LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD

THE WIDOW

Written and Directed by BRENDAN YOUNG
THE WIDOW

2018. 29 minutes. Black & White. English/Italian dialogue.

Melbourne, Australia in 1965. A Sicilian widow fights for her life when members of the local Calabrian Mafia murder her husband and try to seize control of his wholesaling produce business. God forgives. Sicilian women don't!

Credits
Written and Directed by Brendan Young
Produced by Brendan Young and Catherine McQuade
Executive Producer Frank Lotito
Cinematography by Wayne Aistrope
Edited by Brendan Young
Original Music Score by Catherine McQuade

Cast:
Daniela Farinacci…Luisa
Steve Bastoni…Antonio
Luke Ryan…Ron
Joe Petruzzi…Domenico
Frank Lotito…Mario
Nick Carrafa…Nello
Vincenzo D’Amico…Angelo
Paul Bongiovanni…Farmer with machete

Shot on location in Melbourne, Australia. 2018.
Available for screening:
DCP 2K
Pro-Res Quicktime .mov
H.264. mov
Director’s Statement

“The Widow” is the first step in creating a compelling, character-based crime film with a powerful emotional core. It’s a distillation of a planned feature version of the same material. The main intent in making the film is to help bolster interest and support for the feature version of “The Widow”. The film, however, is more than just a demo calling card; it’s an emotionally intense self-contained narrative. I still wanted to engage and captivate an audience, drawing them into the intimate and layered time-shifting drama of the film.

The film is set against a backdrop of real-life events taking place in Melbourne in the 1960s. The press labelled these events “The Market Murders” – a bloody and violent battle of opposing factions within the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta (Mafia) to seize control of the lucrative produce industry. The group at the centre of this battle was known as “L’Onorata Societa” (The Honoured Society), an organisation with direct roots to crime gangs long established in villages scattered across Calabria in Italy.

The main character, Luisa, is based on an enigmatic woman who lived at the end of my street in the inner city Melbourne suburb, Brunswick. From the 50s to the mid 70s, Brunswick was mainly a working class, Southern European migrant enclave. The woman’s husband, a fruit and vegetable wholesaler, was allegedly gunned down at the Queen Victoria Markets (or so my parents told me). In a sense, the film is a kind of fever-dream imagining of what may have happened to her.

I was keen to make a film with a lead female character. Having a woman in her mid 40s in the lead role allows for a very different take on this almost exclusively male-centric crime genre. The focus is more on intimate relationships than criminality.

Luisa is beautifully realised by actor Daniela Farinacci in a very challenging role. Besides the obvious physical demands of the part - participating in the various stunts and on-camera action - Daniela learned to fluently speak regional Sicilian dialect, a language she’d never spoken.

The use of language was part of an important goal in creating an authentic atmosphere. Besides recreating a period setting - dressing locations, sourcing wardrobe and motor vehicles, I wanted to faithfully recreate the language used within Italian migrant community of the time. Though Luisa speaks Sicilian, the other characters speak to her in Calabrian. The dialogue employs 1960s, Melbourne-centric Siciliano and Calabrese dialects - often incorporating appropriated Aussie English words into the patois.

Shot in black and white, the monochrome palette and shooting style was inspired by 1960s French & Italian New Wave films with a crime theme: “Breathless”; “Don’t Shoot The Piano Player”, “Alphaville” “Un Uomo Da Bruciare” and “ L’Assassino” to name a few.

In spite of the ludicrously tight crowd-funded budget, I feel we were still able to create an evocative genre film blessed with nuanced performances, and offering an authentic window into a rarely explored aspect of Australian true crime history.
Production Notes

Speaking in Tongues

A majority of the film is performed in a mix of localised Sicilian and Calabrian dialect and Italian language. Most of the actors have Italian heritage and could speak varying degrees of Italian language. Frank Lotito and Vince D’Amico were the only cast members fluent in Calabrian and Sicilian dialect. For the other actors, including the film's two leads, Daniela Farinacci and Steve Bastoni, both with long and established careers in Australian film and television, both had to learn their lines phonetically using articulated dialogue audio recordings made by actor, Vince D’Amico, and vocal coaching. We employed three translators to work on the dialogue helping to accurately recreate the language used at the time. Two of the translators, Vince D’Amico and Rosa Simonelli had grown up in Melbourne in the late 1950s and 1960s and were able to inject the dialogue with a genuine local authenticity. And like most migrant cultures, their dialects were infused with the appropriation of masticated English words. The manner of speech and some of the expressions used in the script have pretty much faded from use. It's most likely when this film screens in Italy, it will probably need subtitles! And Indeed the film has had two very successful screenings in Italy so far. The film was subtitled in “coretto Italiano” (correct Italian) as some of the dialect spoken in the film was deemed too regional and antiquated!
Director’s Biography

Brendan began his filmmaking career armed with a Super 8 camera and a burning desire to shoot and make films. He also had a brief stint as a child actor, which included a small role in the Aussie movie grind-house classic “Mad Max”. Ultimately his real passion lay behind the camera.

