo wrote a book it was out of his system, and he moved on to another subject. But ...*CRACKTOWN* never left his system, these characters continued to haunt him and he realized, he'd never seen anything like this depicted in film. Giovinazzo adapted the book into a screenplay and tried to set it up for production. He thought at the time it should be somewhat easy—he was still fairly naïve even in his late thirties.

Larry Rattner read the script shortly, liked it, and was drawn to the material which he thought was very good, but the film was unique and not easy to label and or market. As he produced other pictures, he never forgot about "*LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN*." Then in 2006, Rattner partnered up with William Fisch. Finally after of years of trying, they were finally able to raise the financing for the film.

Downtown Los Angeles was used as a stand-in for Anytown USA. Shooting in Downtown Los Angeles presented its own dilemma in that it was actually more dangerous to shoot nights downtown in LA then it would be to shoot in New York City. Because of the LA gangs and the fact that many of the locations were in dangerous areas, a police presence was required for most of the shoots, augmented with an understanding from the gangs that we were doing an authentic film about street life and not some weekly crime drama. The production was pretty much left alone; well, except for one night where a stabbing took place twenty minutes before the crew arrived to shoot an integral scene. The police were hosing down the blood as trucks were unloaded to shoot the scene where Romeo kills Pepperton, the drug king, in cold blood. They said it was nothing special, just a typical Friday night disagreement among friends.

Attracting a talented cast was another challenge because if the characters didn't elicit sympathy or at least understanding, how could we connect with them; why should the audience follow or care what happens to them? As the director, Buddy Giovinazzo would live or die by the cast, more so in a film like ...*CRACKTOWN*. In that regard casting director Lina Todd began a quest to attract the best and brightest actors she could find. Most notably Kerry Washington was the first to come on board. Washington immediately saw the heart and soul of these people and threw her support behind Giovinazzo and the project, and because of Kerry's initial enthusiasm and support, Todd was able to attract the other name talent: Evan Ross, Victor Rasuk, Brandon Routh, Illeana Douglas, Lara Flynn Boyle, RZA, Shannyn Sossamon, Vondie Curtis Hall, and more.

The actors came to this project with a commitment and a desire to show another color of their talent, to show what they could really do—How else do you get Superman to smoke crack in your movie? During the shoot Giovinazzo challenged them to go for the extreme, not only on the cutting edge but way over it; to show a truth and grittiness that they normally would never get a chance to show in their work; and yet, they portrayed these lives with sensitivity and humanity, authenticity.

Life Is Hot In Cracktown takes the audience down a journey into a dark and very real world that exists on the periphery of our own “normal” world; it’s both disturbing and enlightening, always exciting. The actors’ performances draw the audience into the story, and it is one of the elements that director Giovinazzo is most proud of. It’s a harrowing, no holds barred ride through Hell, and one that you’ll remember, long after the end credits have rolled.

**CAST (in order of appearance)**

Romeo	Evan Ross
Debbie	Stephanie Lugo
Brazil	Maurice Blake
Cremont	Omar Regan
Soby	Jeffrey Lorenzo
Manny	Victor Rasuk
Lou	Tony Plana
Betty McBain	Lara Flynn Boyle
Fay	Melissa Wilfley
Ceasar	Ten Travis
Concetta	Shannyn Sossamon
Ramon	Gavin M. Enriquez & Noah G. Enriquez
Melody Amber	Elena Franklin
Melody's Mom	Marci Canipe
Terrance	Quddus Philippe
Willy	Ridge Canipe
Suzie	Ariel Winter
Chas	Edoardo Ballerini
Mommy	Illeana Douglas
Sizemore	Brandon Routh
Guy from 4 K	Richard Portnow
Tiny Pinta	Shawn McGill
Kenny Carter -Zooka	Jonathan Silva
Benny	Desmond Harrington
Marybeth	Kerry Washington
Ridley	Mark Webber
Dixon	Vondie Curtis-Hall
Customer	Pierson Blaetz
Mr. Rutherford	Jeremy West
Chad Wesley	Thomas Ian Nicholas
Girl in Closet	Hope Olaide Wilson
Joy	Sara Pickett
Cop #1	Adriano Aragon
Marybeth's Father	Paul Mabon
Junkie	Carmine Giovinazzo
Pregnant Woman at Party	Jamie Rae
Sammy	RZA
Stacy	Carly Pope
Becky	Katija Pevec
Pepperton	Bryan Becker

The Beret  
Dr. Clark  
Robber

Luke LaFontaine  
Joseph Rye  
James Saxenmeyer

**FILMMAKERS**

CASTING LINA TODD C.S.A.

