

PLAY THE GAME

PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

PAUL CAMPBELL **ANDY GRIFFITH**

DORIS ROBERTS **LIZ SHERIDAN** **MARLA SOKOLOFF**



"★ ★ ★"
GREAT FUN!"
- AARP Movies for Grownups



"★ ★ ★"
**A Robust
Romantic
Comedy"**
-Dan Hudak,
Florida Sun Sentinel

PAUL CAMPBELL **ANDY GRIFFITH** **DORIS ROBERTS** **LIZ SHERIDAN** **MARLA SOKOLOFF**

PLAY THE GAME

**IF YOU WANT TO WIN THE GAME OF LOVE,
YOU HAVE TO PLAY THE GAME**

STORY FILMS PRESENTS "PLAY THE GAME" PAUL CAMPBELL ANDY GRIFFITH MARLA SOKOLOFF LIZ SHERIDAN GREGORY OWENS CLINT HOWARD BRANCE HOWARD
AND DORIS ROBERTS MUSIC BY ADRIENNE STEIN COSTUME DESIGNER JIM LATHAM EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROBIN URBANG PRODUCED BY LAURA BRODY WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY GENEROUS WHITE DIRECTED BY CHRIS ANTHONY MILLER
CASTING BY CAVIN KELLY EDITOR JENNIFER SCHAEFER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS A. CHARLES FUNAI PRODUCED BY JIM ROSE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS EVA GORDON PRODUCED BY MARC FENBERG
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August 2009



Photo by Gavin Kelly,
Courtesy of Story Films Inc.

Play the Game (PG-13)



Some movies get points just for the casting, and *Play the Game*—a sweet study of late-life love—is one of them. Any time you find the amazing **Andy Griffith**, the versatile **Doris Roberts** (*Everybody Loves Raymond*), and the indomitable **Liz Sheridan** (*Seinfeld*) entangled in a romantic triangle, well, that ought to be something worth watching. And the three veterans squeeze every funny, awkward, and poignant moment they can out of a surprisingly insightful script by young writer/director Marc Fienberg.

Griffith stars as Joe, who'd like to pitch a little woo toward a certain woman at his retirement home (Sheridan). Trouble is, Joe's been out of circulation for so long, he doesn't know where to start. Enter his youthful grandson David (**Paul Campbell**), who fancies himself an expert on courting the laydeezee, and who's more than happy to take on Grandpa Joe as a project.

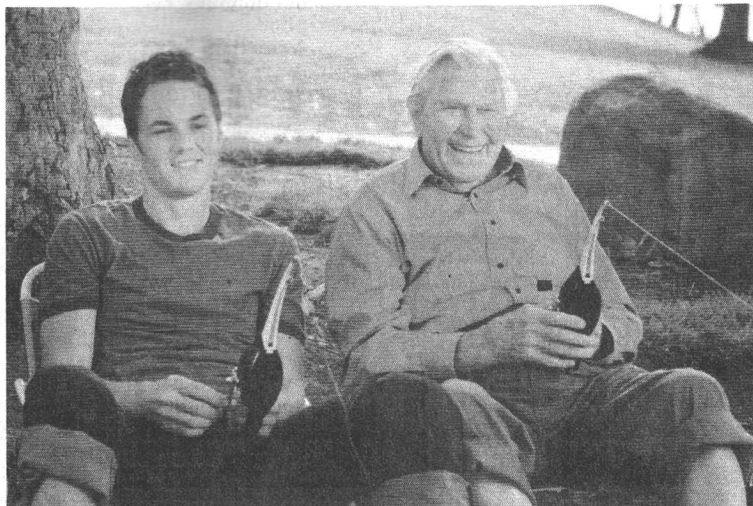
There's great fun in the pair's give-and-take, and some subversive delight in watching as the two slowly switch roles: Joe becoming increasingly self-confident; David steadily succumbing to the inevitable insecurities of youth.

But the film's truly a delight when turning itself over to the three grownup protagonists. They circle each other tentatively, suffer pangs of inadequacy, and finally give themselves over to passions they never knew they had. In short, the lesson of *Play the Game* seems to be, whether you're at Sunset Acres or McKinley Central, life is all high school.

As he did in the sleeper hit *Waitress* a couple of years back, Griffith prods us with a gentle reminder that, Sheriff Andy Taylor aside, he's still the same fine, nuanced actor who startled audiences with his riveting performance 50 years ago as a secretly sleazy snake oil salesman in *A Face in the Crowd* (and if you haven't seen that underrated Elia Kazan classic, rent it now). Sheridan is one of Hollywood's most reliable character actresses—best remembered as Jerry Seinfeld's smothering mom on *Seinfeld*—and she brings unexpected sexiness as the object of Joe's affections. And Roberts—moving beyond her nine years as the domineering mom on *Everybody Loves Raymond*—shows touching vulnerability as another woman of Joe's lately resurgent dreams.

It goes without saying that Hollywood doesn't make nearly enough films that take grownup love seriously. In bringing laughs to the table, *Play the Game* takes a big, joyful step in the right direction.

FILM REVIEW: PLAY THE GAME



Story Films, courtesy

Grandson (Paul Campbell) and Grandpa (Andy Griffith) are both "players" in comedy.

Griffith aces in 'Game' of hearts

By Dan Hudak
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

You probably never wanted to see Andy Griffith as a swingin' bachelor who has a special way with the ladies, but his performance is one of the many charms of *Play the Game*, a robust romantic comedy that reminds us that love has no rules or age limits.

In the movie, which hits local theaters today after winning the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival's audience award in November, Griffith plays Grandpa Joe, an 84-year-old widower who still says things like "Oh applesauce, you're all wet" to grandson David (Paul Campbell, *Battlestar Galactica*).

David's efforts to help his grandfather socialize in his retirement community turn Grandpa Joe into a prime object of desire, particularly to Rose (Doris Roberts, *Everybody Loves Raymond*) and Edna (Liz Sheridan, *Seinfeld*). At the same time, David en-

counters romantic problems of his own in Julie (Maria Sokoloff, *The Practice*).

Writer-director Marc Fienberg based the movie on his relationship with his own grandfather, who lived in South Florida. How much of the movie actually occurred only Fienberg knows, but there are so many delightful moments you'll leave hoping all of them are true.

Through the silliness of the story, Fienberg — making his feature-film debut — finds an essential truth: The game of love doesn't take mercy on the elderly or heartbroken, and only rarely is it fair. But it's still a game we all play, because we always believe that the exultation of finding love is worth the heartache. That Fienberg brings this concept to life in the characters of both the grandfather and grandson, and does so with charm, humor and candor, is a real achievement.

