

TOWN NEWS

Hollywood for a night



CHRIS PETERS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Actor Terrence Howard (center) hits the red carpet with his son for the premiere of the documentary film "Harry... A Communication Breakdown" at Chakra Restaurant in Paramus on Nov. 26. For a full story on the event, see page 3.

Stars line up for premiere of documentary

BY KATIE O'CONNELL
Staff Writer

A local restaurant turned into Grauman's Chinese Theater last week.

On Nov. 26, Academy Award nominated actors Danny Aiello and Terrence Howard were in attendance for a red carpet, documentary premiere held at Chakra Restaurant on Route 4 and hosted by Starline Films, a motion picture production and distribution company based out of Upper Saddle River.

"Harry...A Communication Breakdown" tells the story of the Thanksgiving Day 1976 murders of four members of the De La Roche Family from Montvale. At 18 years old, Harry De La Roche Jr. was charged with four counts of first-degree murder for the deaths of his parents and two younger brothers, and is currently serving a life sentence in South Woods State Prison in Bridgeton.

Narrated by Aiello, the documentary is a companion project to Starline's feature film, "Anyone's Son," directed by Aiello and scheduled for release in 2009. The feature film is based on a book of the same name by author Roberta Roesch.

"I thought [the story] was so unique," said Saddle River resident Aiello. "This has a person who had confessed [to the murders] and then recanted his confession and said he wasn't responsible for killing the entire family, but he killed his younger brother who was responsible for killing the whole family. It's something that's going to enlighten a lot of people. I think it's very meaningful."

Jon Doscher, actor, producer, and owner of Starline Films, is from Woodcliff Lake and graduated from Pascack Hills High School, the same school De La Roche attended. Doscher was intrigued by the story of the famous alum from his school, especially after hearing many stories about the murders and reading Roesch's book.

The book and the film portray De La Roche as a boy that grew up with a father who seemed like the perfect man to the outside world, but in actuality was abusive toward his family, and Harry Jr. in particular. In addition to abuse, taunting, and unrealistic demands from his father, De La Roche was also said to have suffered cruel taunting from his peers.

These circumstances are thought to have contributed to De La Roche's breaking point the day his family was murdered, a crime to which he initially confessed to. He took back his confession during the murder trial and said he just shot his brother, Ronald, after coming home one night to find that Ronald had killed the rest of



The stars on the red carpet included actor Terrance Howard (from left), producer and writer Fran Ganguzzza, producer and actor Jon Doscher, Howard's son Hunter, and Danny Aiello (giving a television interview).



Author of "Anyone's Son," Roberta Roesch, wrote the original newspaper article from the murder for *The Record*.

the family.

After researching the trial and the De La Roche family, Doscher wanted to bring to light another perspective on the murders, a perspective shared by Roesch, that perhaps De La Roche was wrongly convicted.

"I was intrigued by the mystique and inconsistencies of what may have happened. I also find true stories to be very compelling. After researching the facts and details of the case, I realized there were several loopholes and unanswered questions," said Doscher in a press

release. "I reached out to Roberta Roesch, author of the book on Harry and the murder."

Doscher also began to correspond with De La Roche, and portions of a 90-minute prison interview are included in the documentary.

"Harry, in fact, could be anyone's son. We all know that everyone has a breaking point which can be avoided with the proper counseling and care from family and friends," said Doscher in the written statement.

The documentary premiere was



CHRIS PETERS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Producer Jon Doscher with actor Danny Aiello, narrator of the documentary and director of the film "Anyone's Son."

also a fund-raiser for The New Jersey Child Assault Prevention Project, a community project that teaches children to prevent verbal, physical and sexual assault. The project, a model for programs implemented in 32 states and 18 countries, has reached over 2,500,000 children and 300,000 parents and teachers in the state.

Doscher expressed that it is important to prevent child abuse, most importantly for their well-being, but to also prevent future tragedies similar to the De La Roche case. He said NJCAP was

an appropriate organization to be represented at the event.

"It ties in," said Doscher. "It relates to the underlying premise regarding Harry De La Roche Jr."

Doscher said he met with De La Roche in the state prison just three weeks before the premiere event.

"You can still see him as that 18-year-old child that was mocked, ridiculed, abused, both inside and outside the home," Doscher said. "It seemed that his growth had been stunted emotionally."

SEE PREMIERE, PAGE 5

PREMIERE

FROM PAGE 3

The feature film version of "Anyone's Son" will star Haley Joel Osment, Sharon Stone, Val Kilmer, James Caan, Shirley MacLaine, and Robert Duvall. Also, Doscher will be playing prosecutor Rick Salkin and Aiello will be making his directorial debut.

"People have asked me to direct many movies in the past,

but you have to love something. I never found anything that was so interesting that I wanted to dedicate a year and a half of my life to do," said Aiello.

Howard, known from such movies as "Iron Man" and the Academy Award winning film "Crash," was at the event in support of the fund-raiser, the documentary project and the independent film industry as a whole.

"We've been talking about doing a number of different projects together and it's just support-

ing those independent markets," said Howard. "That's always been where the artists come from."

Howard is set to star in "4Chosen," Starline's next feature film about the four young African-American basketball players on their way to college basketball camp who were shot by state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1998.

Katie O'Connell's e-mail address is oonnell@northjersey.com