COSTUME DESIGNER LYNN BRANNELLY

PRODUCTION DESIGNER RUSSELL M. JAEGER

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KAT WESTERGAARD

EDITOR SHILPA SAHI

ORIGINAL SCORE MATTER MUSIC

CO-PRODUCER TENNESSEE "TEN" TRAVIS

CO-PRODUCER PAUL CANTERNA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MELISSA WILFLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BRAXTON POPE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER WILLIAM FISCH

PRODUCER LARRY RATTNER

PRODUCER WILLIAM D. FISCH

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED By BUDDY GIOVINAZZO

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

### **KERRY WASHINGTON (Marybeth)**

Winner of "Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture" for *Ray* at the NAACP Image Awards in 2005 and Nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for "Best Actress" in the film *Lift* in 2002, Kerry Washington is a versatile, talented and fearless actress who has built an impressive list of credits in a relatively short amount of time. She garnered critical acclaim for her recent roles in *The Last King of Scotland* opposite Forest Whitaker for which she was nominated for "Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture" at the NAACP Image Awards in 2007, *The Dead Girl* opposite Marcia Gay Harden and Brittany Murphy, and in *Lakeview Terrace* starring opposite Samuel L. Jackson and Patrick Wilson. Kerry will next be seen in *A Thousand Words* starring opposite Eddie Murphy and Howard Zinn's documentary *The People Speak*, which premieres in August 2009. She is currently filming *Mother and Child* a drama centered around three women portrayed by Annette Bening, Naomi Watts and Washington.

Prior to these films, Washington starred as Alicia Masters in *Fantastic Four* and its sequel *Rise of the Silver Surfer*, *I Think I Love My Wife* opposite Chris Rock, the Wayans Brothers' comedy *Little Man, Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, Spike Lee's *She Hate Me*, Sidney Lumet's HBO film *Strip Search* and the independent film *Sexual Life*.

Other film credits for Washington include *Against the Ropes*, *The United States of Leland*, *The Human Stain*, *Bad Company*, *Save the Last Dance* for which she received a Teen Choice Award for Best Breakout Performance, and the highly acclaimed independent film, *Our Song*.

During her free time, Washington is an active member on the Board of Directors for The Creative Coalition, a group dedicated to raising awareness of First Amendment Rights and support of arts in education, and is a Committee Member of Americans for the Arts, which is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. She is also a member of the V-Counsel, an esteemed group of advisors to V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls ([vday.org](http://vday.org)).

Washington is currently a spokesperson for both L'Oreal Paris and Movado.

### **VICTOR RASUK (Manny)**

Victor Rasuk most recently co-starred in Steven Soderbergh's *CHE*, the first of two films about Che Guevara that stars Benicio Del Toro. This fall, Rasuk begins work on HBO's new half hour comedy series "How to Make it in America," with Bryan Greenberg. The show tells the story of two innovative young men, (Rasuk and Greenberg) who attempt to realize the American dream in New York City. Last year, Rasuk completed an arc for the final season of "ER."

For his feature film debut as the title character in the Sundance Film Festival hit *RAISING VICTOR VARGAS* (2003), Rasuk garnered an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Debut Performance. He also starred as skateboard legend Tony Alva in TriStar Pictures' *LORDS OF DOGTOWN*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke. Based on Stacey Peralta's 2001 documentary *DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS*, the film co-starred Heath Ledger, Emile Hirsch, John Robinson and Johnny Knoxville. Last year, he co-starred in Kimberly Peirce's *STOP LOSS* with Ryan Phillippe and Abbie Cornish.

Rasuk's credits also include the independent features *KEEP COMING BACK* starring William H. Macy and Mos Def, *LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN* with Kerry Washington and Brandon Routh, *BONNEVILLE*, starring Joan Allen, Kathy Bates and Jessica Lange, *SPINNING INTO BUTTER* with Sarah Jessica Parker, *ADRIFT IN MANHATTAN*

(2007 Sundance Film Festival, Dramatic Competition) with Heather Graham and Zackary Adler's I'M REED FISH with Alexis Bledel, Jay Baruchel and DJ Qualls.

A native New Yorker, Rasuk began acting at age 14. In 1998, he starred in "Five Feet High and Rising," Peter Sollett's short that garnered awards at both the Sundance and Cannes film festivals. Rasuk went on to study acting at the Professional Performing Arts School and HB Studios in Manhattan before collaborating with Sollett again on RAISING VICTOR VARGAS.