★★★ **Play the Game** — 105 min. Rated PG-13: Sexual content, language

Read more from nationally syndicated film critic Dan Hudak at hudakonhollywood.com.

AT THE MOVIES

'Play The Game'

Rated: PG-13

Starring: Andy Griffith, Paul Campbell, Doris Roberts, Marla Sokoloff, Liz Sheridan

★★★★

A while back, I had a chance to interview Art Linkletter, 96, and the former radio and television personality talked about sex for the older generation.

"Some people think that older people should forget about sex, but it's not true," Linkletter said.

"People in their 70s and 80s should have a sex life. They should have sex at least once a week."

Senior sex is the theme of Andy Griffith's awkwardly charming movie, "Play The Game." Griffith plays Grandpa Joe, a widower in a nursing home who, with a little advice from his grandson David (Paul Campbell) and some Viagra, rediscovers the joy and bewilderment of sex.

It's a long way from Mayberry, but Griffith is a delight. So are Doris Roberts ("Everybody Loves Raymond") as Rose, who puts the twinkle in Griffith's eye, and Liz Sheridan ("Seinfeld") as Edna.

Sheridan is the one who teams with Griffith in what is called "the sex

scene." Director/writer Marc Fienberg describes it as an 84-year-old man's first sexual encounter in years. It's relatively mild stuff by today's standards and very funny.

A subplot in the film is young David's search for true love. He likes to prowl for one-night stands, but that changes when he finds Julie, played by Maria Sokoloff.

Grandpa Joe helps set David straight.

"If you want to win the game of love," he tells the younger man, "you shouldn't play games with women."

He adds that Julie "isn't interested in the man you were, but the man you are."

Underneath the sex farce, Griffith touches a nerve as an older man

copied with loneliness, loss and living in a nursing home.

"I'm lost without her," Griffith tells his grandson while speaking of his first wife who died a few years earlier. After a few failed attempts to find a relationship, Griffith says, "Getting hurt hurts. I'd rather be lonely."

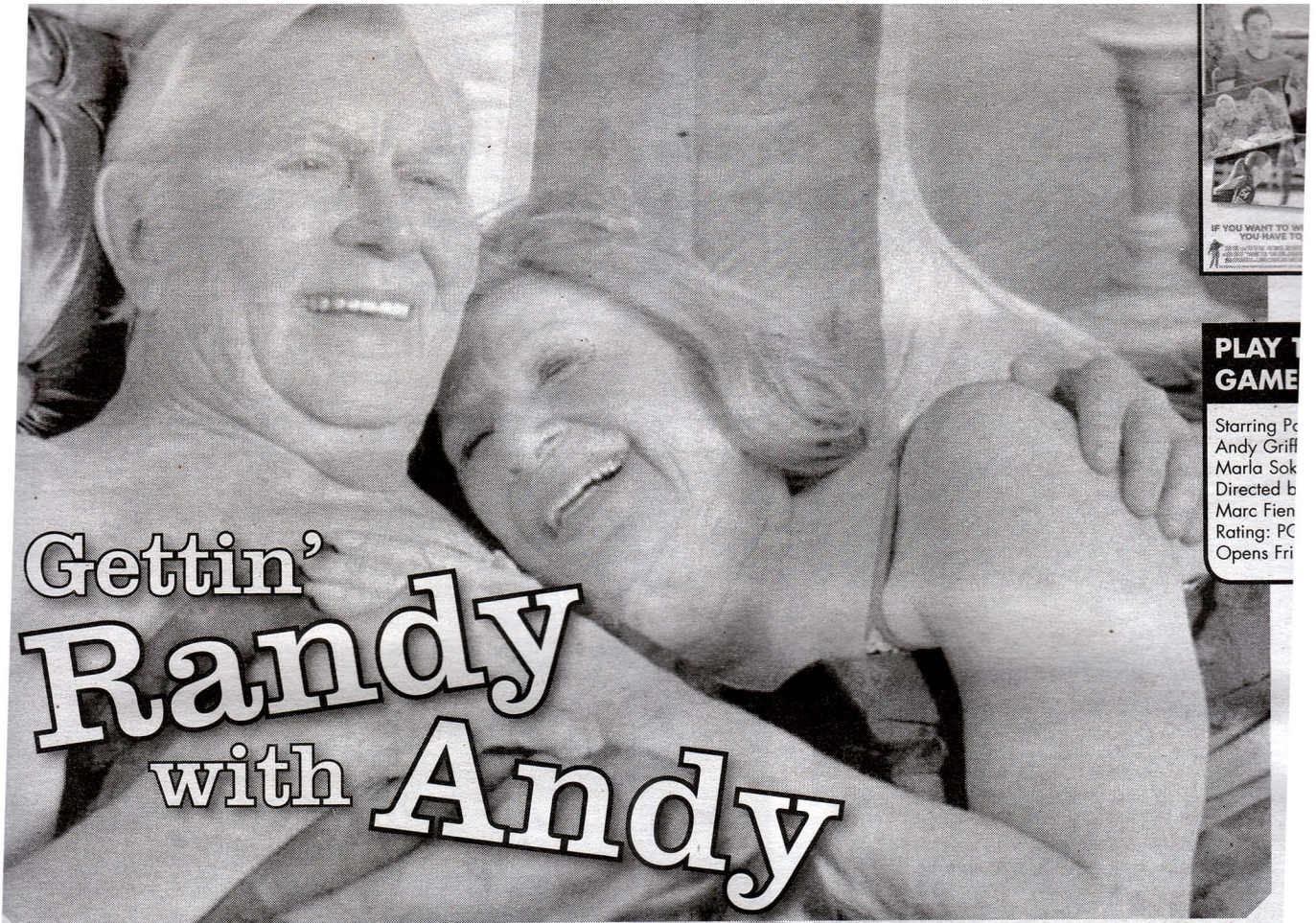
Eventually, Grandpa Joe gets his groove back, but the essence of this movie isn't about old-timers jumping in bed. It's something more meaningful.

"People our age have to live every second to the fullest," Edna tells Grandpa.

That's what playing the game is all about.

—Anthony Violanti
Staff writer

MOVIES on Page 20



Gettin' Randy with Andy

Seinfeld's mom gets it on with Andy Griffith:
Fifth sign of the apocalypse?

Allison Miller • *College Times*

Liz Sheridan had the opportunity to do something that not many actresses in their 80s are asked to do – shoot a love scene.

The new romantic comedy, "Play the Game" follows ladies' man David Mitchell (Paul Campbell) as he tries to teach his grandpa (Andy Griffith) how to pick up women at his retirement community.

