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# Splash

WEEKEND



# 'The Victims' is a morality tale for the '90s

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A morality tale for the 1990s is how a North Miami Beach producer describes his feature film debut, a story about heterosexuality and AIDS.

Moshe Israel says he put everything on the line to make "The Victims," due to be released in area theaters today.

"For my first movie I wanted it to be about a topic that would benefit everyone," says Israel, an Israeli businessman who owned a string of duty-free shops in Panama.

Whether "The Victims" becomes a financial and critical success remains to be seen, though. The movie, a love story with a fatal attraction twist, is an independent project that features a cast of unknowns and does not have the backing of a major studio. It will have a limited first-run in Broward and Dade movie houses, then expand to other theaters throughout the state.

The film is expected to go nationwide sometime this fall. No release date has been set, says a company spokeswoman.

Israel says when he first came up with the idea to produce a movie about the effects of AIDS on a heterosexual couple, the major Hollywood studios didn't touch it, although several did compliment him on the concept.

Despite the film's controversial subject matter, it has received no negative feedback with the exception of one West Palm Beach radio



Sherri D'Rosa and Roger Pretto in a scene from 'The Victims'

station which refused to carry promotional advertisements, says the spokeswoman.

The film's main character, a man named Paul Genesco, is a Cuban immigrant of Turkish descent who arrives in Miami in 1967 after

jumping off a boat filled with illegal aliens.

In typical Horatio Alger fashion, he climbs the corporate ladder, marries a beautiful American woman and has a son.

Two decades later, Genesco,

played by Coral Gables actor Roger Pretto, has built his own successful real estate business backed by the support of his loving wife and child. The American dream he strived for

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# 'VICTIMS'

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has come true.

Their dream is dealt a shattering blow when Genesco has a one-night affair with a business colleague who later discovers she is dying from AIDS.

Genesco and his wife both test positive for the HIV virus. The story progresses about their dealing with the disease individually and as a family.

The film also stars Mary Fanaro as the other woman, Sherri D'Rosa as the wife and Lynn Walker in a supporting role playing D'Rosa's best friend. All of the actors live in the Miami area, except D'Rosa who hails from Tampa.

Walker says when she first read the script she was shocked that no one had attempted to make a movie of this kind before.

"I hope it has a big impact on everyone," she says.

It definitely has had a impact on D'Rosa. During filming she did a bit of her own research, speaking to AIDS sufferers and to Miami AIDS counselor Christine Nolan, who plays herself in the movie.

"(Christine) and I talked about the statistics and I was surprised to find that women contracting the disease from their husbands or lovers happens quite frequently," D'Rosa says.

Juliette Love, executive director for Center One, an AIDS services agency in Fort Lauderdale, says "The Victims" hits closer to home than a lot of people want to realize.

Love was among those invited to a special sneak preview Monday and has lauded the film for its reality-based premise.

For too long the public has been led to believe that AIDS only affects homosexuals, IV drug users and prostitutes, Love says. "It's important for people to understand that this can happen to anyone. People need to accept the reality of the situation."

She hopes that potential moviegoers won't be frightened away by the film's subject matter. "If anything, I hope it enlightens them about the need for testing and safe sex."

Florida ranks third in the nation in the number of symptomatic reported AIDS cases. From 1981 through July, 1989, Florida has documented 8,248 cases. Nationally, there are 102,621 reported cases, Love says.

In that same time, Broward has reported 1,369 cases. The county has the second highest number of AIDS sufferers in the state.

Fourteen percent of those with documented AIDS cases in Florida, and 13 percent of the cases in Broward, attribute contracting AIDS to heterosexual contact, she says.