### **EVAN ROSS (Romeo)**

Evan Ross burst onto the Hollywood scene in 2006 in Warner Brother's film *ATL*, opposite rappers T.I. and Big Boi. He soon followed up with his raved review role as a troubled teenager in HBO's *Life Support*, co-starring Queen Latifah. In 2007, he starred in Lionsgate's *Pride* along with Terrence Howard and Bernie Mac.

His most recent work includes *Brooklyn to Manhattan* directed by Jessy Terrero and *Gardens of the Night* starring opposite John Malkovich and Tom Arnold. He also just finished filming director Tony Kaye's *Black Water Transit* opposite Laurence Fishburne, and had a role in *Linewatch* opposite Cuba Gooding Jr.

Coming up in 2009, Ross will appear in *Life is Hot in Cracktown* opposite Kerry Washington and Victor Rasuk and the indie film *Driving Lessons* in the role of Chi McBride's son. He will also co-star with Ellen Burstyn and Hilary Duff in the upcoming film *Greta*.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Evan is the son of legendary musician Diana Ross and Arne Naess Jr.. In an interview in 2007, Terrence Howard had the following to say about Ross after working together on *Pride*: "I've said that I was looking for a protégé. And I've seen in him abilities and talents greater than I've ever seen in myself or in almost any other young actor. He's naturally equipped with all of his mother's gifts. I would like to see him win an Academy Award one day because he is truly gifted."

### **BRANDON ROUTH (Sizemore)**

In 2005, handsome and clean-cut actor Routh soared into the media limelight when he was cast as "the Man of Steel" in director Bryan Singer's highly anticipated revival of the original superhero film franchise "Superman Returns."

Brandon can be seen in the soon to be released indie feature "FLING," which premiered at the Long Beach International Film Festival, about a couple in an open relationship who are stretched to the breaking point when each partner finds themselves falling in love with other people. He is in the post-production stage on "Unthinkable," a psychological thriller also starring Samuel L. Jackson; as well as "Life is Hot in Cracktown," based on the novel by Buddy Giovinazzo, where he stars opposite Lara Flynn Boyle and Kerry Washington; the dark comedy "Miss Nobody," where he stars opposite Leslie Bibb and Missi Pyle, about a secretary who discovers she has a talent for murder as she ascends the corporate ladder; and the romantic comedy "Table for Three." He was last seen in Kevin Smith's film, "Zach and Miri Make a Porno" with Seth Rogen and Justin Long. Routh is currently filming "Dead of Night" and soon starts "Scott Pilgrim vs. The World," for Universal with Michael Cera.

Routh got his first major role in 1999 on the television sitcom "Odd Man Out." This was followed by a four-episode stint on the nighttime soap "Undressed" and an appearance on "Gilmore Girls" in 2000. The actor earned steady work on the daytime drama "One Life to Live," originating the role of Seth Anderson from 2001-2002. His subsequent primetime credits include guest stints on "Cold Case," NBC's "Will & Grace" and "Oliver Beene." Routh recently appeared in an episode of NBC's horror anthology series FEAR ITSELF.



Born in Des Moines, Iowa and raised in nearby Norwalk (about 100 miles south of Woolstock, the hometown of TV's original "Superman," George Reeves), the strapping 6'3" Routh was a high school athlete who swam and played soccer, as well as starring in several theatrical productions. He attended the University of Iowa for a year before heading to Hollywood in search of his big break.

### **SHANNYN SOSSAMON (Concetta)**

Hawaiian born, but raised in Reno, Nevada, Shannyn Sossamon is of Dutch, English, Irish, German, French, Filipino, and Hawaiian descent. She spent much of her childhood in a dance studio, so it was no surprise that the day after graduating from high school, Shannyn left her small town to pursue her love for dance in Los Angeles. Through the first few years, she supported herself by working as a DJ, modeling in various campaigns, and appearing in commercials and music videos.

In 1999, Sossamon was discovered by a casting director when she assisted a DJ at a birthday party. After several auditions, she landed her breakout role as the lead actress opposite Heath Ledger in the 2001 film, *A Knight's Tale*. Since then, Shannyn has appeared and starred in many films including *40 Days and 40 Nights*, *The Rules of Attraction*, *Writescutters: A Love Story*, *The Holiday*, and *One Missed Call*. She continues to study acting, music, and dance.

### **VONDIE CURTIS HALL (Dixon)**

Actor/director/screenwriter Vondie Curtis Hall has had success in both film and television, and on both sides of the camera.