Sheridan, perhaps best-known for playing the role of Jerry Seinfeld's mom on the popular television show, "Seinfeld," portrays Edna Gordon in "Play the Game." Her character becomes one of Grandpa Joe's girlfriends, after she seduces him in the bedroom (by slipping Viagra in his glass of wine) and reignites his passion for life.

Sheridan said the director, Marc Fienberg, contacted her about playing the role of Edna in the film.

"I read [the script], and it looked like fun," Sheridan said.

Sheridan said the film is great for all ages. Not only does it star Paul Campbell and Marla Sokoloff for the younger crowd, but it emphasizes to the older people in the audience that it is okay to let loose and live a little.

"I think it is terribly important for older people, especially turned widowed, to get out there and have some fun," Sheridan said.

And Sheridan seems to be taking her own advice. Her favorite part of the film?

"Going down on Andy Griffith," Sheridan said.

Sheridan said she had a really fun time acting in this scene with Griffith, even though it was shot in a small room packed with the entire film crew.

"It was funny. I got under the covers. He

did the 'oohs' and 'ahhs' and I made the noises," Sheridan said.

But Sheridan said she did have a difficult time trying to feel comfortable in the clothing, or lack thereof, that she wore in the scene.

"The hardest part was wearing the red satin negligee they gave me," Sheridan said.

As far as any future plans in her career, Sheridan says she doesn't audition much and she has trouble getting opportunities in film because she is so well-known for the role she played on "Seinfeld."

"As much as I loved playing Seinfeld's mom, you are constantly known as being Seinfeld's mom," Sheridan said.

However, Sheridan is currently working on making a movie out of the book she wrote, "Dizzy and Jimmy," which reveals the love affair that she had with James Dean.

Special Sedona Film Festival Preview

SEDONA MONTHLY

Arizona's Magazine with the Great View www.sedonamonthly.com

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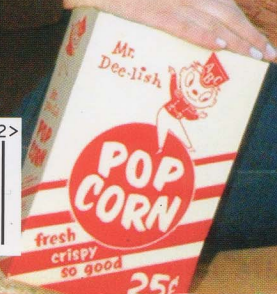
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PLAY THE GAME

Marla Sokoloff

ONE LOOK AT 28-year-old actress Marla Sokoloff and you'll instantly remember her from her roles on some of television's most beloved series: *Full House*, *Friends*, *Party of Five*, *3rd Rock From the Sun*, *7th Heaven*, *Desperate Housewives*, and, perhaps most notably, *The Practice*, in which she played Lucy for six seasons. Born in San Francisco, this month's covergirl began acting on TV when she was only 12 years old after discovering the craft through community theater. Marla flew to Sedona from LA three weeks after getting engaged to talk to *Sedona Monthly* about her role as Julie Larabee in *Play the Game*, a featured film in the Sedona International Film Festival.

SEDONA MONTHLY: Tell us about the first time you read the script for *Play the Game*. How did you land the role of Julie?

MARLA SOKOLOFF: The script was sent to me by my agent and I loved it. I knew [director] Marc [Fienberg] was going to be meeting with actresses but not reading – it was a sit down meeting. I get frustrated when it's like that because I'm not Scarlett Johansson or someone who would get an offer – I'm not great at telling a director they should give me a job. So I met with Marc and he told me he wouldn't be auditioning, just making an offer. I knew it wasn't going to be me [laughs]. I begged him right then and there to let me audition and read parts of the script. Even after I read with Marc – and he really worked me, it was a long session of trying different things – I didn't get the job for two more weeks. I just didn't know how it was going to end.

SM: You got to work with some of TV's greatest character actors with this film: Andy Griffith, Liz Sheridan, Doris Roberts and Clint Howard. What was that like?

MS: I was really impressed with the cast Marc put together but I was also impressed with Marc's personality – he's such a great guy. For me, obviously working with Doris Roberts was insane. She's great and her personality is a million times better than her comedic skills. It was cold where we were filming and I remember sitting in a tent with heaters and Doris was telling stories about auditioning with Shelley Winters. It was such a surreal moment. I wouldn't even talk – I'd just listen to her and Andy Griffith and think, This is crazy. These are legends and it was like the best acting school you could go to. It was very inspiring.

SM: The twist at the end of the film is fabulous and we don't want to reveal anything to our readers, however, Julie plays a big role in the twist. What did you think about that?

MS: I thought it was genius. You see so many romantic comedies with the quintessential "girl next door" or the ingenue, not a girl in control. It was hard to play as an actor because you don't want to give anything away throughout the movie. It was tricky.

SM: Have you had a lot of experiences with film festivals?

MS: I've been to Sundance, Toronto and Deauville. They are so much fun, the only problem is when you have a movie there you're so busy doing press you don't have the time to see other films. If my schedule allows I'd love to come to the Sedona Film Festival.

SM: Is this your first time in Sedona?

MS: It is and I love it except I do have one complaint: I got carsick coming down 89A from Flagstaff. I don't like all these windy roads! I'm such a baby. But the red rocks are beautiful – [my fiance and I] got some insane pictures.

SM: Tell us about your favorite roles.

MS: Definitely my favorite role of all time was *The Practice*. I was 17 when I got the job – still in high school – and those people were huge parts of my life. I loved everyone on the show and having the same place to go every day. Nothing has topped that yet. And I love doing TV. I'm a creature of habit so working with the same people, having the same place to go, working on the same character for a long period of time appeals to me.

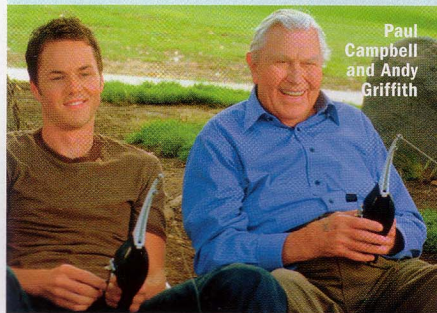
WHEN MARC FIENBERG was in his late 20s his 89-year-old grandfather, Papa Joe, sat him down and told him he wanted back in the game. His wife of 56 years had passed away, he was lonely, and he went to his grandson for advice. "Here was this nearly 90-year-old man going through the same emotions as a school boy – I knew it was a story that needed to be told," says Marc.