Brendan graduated from the Australian Film Television and Radio School majoring in cinematography and film direction. His graduation film, the comedy sci-fi thriller, “Wild Planet” went on to win a number of local and international awards including the Gold Jury Prize at the Houston International Film Festival, The Red Ribbon at the American Film and Video Festival - San Francisco, Gold Jury Award - Houston International Film Festival and Best Student Film at the Hof Film Festival in Germany.

Brendan was launched into a diverse filmmaking career which saw him working as cinematographer and editor on an array of award winning films, music videos, tvcs and promos, which then evolved into a successful career as a director working in film, television and commercials.

His relationship comedy short film, “Three Chords And A Wardrobe” was a hit on the international festival circuit including being voted “Best Australian short film” at the 1998 Sydney Film Festival as well as being theatrically distributed in the U.S. in select theatres and broadcast on the Sundance Channel along with a slew of international cable channel and broadcasters.


In recent years Brendan has been focusing on developing a slate of dramatic film projects including the noir, crime-action-thriller, “The Widow” set in Melbourne in the early 1960s. He has just completed a 28 minute short “proof of concept” of the film, which has already picked up a number of awards on the international festival circuit, to help promote and finance an intended feature project. He continues to develop other projects such as “Reunion” - a music based, drama comedy-romance and “Saigon - Violent City” - a suspenseful crime thriller set in Saigon in the volatile year of 1963.
Frank Lotito as Mario & Joe Petruzzi as Domenico

Nick Carrafa as Nello

Daniela Farinacci as Luisa & Steve Bastoni as Antonio

Daniela Farinacci as Luisa
Daniela Farinacci has most recently been seen as ‘Maria’ in the ABC television series GLITCH and telemovie, REDFERN NOW – PROMISE ME. Daniela was nominated for a Most Outstanding Actress Silver Logie for her work as Maritza Wales in the popular Australian telemovie, THE SOCIETY MURDERS. Daniela’s other television credits include LOWDOWN, DANGEROUS REMEDY, JACK IRISH: BLACK TIDE, MDA, THE SECRET LIFE OF US, PUBERTY BLUES, SNAKE TALES, CARLA CAMETTI, CITY HOMICIDE, THE HEARTBREAK TOUR, BLACKJACK-ACE POINT GAME, RUSH, BLUE HEELERS and EAST WEST 101 which received the 2012 Equity Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series.

Daniela has been widely acknowledged for her roles in award winning films such as LOOK BOTH WAYS, where she was nominated for an AFI Award for Best Supporting Actress, For her role as Paula in LANTANA. Daniela won an IF Award for Best Actress, a Film Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress and was nominated for an AFI Award for Best Supporting Actress. Daniela’s other feature credits include Rowan Woods’ LITTLE FISH, Nadia Tass’ MATCHING JACK, Sarah Watt’s MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX and LOU directed by Belinda Chayko and Garth Davis’ international hit film, LION.

Daniela’s theatre career spans numerous productions for companies including Melbourne Workers Theatre, Arena Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company, notably THE CLEAN HOUSE for which she was nominated for a Green Room Award. Daniela received further Green Room Award nominations for her role in METAMORPHOSES for MTC in 2003 and for her role in the Melbourne Independent Production TRAITORS in 2005. Most recently Daniela has performed in HELICOPTER and YELLOW MOON (both directed by Leticia Caceres), and RUPERT directed by Lee Lewis (which toured to Washington D.C.), for the MTC, and the sell out MTC season of Arthur Miller’s A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.

Steve Bastoni is one of Australia’s most versatile and respected actors, he has a string of impressive credits to his name including the Emmy award winning ON THE BEACH, MATRIX RELOADED and THE WATER DIVINER to name a few. His performance as Alfredo in 15 AMORE garnered an AFI award nomination for Best Actor in a leading role. His portrayal of Michael Drury in the classic mini-series BLUE MURDER is worthy of the critical acclaim it received, as are his many stage credits including his turn as Bill Sykes in Cameron Macintosh’s OLIVER. His portrayal of Wayne in Ben Elton’s POPCORN was chillingly exact and resulted in a green room award nomination. He has also appeared in many other Australian series such as Wildside (1998), Prisoner (1986), On the Beach (2000) and Stingers (1999–2002). Bastoni hosted Missing Persons Unit (replacing Mike Munro) in 2009 and 2010, he appeared in Underbelly 3 in 2010 as Louis Bayeh. Steve appeared once in Sea Patrol (2010); He was temporarily replacing Mike Flynn as the Commanding Officer aboard the fictional RAN vessel HMAS Hammersley. At the moment he plays Don Kaplan in the Australian prison drama WENTWORTH. Bastoni also played the Homicide Detective, Charlie Bezzina in the 2014 spin off show Fat Tony & Co. to the well known Underbelly (series 1) which was based on the Melbourne gangland war (1980-2007).
Film Festival Screenings and Awards

Amarcort Film Festival - Rimini, Italy
November 16, 2018 - World Premiere
Award: Migliore Interpretazione (Best Performances) A collective cast accolade.