His most recent feature as writer/director was *Waist Deep*, which was named one of the year's Ten Best films by author/columnist Stephen King. The Rogue Pictures release starred Tyrese Gibson, Meagan Good, Larenz Tate, and The Game.

Mr. Hall also directed *Redemption: The Stan Tookie Williams Story*, which played at the Sundance Film Festival and then aired on the FX cable network. Mr. Hall won a Black Reel Award for his direction; among the biopic's other honors, lead actor Jamie Foxx received NAACP Image and Black Reel Awards as well as Golden Globe, Independent Spirit, and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for his performance as the late activist Stan Tookie Williams.

His other feature credits as director include *Gridlock'd*, from his screenplay and starring Tim Roth and the late Tupac Shakur, for which he was honored by the National Board of Review with the Excellence in Filmmaking Award; and *Glitter*, starring Mariah Carey. For television, he has helmed episodes of such series as *Sleeper Cell*, *The Shield*, *Firefly*, and *ER*.

The latter program has featured Mr. Hall in a guest-starring arc, as well as in an earlier (separate) characterization that earned him an Emmy Award nomination. He was a series regular on *Chicago Hope* (for which the ensemble twice received Screen Actors Guild Award nominations) and *Cap Rock*. He also had guest-starring arcs on the acclaimed television series *Soul Food* and *I'll Fly Away*.

He began his career in music, training at Juilliard and then starring in several NYC stage shows. Among them were such Broadway musicals as *It's So Nice To Be Civilized*; *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*; *Stardust*; and the original production of *Dreamgirls*.

Mr. Hall next segued into films, with roles in such movies as John Landis' *Coming to America*; Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*; Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*; Renny Harlin's *Die Hard 2*; John Sayles' *Passion Fish* (opposite Alfre Woodard); Joel Schumacher's *Falling Down*; Spike Lee's *Crooklyn*; Phillip Noyce's *Clear and Present Danger*;

John Woo's *Broken Arrow*; Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*; John Herzfeld's telefilm *Don King: Only in America* (for which, as Lloyd Price, he won a Satellite Award); Leon Ichaso's telefilm *Ali: An American Hero* (as Bundini Brown); and his wife Kasi Lemmons' *Eve's Bayou* (for which he received an NAACP Image Award nomination).

He is board president of Film Independent, which is the organization that encompasses the Los Angeles Film Festival and the Independent Spirit Awards.

Mr. Hall's next project as writer/director is *The Big Biazarro*, based on Leonard Wise's novel of the same name, to star and be produced by Pierce Brosnan.

## **RZA (Samy)**

The RZA, aka the Abbot, aka Bobby Digital. Man of many aliases and even more talents. The heart, soul, and brains behind rap's only true supergroup, the Wu-Tang Clan, RZA single-handedly changed the face of hip hop with the explosive release of "Enter The Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers" in 1993. His raw and dirty beats influenced virtually every producer that followed in his roaring wake. He also created a precedent for the industry, signing the group to deal that allowed each member to pursue solo deals on other labels. Solo efforts by Method Man, Ol' Dirty Bastard, Raekwon, GZA, and Ghostface all went gold, if not platinum. The group's second album, *Wu-Tang Forever*, sold over 600,000 copies in its first week. RZA's business savvy was heralded on the front page of a New York Times' Business section, as he has diversified his business interests: a clothing line, a studio, a film production company to name a few.

It is not only his music that sets the RZA apart from other producers; it is also his social, spiritual and political outlook. He is an auto-didactic: well-versed in science, philosophy, history, and humanity, he often quotes the Koran, the Bible, and Sun Tzu. In 2007 he became the Hip Hop Chess Federation Champion and hopes to help promote chess as a sport and mental discipline.

In 1999 RZA again made history as the first artist to perform at the 1500 year old Shaolin Temple in China. He further made a pilgrimage to the actual Wu-Tang Mountain where he met the other Abbot of Wu-Tang who presented him with some special music from the Temple. The trip was the subject of the documentary "Return to Shaolin."

That same year director Jim Jarmusch asked RZA to score "Ghost Dog," a modern samurai film. The result was an ethereal soundscape that subtly wove together the ancient Eastern with the modern Western warrior sensibility. In 2003 RZA scored "Kill Bill Vol.1" for Quentin Tarantino, for which he received a BAFTA nomination. In 2004 RZA contributed music to "Barbershop 2," "Soul Plane," "Kill Bill Volume 2," and "Blade: Trinity." Last year RZA scored the critically acclaimed Spike TV animated series "Afro Samurai" starring Samuel Jackson. Most recently he and his partner Shavo Odadjian (bass player for System of a Down with whom he has formed a group, the Chosen) contributed to the score of Fox Film "Babylon AD" starring Vin Diesel.