This was in 2000 and Marc had never written a screenplay, though he'd had some directing experience. He worked on the script for *Play the Game* for several years, perfecting a story about Grandpa Joe (Andy Griffith of *The Andy Griffith Show* fame) and his grandson, lady's man David Mitchell (Paul Campbell from TV's *Battlestar Galactica*), and the duo's escapades with the opposite sex, which includes witty and poignant roles by Doris Roberts (*Everybody Loves Raymond*), Liz Sheridan (*Seinfeld*), and Marla Sokoloff (*The Practice*). Unfortunately, Papa Joe didn't live long enough to see the movie – he passed away in 2006.

"I put together a script reading for him," remembers Marc the night before the film's big premiere at the Fort Lauderdale Film

THE DIRECTOR

Marc Fienberg



Paul
Campbell
and Andy
Griffith

Festival [winner of the festival's Audience Award for Best Indie Feature]. "He had the front row seat and at the end he just lost it. He would have loved to see Andy Griffith play his role because he was a huge *Matlock* fan."

Marc has never been to Sedona but the SIFF was at the top of his list. Marc's goal, like most other filmmakers, is to see his movie receive a major theatrical release but he still gets a thrill out of watching audience's react, especially when it comes to the sex scene between Griffith and Liz Sheridan.

"Doris pointed out that it's rare to see senior sex treated with honesty and humor," says Marc. "The message of the film has been the same since I first wrote the script: No matter how old you are, we all need companionship."

MOVIES

Griffith's still got 'Game'

The enduring icon is a scene-stealer as a randy grandpa

By LESLIE GRAY STREETER
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

It's a darned shame that virtually no romantic comedies are targeted at senior citizens, and it would be doubly shameful if *Play the Game* were the last and only time audiences got to see national treasure Andy Griffith get his flirt on.

Whenever Griffith, as a senior Lothario named Joe, waxes fondly about his romancing of the ladies at his retirement community, or about the wonders of certain little blue pharmaceuticals, the years peel from that gloriously wrinkled face and you can see clearly the winking, energetic eyes of a young sheriff from Mayberry.

And he's pretty cute, too. Griffith's performance as randy Grandpa Joe is far and away the highlight, but

far from the only charm, of *Play the Game*, director Marc Fienberg's comedy about the risks, joys and, sometimes, naughty little thrills to be found along the road to love.

It's far from perfect: The start is slow and weirdly generic, and for most of the film, the piece's younger couple (Paul Campbell and Marla Sokoloff) aren't nearly as interesting as Griffith and the ladies (Doris Roberts and Liz Sheridan) he's smooth-talking.

But things solidify joyfully every time Joe's on screen, which, thankfully, is a lot. We meet him as a despairing widower neglected by his selfish 20-something grandson David (Campbell), a slightly sleazy car salesman and ladies' man who bought Joe a place in the retirement

community so he wouldn't have to deal with him.

But the two start to connect when David takes Joe, along with his long-suffering married friend Rob (Geoffrey Owens), to be his wingman at a club while he trolls for bimbos. This provides one of the film's best scenes, when Joe, misunderstanding Rob and David's horror at him spooning Metamucil into a cup of hot water at the club, helpfully dumps a scoop into each of their cocktails.

Realizing that his grandfather needs some help on his moves, David begins coaching him in the game of love, with rules that men will recognize fondly and women will roll their eyes at. At the same time, David begins wooing perky non-bimbo Julie (*The Practice*'s Sokoloff), but as his game



GENERATION GAP: David (Paul Campbell, left) and his Grandpa Joe (Andy Griffith) start to connect as they pursue romance.

starts to flounder, Joe's picks up, and the elder student becomes the teacher.

And it's that step-up in Joe's game that leads to a very funny and surprisingly suggestive sex scene between Joe and Edna (*Seinfeld*'s Sheridan) involving lingerie, a slipped Mickey and the work of the aforementioned Via-

gra. The scene's slightly uncomfortable, not so much because of the age of the lovers, but because that's Matlock up there on screen marveling about his staying power.

Julie and David's romance is a little more paint-by-numbers.

There are thousands of romantic comedies about

REVIEW

Play the Game

B

Rated PG-13: Sexual content and language

Running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

The verdict: The seniors steal the movie, which would have been even more entertaining without the young folks.

Now showing: Area theaters

callow young people, but very few ... OK, none, about seniors.

One almost wishes Fienberg had dropped the kids and focused just on Griffith and his still-considerable gifts.

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Liz SHERIDAN

By Stacy Carchman



If you have ever seen the television show, "Seinfeld", you are already familiar with Liz Sheridan, who played his mother, Helen Seinfeld, on the long running show. Now she's back in the spotlight in a new movie, starring alongside Andy Griffith in "Play the Game." Not only is she an actress, but she started off her career as a dancer and singer.

Sheridan was born in 1929, in Westchester County, New York, the daughter of Elizabeth Poole-Jones, a concert singer, and Frank Sheridan, a classical pianist. She was on Broadway before moving to Los Angeles in 1980. She had a role in shows that included "Happy End," "Something's Afoot," and "Ballroom."

"These are my most memorable memories," Liz said. It was in New York that she met actor James (Jimmy) Dean while working in a rehearsal hall.

They had a two year relationship. Liz has written a book about this relationship, "Dizzy and Jimmy." "Dizzy was my nickname because my sister could not pronounce Elizabeth when she was a child." Liz is currently working on a script of the book.

After moving to Los Angeles in 1980, her television career began with small lines in various shows, including "Moonlighting." Then she landed a role on the show "Ali." This was a "silly and politically incorrect show starring a puppet." The show lasted for four years and ended in 1989. "The public thought the show was for kids, because it starred a puppet, but actually the humor was quite adult in nature. The writing was very witty and went over the kids

heads."

Almost immediately after "Ali" ended, she auditioned for a part on "Seinfeld." She was given the part immediately after her audition. "When I met with Jerry Seinfeld, he laughed the whole time through the audition." "When I got home, there was a message on my answering machine that I got the part." "The set of "Seinfeld" was very calm and both Larry David and Jerry were easy to work with."

Liz also can be seen in numerous reruns of television shows, including Melrose Place, Murder She Wrote, Family Ties, Empty Nest, and many others.

Liz describes herself as "free floating and young at heart." "I believe romantic relationships between people my age are an "absolute must." In the movie, "Play the Game," she plays Edna, a "naughty and flaky" character who has a romantic scene with Andy Griffith's character. Andy Griffith is "wonderful and a consummate actor." "He has great ideas and is easy to work with." Before our romantic scene, I was "a little nervous, but I felt more at ease because there were many people there, including Andy's wife." "Working with first time director, Marc Fienberg, was terrific." "It was his first venture into film and he was so sweet and helpful, very honest."

Liz believes in "being creative." People my age should "not just sit on the porch and swing and wait to die." They should be out there "exploring and enjoying life." What motivates me is "creating, singing, dancing, venturing and exploring."