LA Crime and Horror Film Festival - Los Angeles, United States
November 17, 2018 - North American Premiere
Award: Best Original Music Score

Rome Independent Prisma Awards - Rome, Italy
December 4, 2018 - Semi-Finalist

Spello International Short Film Festival - Spello, Italy
February 26, 2019

Independent Shorts Awards - Los Angeles, United States
March 15, 2019
Awards: Best Crime Film; Best Film Noir; Best Actress; Best Original Film Score

Golden State Film Festival - Los Angeles, United States
March 26, 2019

Indie Short Fest - Los Angeles, United States
March 30, 2019
Award: Best Film Noir; Nominee: Best Thriller; Best Action Film, Best Director - Male; Best Actress. Best Costume Design

WorldFest Houston International Film Festival - Houston, United States
April 6, 2019
Award: Platinum REMI Award Suspense/Thriller - Shorts
Arizona International Film Festival - Tucson, United States
April 20, 2019

Rochester International Film Festival - Rochester, United States
May 11, 2019
Award: Shoestring Trophy

Silicon Beach Film Festival - Los Angeles, California, United States
June 14, 2019
Nominee: Best Short Film

Georgia Shorts Film Festival - Atlanta, Georgia, United States
June 15, 2019

River Film Festival - Padua, Italy
June 23, 2019

Genre Celebration Festival - Tokyo, Japan
June 27, 2019
Award: Best Noir Short

Jersey Shore Film Festival - Deal, New Jersey, United States
June 28, 2019
Award: Best International Short Film

IndieX Film Fest - Los Angeles, United States
June 28, 2019
Award: Best Supporting Actor. Nominee: Best Crime Film; Best Actress

Hollywood South Film Festival - Springfield, Kentucky, United States
July 5, 2019
Awards: Best Foreign Thriller; Best Actress
Revelation Perth International Film Festival - Perth, Western Australia

July 5, 2019

Australian Premiere

Florence Film Awards - Florence, Italy

July 6, 2019

Award: Best Director Short film.

Hollywood Blood Horror Festival - Los Angeles, United States.

July 7, 2019

Awards: Best Actress ; Best Crime Film

Miami Independent Film Festival - Miami, Florida, United States

July 27, 2019

Awards: Best Short Narrative

Moscow Shorts Film Festival - Moscow, Russia

July 30th, 2019

Venus Italian International Film Festival - Las Vegas, Nevada, United States

July 31, 2019

Awards: Best Actress -Short, Special Jury Award - Best Short Film Noir; Nominations: Best Director Short

The San Antonio Film Festival - San Antonio, Texas, United States

July 31, 2019

Genre Blast IV Film Festival - Winchester, Virginia, United States

August 30, 2019

Nominations: Best Short Film; Best Director; Best Actress.
South Film and Arts Academy Festival - Rancagua, O’Higgins, Chile

September 5, 2019

Awards: Best Crime Short Film; Best Lead Actress in A Short Film; Best Cinematography In A Short Film; Supporting Actor In A Short Film - Honourable Mention; Team Performance In A Short Film - Honourable Mention; Production In A Short Film - Honourable Mention; Costume Design In A Short Film - Honourable Mention;

Two Roads International Film Festival Brooklyn - New York, United States

September 7, 2019

Awards: Best Short Film (Inspiration Competition); Best Actress; Best Writing; Best Period Piece; Best International Film  Nominations: Best Supporting Actor; Best Director (Inspiration Competition); Best Cinematography

Apocalypse Later International Fantastic Film Festival - Phoenix, Arizona, United States

October 13, 2019

Official Selection

The Cutting Room International Short Film Festival NYC - New York, New York, United States

October 20, 2019

Awards: Best International Actress; Best International Short Drama. Nominations: Best International Actor; Best International Director; Best International Cinematography; Best Trailer

Cardiff International Film Festival - Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom

October 26, 2019

Official Selection

Short Film Factory - Bucharest, Romania

November 1, 2019

Award: Short Film Factory Festival Award
Reel East Texas Film Festival - Kilgore, Texas, United States

November 17th

Official Selection

Sound & Image Challenge International Festival - Macau, China

December 8, 2019

Nominee: Best Fiction

X World Short Film Festival - Rome, Italy

December 28, 2019

Nominations: Best Short - Thriller; Best Cinematography: Best Actress; Best Actor; Best Director Excellence; Best Trailer; Best Poster (Awards. T.B.A.)

International Short Award - Cesena, Emilia-Romagna, Italy

December 30, 2019

Official Selection

Feel The Reel International Film Festival - Iasi, Romania

January 15, 2020

Awards: (awarded on October 26th (Best Of The Fest ( Best Film); Best Screenplay; Best Actress; Nominations: Best Director; Best Cinematography; Best Music Score.

Flickerfest International Short Film Festival - Sydney, Australia

January 15, 2020

New South Wales Premiere

Official Selection