As an actor RZA has showed real range: from his hilarious stints on the Chappelle Show and in Jarmusch's film "Coffee and Cigarettes" to his dramatic turns in "Derailed" alongside Clive Owen and most recently Ridley Scott's "American Gangster" for which the cast garnered a SAG nomination for ensemble cast. This year he will be seen in the independent features "Life Is Hot in Crackdown," "Gospel Hill," and later this year in Universal Pictures' "Repossession Mambo" and the comedy "Funny People" from director Judd Apatow starring Adam Sandler and Seth Rogan.

## **THOMAS IAN NICHOLAS (Chad Wesley)**

"You nailed it, kid." That phrase, uttered in the span of about a second at the premier of "American Pie",

confirmed the suspicion Thomas Ian Nicholas had cautiously entertained since he started his career at the age of 6: He was onto something special.

Thomas began his career in acting the way that most kids learn how to swim – by being thrown into the deep end. At the age of 6 he moved to Los Angeles with his mother, an aspiring actress who found her niche as a casting director. A resourceful woman, she would fill roles in any way possible, even by casting herself in as many as four extra roles in one feature when necessary. She eventually ran into a wall when a call came on a Sunday night for the role of an altar boy.

“My mom said, ‘Well, how am I going to hire a child tonight? Son, you’re coming to work with me tomorrow!’” Thomas laughs. “So I played hooky from school and went to work as an altar boy.”

That day of work was a revelation for Nicholas, who, despite the fact that he still had his baby teeth, was already feeling a sense of purpose in his life. After the film wrapped, he informed his mother that he wanted to be an actor and was given the name of an agent by the mother of Scott Grimes. Weeks later, after countless hours spent memorizing a lengthy monologue, he marched into the agent's office for his interview.

“When I got into the room, she said, ‘Oh my gosh, you’re adorable. I’ll sign you,’” Nicholas recalls. “I was like, ‘Well, can I still show you the monologue?’”

And that’s how, within a year of his first acting role, Nicholas found himself on the set of “Who’s the Boss?” playing a young Tony Danza. It was an experience full of memories and most importantly for a young boy, Alyssa Milano. “I had a huge crush on Alyssa Milano, even though I was 7 and she was 13,” Nicholas says with an embarrassed laugh. “I had no chance at all!”

Beginning at age 12, Nicholas embarked on a series of feature films that would shape his career to come, including the now-classic “Rookie of the Year,” “A Kid in King Arthur’s Court” and recurring roles on hit TV shows like “Party of 5.” However, the by-products of acting wouldn’t be thrust upon him until he was booked at the age of 17 for the role of Kevin Myers. The “American Pie” empire had begun.

“When I booked that film, it wasn’t so much like, ‘Oh, I booked a hit!’ It was just nice to have a gig,” Nicholas says nonchalantly. But that gig would make him one of the most recognizable faces of his generation, the boy next door whom everyone loved and trusted – and who, as Tara Reid’s on-screen boyfriend, would become the envy of hormonally challenged teens.

The notoriety was all well and good – no one can complain about being successful in his or her chosen field. However, it wasn’t his new high profile that excited Nicholas, it was the recognition from his peers. The ones who noticed that Thomas wasn’t just reciting lines, he was exploring his character from the inside out.

“I like acting for the sake of portraying characters and telling a story, and not all the other things that come with it,” Thomas says frankly. “It’s the idea of embodying a character from the ground up. That’s what acting really is about for me, building the ability.”

With the “American Pie” movies as a springboard, Nicholas was able to land other exciting roles, including the Roger Avary-directed “The Rules of Attraction,” “Halloween: Resurrection” and “Stealing Sinatra,” opposite everyone from Tyra Banks to William H. Macy. He also made his debut as a writer and director in “L.A. DJ,” during which he learned a new appreciation for everyone involved behind the camera in a feature film.

A lifelong musician as well, Nicholas released his debut solo album, *Without Warning*, in January 2008. Co-written by rock legends Bruce Kulick (KISS), Chris Chaney (Jane’s Addiction) and Dan Lavery (Tonic), the album

is a radio-friendly collection of pop-rock tunes that toe the line between Switchfoot's melodic rock and John Mayer's pop-crooner sensibilities.