"I've had a huge life." Aside from New York and Los Angeles, I also lived in San Juan, Puerto Rico for 13 years, where I was a dancer and singer, had a love affair with a jazz musician named Dale. Liz later married him. In her spare time, Liz likes to act as a foster parent to animals. "I love going to the park every Saturday." What motivates me every day is "being creative." Everyone should find something to feel "vibrant and connected."

Grandfather's reentry to dating scene basis of 'Play the Game'

Griffith stars, South Florida seniors take note



Director Marc Fienberg discusses a scene with Andy Griffith. Griffith originally said 'no' when asked to appear, but he reconsidered and agreed to play Grandpa Joe.

By LESLIE GRAY STREETER
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Marc Fienberg's grandfather kissed a girl — and he liked it.

And the Century Village Deerfield resident's reentry into the world of dating not only enhanced his sunset years, but inspired his filmmaker grandson's latest project.

"This was something that people just weren't talking about," said Fienberg, whose film *Play the Game*, stars Andy Griffith as a widower who becomes a retirement community Romeo with dubious advice from his young grandson.

Fienberg has an ingenious marketing plan for his film, which last year won several festival awards, including the Audience Award and Best Indie Feature at the Fort Lauderdale International Film

Festival.

He's spent several weeks taking the movie to retirement communities in South Florida, including several in Palm Beach County. Today, *Play the Game* will open exclusively in Florida, where its target audience resides, before spreading to the rest of the country.

And in his visits to these communities, Fienberg says he's gotten proof that his late grandfather's experiences weren't unique.

"A man came up to me (after seeing the film) and thanked me," says the director, whose film continues to be a family affair with his wife, young children and parents helping him market it at screenings.

Play the Game's most talked-about sequence is a sex scene involving Grandpa Joe (Griffith) and

some little blue pills. Fienberg says that the scene, which is "tasteful," is most realistic "because there's laughter in it."

Integral to that scene is the comic timing of Griffith, who Fienberg contacted after seeing him in his well-received comeback performance in *Waitress*. Unfortunately, "he said 'No!,'" the director says.

But Griffith reconsidered, and agreed to do the movie.

"He really wants to work," Fienberg says of the former *Andy Griffith Show* and *Matlock* star, who he describes as "a pro. If my grandfather was still alive and knew that he was going to be, basically, played by the man from his favorite show, *Matlock*, ... well, it's probably good that he'd already passed away, because he'd have had a heart attack!"

NEW YORK POST

moviespulse

Sheriff Andy gets randy

ANDY Griffith does the nasty in "Play the Game."

Yes, *that* Andy Griffith — and though this comedy discreetly respects the boundaries of a PG-13 comedy, Griffith leaves no doubt he's supposed to be receiving some *very* spe-

MOVIE REVIEW



Lou
Lumenick

PLAY THE GAME

★★★ 1/2

What would Aunt Bee think?

Running time: 105 minutes.
Rated PG-13 (sex, profanity). At the 72nd Street, the Village East, others.



Andy Griffith puts the moves on Doris Roberts in the senior-citizen sex romp "Play the Game."

cial attention down there from Jerry Seinfeld's TV mother.

Opie's dad demonstrated his fearlessness as a performer more than half a century ago, as a redneck celebrity with delusions of grandeur in the classic "A Face in the Crowd."

Though Marc Fienberg's quasi-autobiographical "Play the Game" isn't remotely in the same class, it's good to know the erstwhile Sheriff Andy can

still get his game on as a horny senior citizen.

Griffith plays a lonely widower whose libido is reawakened by a randy resident of his senior residence (Liz Sheridan, a.k.a. Jerry's mom) who introduces him to Viagra as well as oral sex.

His character also receives dubious dating advice from his grandson (Paul Campbell), a slick car salesman who fancies himself a player.

While grandpa is turning himself into what he calls a "chick maggot," the grandson is pursuing an elusive young woman (the charming Marla Sokoloff).

She's the granddaughter of another old lady (Doris Roberts, Ray Romano's TV mother) on whom Griffith has his eye.

While Fienberg's direction is no great shakes, the film showcases its veteran cast.

It includes both Ron Howard's real-life brother Clint (as Griffith's smarmy son-in-law and his grandson's boss) and Howard's father, Rance (as Roberts' boyfriend).

In case anyone misses the connection to "The Andy Griffith Show," there are a couple of fishing scenes in "Play the Game." No whistling, though.

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'Play the Game's' cast, story appeal to seniors

By Anthony Violanti
Staff writer

In an era when Hollywood is ruled by young demographics, "Play the Game," a senior sex comedy starring Andy Griffith, may seem like a surprising new release.

But Marc Fienberg, 38, who directed and wrote the PG-13 film, believes there is a huge audience of people older than 60 waiting to see movies.

"Hollywood is driven by the youth market, and they say older people don't go to the movies," he said. "The reason is that Hollywood doesn't make movies that appeal to seniors. They will come out in droves if you make a movie they can relate to."

"Play the Game" is being screened throughout Florida, aiming to appeal to the seniors who live here. The film opens in Gainesville today.

Seniors understand that passion and romance don't end at 50, and with an icon like Andy Griffith in the starring role, they also will see a beloved star.

But they may be surprised when the man best known as Opie's daddy, Mayberry's sheriff and Matlock on television plays a vivid sex scene.

Now 82, Griffith plays Grandpa Joe, a widower trying to renew relationships with women. The first one turns out to be Edna, played by Liz Sheridan, known for her role as Jerry Seinfeld's mom in "Seinfeld." Before long, Grandpa Joe and Edna head to the bedroom after she spikes his drink with some Viagra.

"I hope everybody



SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts star in "Play the Game."

doesn't go 'Ugh' after they see it," Sheridan said with a laugh. "We had fun doing that scene, and Andy's wife was on the set that day, so everything is OK."

"We closed the set for that scene," Fienberg said. "We wanted the actors to be relaxed. With actors that good, you don't have to do a lot of directing. You just stand back and watch the magic. I think it was tastefully done, and it's funny and wonderful to watch on screen."

Sheridan, 79, also enjoyed the experience.

"I don't get many offers to play a seductress," she said in a telephone interview. "I hope it opens the door for me to play other roles."

She added that Griffith was "great to work with. He's a wonderful actor, who really gives back to other actors. He's a perfectionist but not a pain to work with."

Sheridan wants the film to break some stereotypes for older Americans.

"God, I hope so. When you reach a certain age, people think you should just sit on a porch and wait

to die."

Especially in Hollywood.

"The young executives running this industry don't want to deal with older actors," said the woman who once shared her life with the late acting legend James Dean. She wrote a book about their time together and said it will become a movie.

"(Executives) only know me as Seinfeld's mother. I did a lot more than that. I had a huge life."

In addition to Griffith and Sheridan, the cast includes Doris Roberts ("Everybody Loves Raymond") and a couple of young actors: Paul Campbell, who plays Griffith's grandson, and Maria Sokoloff, who plays Julie, the younger man's romantic interest.

"Play The Game" is a comedy about more than sex. It deals with life, death, mourning and the whole human experience, including relations between men and women.

For Fienberg, this is art imitating life. A few years ago, his late grandfather, Joe Ward, had told him of the problems of meeting women and romancing

them.

"I kissed a girl last week," Ward once told his grandson. That's when the idea for the movie was born for Fienberg.

"I think this film brings out into the open what younger people don't want to think about: that their parents and grandparents still have sex," Fienberg said. "Not only do they still have sex, they still enjoy it."

That is hardly a revelation. The New England Journal of Medicine reports that more than 50 percent of senior citizens are sexually active.

"A lot of people think of seniors as sitting around watching TV and falling asleep on the couch," Fienberg said. "It's just not true. Older people still have a passion for life and love."

Griffith was the key to making the film work. He's best known for the "Andy Griffith Show" which depicted small town life in Mayberry during the early 1960s.

"He loved the script and did whatever we asked," Fienberg said. "You're not going to see Andy Taylor in this movie, because he's not in Mayberry anymore."

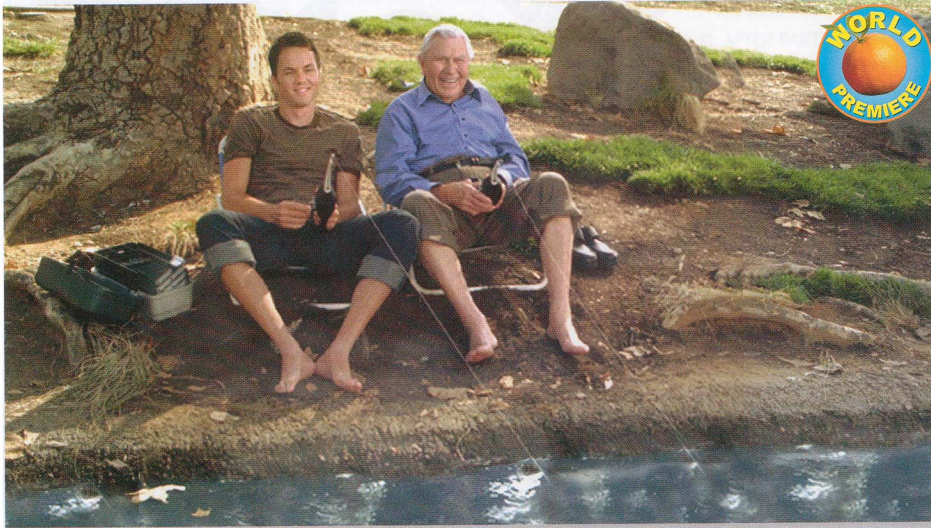
Fienberg was intimidated when he first walked on the set with Griffith.

"'Intimidated' is not strong enough of a word. I grew up watching his show, and 'Matlock' was my grandfather's favorite show," he said. "My grandfather's idol was Andy Griffith."

Contact Anthony Violanti at 867-4154 or anthony.violanti@starbanner.com.

🌀 CENTERPIECE FILM 🌀

PLAY THE GAME



USA / 2008 / 105 Minutes / HDCam / English – Marc Fienberg, Director



A young ladies' man, David, teaches his dating tricks to his lonely, widowed grandfather, and plays his best mind games to meet the woman of his dreams. But as David's games begin to fail him, Grandpa quickly transforms into the Don Juan of the nursing home. Slowly, the teacher becomes the student, and it's up to Grandpa to teach David that the best way to win the game of love is not to play games at all. But both David and Grandpa may have met their match in more ways than one...

"When my 89-year-old widowed grandfather decided to come to me for advice on how to re-enter the dating world after a 60-year hiatus, it was one of the most touching moments of my life. Watching an older man experience all the same uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity of a young schoolboy with his first crush was so amazingly adorable and inherently funny, that I had to write a story about it. After that, all I had to do was convince my wife that we should quit our jobs and move to Los Angeles with our eight month-old daughter, and convince a bunch of strangers to invest in a first-time director." **Marc Fienberg**

A wonderful comedy...irreverent, spicy, and always fun. Watching Andy Griffith do his thing – worth the price of admission alone. Paul Campbell and the always cute and very sexy Marla Sokoloff have great chemistry. Doris Roberts is a gem. Liz Sheridan (Jerry's mom in SEINFELD) is a riot!! And kudos for the surprises.

Producer: Marc Fienberg / Executive Producers: A. Charles Funai, Jim Rose, Eva Gordon / Co-Producer: Jennifer Schaefer / Associate Producers: Michael Cooch, W. Shannon Jones, Svetlana Silverman, Santiago Tapia / Writer: Marc Fienberg / Cinematographer: Gavin Kelly / Editor: Kimberly Generous White / Art Director: Chris Anthony Miller / Composer: Jim Latham / Music Supervisor: Robin Urdang / Principal Cast: Paul Campbell, Andy Griffith, Marla Sokoloff, Doris Roberts, Liz Sheridan, Clint Howard, Rance Howard, Geoffrey Owens, Juliette Jeffers / Contact Info: Story Films, Marc Fienberg, 832 Third St. #304, Santa Monica, CA 90403, 310-569-5646

SPECIAL EVENT

Following the film on Wednesday, The Centerpiece Party will take place at America's Backyard. Party includes buffet and one free drink. Tickets to the party are \$20 for FLIFF members and \$30 for non-members.

SHOWTIMES

Wednesday, Nov 5, 8pm, Cinema Paradiso
 Thursday, Nov 6, 6pm Cinema Paradiso

Sponsored by



SPECIAL GUESTS:
 PAUL CAMPBELL
 LIZ SHERIDAN
 MARC FEINBERG

THE DIRECTOR: Marc Fienberg is an award winning screenwriter and director with more than a decade of film-making experience. Marc wrote and directed his latest film, Play The Game, starring Andy Griffith, Paul Campbell, Doris Roberts and Marla Sokoloff. His film Sunday Morning premiered nationwide on the Comcast network. Marc also wrote and directed the short films Playing It Safe, Digging For, I Don't Get It, and Hard Jobs, and spec television commercials for Converse and Culligan. His script The Machine was chosen as one of the top 30 in the most prestigious screenwriting competition in the nation, the Nicholl Fellowship.