In the past two years alone, Thomas has worked on such hit TV shows such as "Grey's Anatomy" and "Medium" and upcoming films "National Lampoon's Cattle Call," "Let the Game Begin," "Sherman's Way," "The Bridge to Nowhere" and "Life Is Hot In Cracktown."

"I think I am constantly on the journey of honing my ability to crawl into someone else's skin. And I don't think that I'll ever really reach a point where I'm utterly satisfied," Nicholas says, and, after a pause, adds poignantly, "However, the journey itself is satisfying."

### **ILLEANA DOUGLAS (Mommy)**

Iconic Indy Queen Ileana Douglas is a hit with critics and movie goers alike.

Douglas' web series creation for IKEA, "Easy to Assemble" has been picked up for a second season. Born of her short film "Supermarket," "Easy to Assemble 2" will go into production in July for a fall launch with many of the stars who were featured in season one returning.

She recently completed filming the independent drama "April Showers," a true events-based story that takes a look inside the events of a school shooting through the eyes of a survivor.

Douglas was most recently seen starring in "Otis", which opened at last year's SXSW and "The Year of Getting to Know Us", which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. She will next be seen in "Life is Hot in Cracktown", a drama about how crack cocaine has become ubiquitous in inner cities. These three films capped a two-year, ten-project run for Douglas which includes titles such as "Factory Girl", "Bondage", "Walk the Talk", and "Pittsburgh" with Jeff Goldblum to name a few.

She was also seen starring as Sheila on ABC's Golden Globe winning show "Ugly Betty".

While working as a New York film publicist, Douglas was asked to dub screams and provide additional dialogue for Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ". This led to a long association with Scorsese, acting in "New York Stories", "Goodfellas", "Cape Fear" and developing and co-producing "Search and Destroy", "The Lost Army", and "Grace of My Heart" (London Film Critics Nominee). With Scorsese's encouragement she also began writing and directing. Her first effort, "The Perfect Woman", won Best Short at Aspen Shorts Fest and was a nominee for a Cable Ace

Award. Another of Douglas' projects "Everybody Just Stay Calm" was a documentary made for Bravo about the comedic trials of independent filmmaking. "Boy Crazy, Girl Crazier" and the television pilot "Confessions of a Movie Lover" were made for Bravo and IFC.

She was Executive Producer on the film "Life Without Dick" starring Sarah Jessica Parker. She premiered her short "Devil Talk" at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival and later created "Supermarket", a collection of her shorts for The Sundance Channel. "Supermarket" was nominated for a regional Emmy and later developed into "Ileanarama Supermarket of the Stars" as a pilot for the Oxygen Network.

Douglas wrote, produced, directed and starred in the pilot which can be seen on Youtube.com and co-stars Jeff Goldblum, Ed Begley Jr., Justine Bateman and Jane Lynch. It was nominated by the TV Guide Online Awards for Best Show, Best Actress and won Best Ensemble.

Douglas has starred in numerous big screen hit including "Stir of Echoes", "Alive", "Picture Perfect", "Message in a Bottle", "The Next Best Thing", and more. She has also been in such notable television dramas as HBO's "Lansky", "Weapons of Mass Distraction", and "Six Feet Under", which earned her an Emmy nomination for her portrayal of Angela. Additionally, she has been featured in recurring and guest starring roles on many of television's biggest shows including "Law & Order: SVU", "The Drew Carey Show", "Frazier", "Seinfeld", the comedy reality series "Celebrity Garage Sale" and more including the TV movies "Rough Riders" for TNT and "Bella Mafia" for CBS. Douglas has been a frequent guest on "Politically Incorrect" to discuss politics and women's issues.

She first came to prominence as Matt Dillon's suspicious sister in Gus Van Sant's "To Die For" (NY Film Critic's Nominee) and has since been a staple on the independent film scene with memorable performances in "Ghost World", "Happy Texas", "Wedding Bell Blues", "Dummy", "Hacks", and many more.

Douglas began her career as a stand up and sketch comedian at Stand Up New York and Manhattan Punchline so situation comedy was an easy transition. She starred as Gary Shandling's girlfriend on the final season of The Gary Shandling Show and starred in FOX's ahead-of-its-time comedy "Action", with Jay Mohr.

### **LARA FLYNN BOYLE (Betty McBain)**

Lara starred opposite Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones as the evil alien temptress, Serleena in the much-anticipated sequel to the blockbuster with the same name, *Men in Black II* for Columbia Pictures.

Lara was last seen on NBC hit *Las Vegas* as the flamboyant owner of the Montecito Resort & Casino.