This romance is one for the aged

MOVIES | Roberts sees 'Game' appealing to the over-50 crowd

BY CINDY PEARLMAN

There are certain pieces of Americana that are lost in the translation. These include rap music, Pauly Shore movies, corn dogs and the Barone family.

"Did you know in Russia, they are doing their own version of [Everybody Loves] Raymond?" Our executive producer talked to their costume designer about why he has the mother and daughter-in-law walking around their homes in elaborate evening gowns," marvels Doris Roberts.

"He said, 'Have you ever seen our show? Debra and Marie didn't leave the house. They didn't wear gowns.'"

"The Russian costume designer said, 'This is what you don't know! If you don't dress up for your man, you lose your man!'" she says. "So I guess they're in gowns and beautiful cashmere sweaters cleaning the house."

The warm laugh that floats through the phone lines belongs to one of TV's favorite mothers. Roberts, who starred on "Ray-



Grandpa Joe (Andy Griffith) and Rose (Doris Roberts) are seniors looking for love in the romantic comedy "Play the Game."

mond" from 1996 to 2005, says she still has fans in high places.

But at 78, Roberts is breaking out of her TV mom shell.

She stars as Rose Sherman in "Play the Game," opening Friday and billed as a senior citizen love story complete with bedroom scenes that aren't limited to sharing a bottle of Maalox.

Written and directed by Skokie native Marc Fienberg (see below), the film stars Andy Griffith as Grandpa Joe, a widower in a nursing home who is exploring dating and even senior sex with women played by

Roberts and Liz Sheridan (Helen Seinfeld on "Seinfeld").

"There is a huge audience out there who want to see movies about people who are over 50," Roberts says from her home in Los Angeles. "If Baby Boomers and seniors respond, then we'll prove our audience and Hollywood will have to respond."

Roberts says that playing a soft-spoken senior was part of her game plan.

"I was happy to find a role that was so unlike Marie," Roberts says. "Rose is a caring, nurturing, soft woman who simply likes to

be alive. She likes men. And she feels lucky to find someone at her age as a love interest. She feels grateful to find a man who makes her feel strongly about him."

The film revolves around the idea that it's never too late to love.

"To put your head on a pillow at night and be alone in the house is very difficult for me," says Roberts, whose husband, William Goyen, died in 1983.

"I have to make sure I have things to do in life. I'm occupied all day long. By the time I go to bed, I'm tired and want to go to sleep."

There have been tough times.

"After my husband died, I went out there and read books to children," Roberts says. "I talked about him a lot and told people about the books he had written. When people asked me how I could get through losing a husband, I simply said, 'Take your mind off you. There is a time for mourning and a time to stop and move on.'"

She says it's good life advice for any traumas.

"If your life isn't perfect, then take your mind off what you're worrying about today and go help somebody else. Get off that chair. Turn off the TV. Put down the coffee cup," Roberts says. "Get out into life."

Big Picture News Inc.



Grandpa's got game

Jewish filmmaker and Chicago native 'plays the game' in his new movie about dating at any age

By CINDY SHER
Managing Editor

MARC FIENBERG always had a close friendship with his grandpa Joe.

Years after Joe lost his wife—Marc's grandmother—of 54 years, Joe came to his grandson for advice on how to start dating again. Both men were living in Chicago at the time, Marc in Lincoln Park and his grandfather in a nearby retirement community. They would hang out with the ladies at Joe's complex and Marc would offer his grandpa pointers.

Then, Marc's advice paid off. "I kissed a woman last week," Joe confided to his grandson. "Watching an 89-year-old man experience all the uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity of a young schoolboy—when to call her, what to say, whether to ask her out—was moving and uplifting," Marc recalls.

Grandpa Joe passed away three years ago, but Marc—a Jewish filmmaker originally from the Chicago area—keeps his memory alive in his new film, "Play The Game," (Story Films) which is now playing at Chicago-area theaters. Written, directed, and produced by Marc, the movie is his first feature film, although he has produced short films in the past. Loosely based on Marc's grandfather, the movie tells the story of David (Paul Campbell), who teaches his dating tricks to his lonely widowed grandfather Joe, played by Andy Griffith, who was Marc's grandfather's favorite actor.

At the same time, David tries



Chicago native and filmmaker Marc Fienberg at the movies.

to "play the game" and use his own dating techniques to attract Julie (Marla Sokoloff), the woman of his dreams. For David, the dating game fails, but the same tricks transform Grandpa Joe into the Don Juan of his retirement community. The movie also stars two famous TV moms, Doris Roberts, from "Everybody Loves Raymond," and Liz Sheridan, from "Seinfeld."

Marc—who grew up in Lincolnwood and Skokie and now lives in Los Angeles with his wife and four children all under age 5—wasn't always planning on a film career. In fact, he worked in the business world, most recently at an Internet start-up company in Los Angeles until two years.

Then, he took what he recognizes as a risky leap into filmmaking. At the same time, he exercised his business acumen and connections from his business school, Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, to raise money for the movie, which proved no easy task.

In addition to his business network, Marc used his connections

'Watching an 89-year-old man experience all the uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity of a young schoolboy—when to call her, what to say, whether to ask her out—was moving and uplifting.'

in the Jewish world to get the film off the ground. He traveled around the country lecturing to Jewish organizations to spread the word about his film. The movie has, in particular, resonated with seniors. One such Florida senior, a 75-year-old woman named Florence, embraced the film so much that she spent three weeks visiting temples, retirement communities, and condos drumming up support for it. Marc credits Florence with drawing more than 3,000 people

into theaters to see the film!

Returning home to Chicago in July to promote his movie, Marc spoke with JUF News about his grandpa Joe, switching careers, and playing the dating game.

JUF News: In what way is Grandpa Joe in the movie based on your grandfather?

Marc Fienberg: Some of the best lines and scenes [in the movie] came straight out of his mouth and life. He was living in Florida with my grandma and my grandmother died. Then, he came to Chicago so we could take care of him. For four years, he was down in the dumps, and then, overnight, he turned around and met a woman. He whispered to me, "I met a woman." He started telling me the details. At first, I was a little bit "TMI" (too much information). But then I realized this was so nice to hear that an 89-year-old-guy can get back into it and can find literally a purpose for waking up in the morning. Think about it, you go from your only friend, your best friend, your wife for 54 years and then overnight she's gone and he realizes he doesn't really have that many other friends, so you go from everything to nothing, and I could see how it sucks the life out of you. And then he had a reason to get back into it.