On the small screen the Emmy nominated, Lara Flynn Boyle played Helen Gamble in David E. Kelley's Emmy Award winning drama *The Practice*.

Lara has most recently been seen in Showtime's original series, *Huff* starring opposite Hank Azaria.

Lara starred in *Happiness* for director Todd Solondz, and had a memorable performance in the feature film *Afterglow*, directed by Alan Rudolph, with Nick Nolte and Julie Christie. A role in ABC's movie of the week *The Preppie Murder*, opposite Billy Baldwin led to her starring role in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* for ABC.

Lara's past films include: *Equinox*, also directed by Alan Rudolph; *Red Rock West*, directed by John Dahl; Alan Parker's *The Road to Wellville*; Clint Eastwood's *The Rookie*; *Wayne's World*, directed by Penelope Spheeris; Andrew Fleming's *Threesome*, and Mark Rocco's *Where the Day Takes You*.

A Native of Chicago, Lara began her career upon graduation from The Chicago Academy for the Arts. Lara is an animal lover, and spends a great deal of her free time with her dogs.

### **EDOARDO BALLERINI (Chas)**

Edoardo Ballerini has been called "an actor to watch" (Variety), "a most promising actor" (Los Angeles Times), and "a heartthrob" (Hollywood Reporter). He has appeared in over forty films and television series, including the blockbuster "Romeo Must Die," the highly acclaimed indie "Dinner Rush," co-starring with Danny Aiello, and in a memorable recurring turn in "The Sopranos."

In 2009, Edoardo will be seen in "The Caller," with Frank Langella, "Corrado" opposite Tom Sizemore, and in the ensemble "Life is Hot in Cracktown" alongside Kerry Washington and Shannyn Sossamon.

Edoardo's directorial debut "Good Night Valentino" premiered at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival and later screened at the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, in Italy. He also played the title character, silent screen idol Rudolph Valentino. The short film is permanently archived at the Academy of Motion Pictures.

He is currently in pre-production on a feature length film on Valentino.

Edoardo Ballerini is a graduate of Wesleyan University and is a dual citizen (Italy), and fluent in Italian. He lives between Los Angeles, New York and London.

## **MARK WEBBER (Ridley)**

Mark Webber is one of the most intriguing actors of today. At 28, Webber has worked with some of Hollywood's most impressive talents.

Mark is currently shooting one of the lead roles in the Universal feature, SCOTT PILGRIM vs. THE WORLD. He starred opposite Kevin Spacey in SHRINK, which was at The Sundance Film Festival in 2009.

Mark wrote and directed his first feature in 2008, EXPLICIT ILLS. This feature, executive produced by Jim Jarmusch won the audience award at The South By Southwest Film festival last year. The cast includes Rosario Dawson, Paul Dano, Lou Taylor Pucci and Tariq Trotter. It is currently playing in NY, LA and Philadelphia. It will then be distributed by Peace Arch Entertainment.

Mark was at Sundance in 2008 with the film, GOOD DICK, and had two movies in the 2007 Sundance Competition: THE GOOD LIFE with Zoey Deschanel and WEAPONS which he also produced. In THE HOTTEST STATE, directed by Ethan Hawke, Webber played the lead alongside Michelle Williams, Laura Linney and Catalina Sandino. This feature premiered at both the 2006 Venice and the 2006 Toronto Film Festival. His film JUST LIKE THE SON was at The 2006 Tribeca Film Festival.

He worked with Jessica Lange, Bill Murray and Sharon Stone in the Jim Jarmusch film, BROKEN FLOWERS. Mark was a lead in the Thomas Vinterberg film, DEAR WENDY. He worked with Anthony LaPaglia in WINTER SOLSTICE. And his feature, BOMB THE SYSTEM was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

He received phenomenal reviews as the lead role of "Scooby" in Todd Solondz' STORYTELLING, the story of an oddball teenage boy growing up in the suburbs.

Mark was seen in HBO's critically acclaimed LARAMIE PROJECT, which depicts the story of the aftermath of the 1998 beating death of Matthew Shepherd.

Webber was featured as Woody Allen's son in the Dreamworks feature HOLLYWOOD ENDING. In PEOPLE I KNOW, he was Al Pacino's assistant.

In addition to the above-mentioned projects, Mark has also appeared in CHELSEA WALLS directed by Ethan Hawke, SNOW DAY with Chevy Chase, THE ANIMAL FACTORY directed by Steve Buscemi, the FOX feature DRIVE ME CRAZY, FOX Searchlight's WHITE BOYS directed by Sundance Film Festival award winner Marc Levin, and JESUS'S SON with Billy Crudup.

In addition to a successful film career, Mark is an accomplished stage performer. He played the lead in THE DISTANCE FROM HERE by Neil LaBute which premiered at London's Almeida Theatre and continued its run in New York where it won a drama Desk Award. Previously, Webber garnered rave reviews starring as "Bobby"

in both the sold-out London and New York stage productions of David Mamet's AMERICAN BUFFALO opposite William H. Macy and Philip Baker Hall.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

### **BUDDY GIOVINAZZO (Writer/Director)**

Buddy Giovinazzo directed his first feature film, *COMBAT SHOCK* in 1986 in NY. Released by Troma Inc. the film has become a cult classic in Europe and the U.S.

Buddy next went on to write and direct the indie film *NO WAY HOME*, starring Tim Roth and Deborah Kara Unger (released in Germany as *UNTER BRUEDERN*). His first published book of fiction *LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN* was released in 1992 and was shortly thereafter adapted into a screenplay.

The novels *POETRY & PURGATORY* and *ON BROKEN STREET* were published in the U.S. and Europe, notably Germany where they enjoyed a modest success.

In 1998 Buddy received a DAAD grant and moved to Berlin. Falling in love with the city he decided to stay permanently and in that time has directed 7 features for German television and theatrical release. He also wrote the successful crime novel, *POTSDAMER PLATZ*, published by Maas Verlag and which Tony Scott has optioned to direct in 2008, produced by Fox Searchlight.

Buddy is a regular instructor at the DFFB (Deutsche Film und Fernseh Akademie Berlin), still lives in Berlin (his "favorite city on Earth) and in April of 2007 after many years of persistence, he directed his screenplay for *LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN*. Buddy is currently working on his next screenplay.

### **LARRY RATTNER (Producer)**

After graduating from UCLA, Larry Rattner began his film career at New World Pictures. Rattner worked in the domestic theatrical feature distribution and finance departments before leaving New World Entertainment in 1989 to become an independent film producer.

Rattner's first independent project, the award winning *Horseplayer*, screened in competition at the Sundance Film Festival before receiving critical acclaim during its domestic theatrical release. Rattner's next feature was *Genuine Risk*, released by Columbia/Tri-Star and IRS Media, and starring Terence Stamp and Peter Berg. In 1993, Rattner became a partner in Dream Entertainment, Inc., where he produced all in-house productions.

In 1996, Rattner left Dream to form Peninsula Films and produced a series of acclaimed independent productions including: *Small Time*, starring Jeff Fahey, Darren McCain, Rae Dawn Chong, and James Russo, won the Jury Award at the 1996 Santa Barbara International Film Festival. *Lover Girl* starring Kristy Swanson, Sandra Bernhard, and Loretta Devine was an official selection in the competition section of the Toronto International and AFI Film Festivals. Larry Rattner produced the feature film *Dahmer*. Written and directed by David Jacobson and starring Jeremy Renner and Bruce Davison, *Dahmer* enjoyed a nationwide theatrical release by Peninsula Films before receiving three Independent Spirit Award nominations including the John Cassavetes Best Picture Award. Larry Rattner's next film, *Day on Fire* written and directed by Jay Anania was completed in September of 2006. The film starring Martin Donovan, Olympia Dukakis and Carmen Chaplin was invited to the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival and the 2006 Berlin International Film Festival. *Life is Hot in Cracktown* is Rattner's latest production. Lightning Entertainment will release the film in theaters in June 2009.

### **WILLIAM FISCH (Producer)**

Bill Fisch received a B.A. in Cinema Studies from the USC School of Cinema. He shelved his love of film to go into the family business of commercial real estate development, helping Fisch Properties to develop such areas as the Fashion District in downtown Los Angeles.



Fisch is a longtime friend of producer Larry Rattner, and he found himself intrigued by the film projects that Rattner was developing with various partners. Feeling there is no time like the present, Bill Fisch decided to join with Rattner with a proposal to create a production company, Lodestar Entertainment, which would allow him to join his business acumen with Rattner's film production experience.

*Day On Fire* is Bill Fisch's first project as a producer. Fisch's next production, *Life is Hot in Cracktown*. The film shows the gritty, hard realities of street life, as well as the struggling, proud people who try to survive them day by day. The film has an ensemble cast that includes Kerry Washington, Evan Ross, Victor Rasuk, Shannyn Sossamon, Lara Flynn Boyle, Rza, Illeana Douglas and Vondie Curtis Hall.