How much of David, the ladies' man in the movie, is based on you?

I would love to say, "I'm as suave and debonair as this ladies' man." The reality of it—as you can ask several women in the Chicagoland area that know me from single days—is I was not as suave and debonair. I think the character is based more on the guy I hoped I could be one day. No, I was not quite the ladies' man, but my friends and I did try all those tricks. They worked for my friends, just not for me.

There was a woman I dated in college that broke up with me, who I never stopped thinking

It was important for me not to have the typical Hollywood ending that says 'Just be honest with one another and good things will happen.' That's nice but we all know that's not the way the world works.

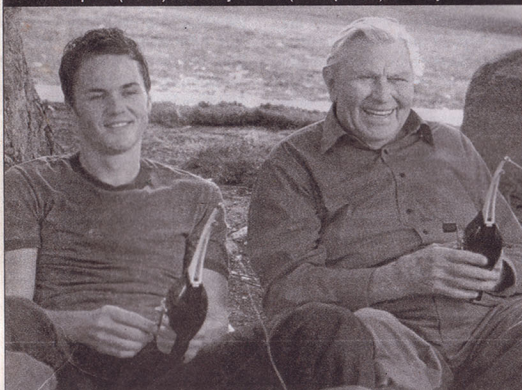
about. I would constantly call her. Four years later, I couldn't stop thinking about her. I would come up with excuses to go meet her. I would make up stories why I ran into her and it never worked out. Finally, seven years later, I called her out of the blue and put it all on the line. I said I'm still thinking about you and I'm not making up excuses to see you. Let's date again and, sure enough, that's when it happened. We got engaged and married and have four kids now. I took one of the messages of the movie and it worked for me in my own life.

Q. Do you recommend that single people 'play the game'?

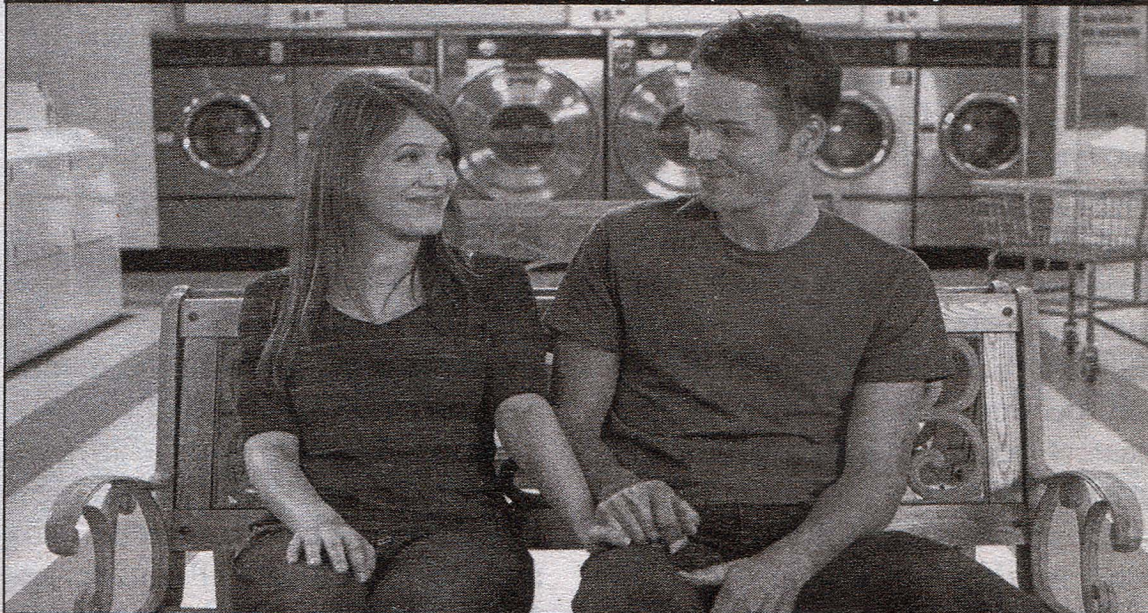
A. I leave that to the viewer of the movie. It's definitely not the Hollywood ending that people would expect. It's a romantic comedy, so you sort of have an idea of who is going to end up with whom, but you're completely surprised as to how they end up together and what the message of the movie is. It was important for me not to have the typical Hollywood ending that says "Just be honest with one another and good things will happen." That's nice but we all know that's not the way the world works. I wanted to be very true to life in the message and the theme of my movie.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 74

Paul Campbell (David) and Andy Griffith (Grandpa Joe) in "Play The Game"



Marla Sokoloff (Julie) and Paul Campbell (David) in "Play the Game"



PLAYING THE GAME

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 73

Q. Do these rules work on single Jews?

A. These rules are particularly effective with Jewish women and men because it plays on the stereotypical, but somewhat true Jewish stereotypes: We probably have a little more guilt and a little more neurosis than the average group of people.

Q. How are you raising your children Jewishly?

A. I had a strong culturally Jewish upbringing. I'm actually raising my four children more religious than I was. They know more much more about Judaism at 5 years old than my wife knows today. We want to send

them to a Jewish preschool.

Q. Was making a career switch to showbiz worth it?

A. I sit in a movie theater with 350 strangers and listen to the first joke and hear exploding laughter and hear them affected by my film. We showed it in a retirement community, and were expecting 200 people, but got 3,500 people instead. Afterwards, a 92-year-old guy comes up to me and says, "This movie could have been made about me. I want to introduce you to my 87-year-old girlfriend. We've been dating for seven years. We go out dancing and this movie is about us. This has given me confidence..." That's why I got into this business, what made it all worth it. ■

INDUSTRY BUZZ *By Hugh Hart*

New filmmaker entices Andy Griffith with romantic role in 'Play the Game'

First-time filmmaker **Marc Fienberg** got a phone call a few months ago that he describes as a peak moment in his life. On the other end of the line: **Andy Griffith**.

Fienberg had sent his "Play the Game" script to Griffith's agent, hoping the veteran actor would play an elderly retirement home resident who begins dating again after the death of his wife. Weeks passed with no reply. Then the phone rang and Fienberg heard Griffith's distinctive drawl. "Andy told me he wanted to make the movie and said there were two things he loved about the role. No. 1, he got to have a bedroom scene, and No. 2, he didn't die at the end."

From the outset, the writer-director pictured Griffith as the lead character, who is based on his own grandfather. "My grandfather started dating when he was 89 years old. One day he came to me and said, 'Marc, I kissed a girl!' It was sweet to see my grandfather go through all the same emotions



Bob Jordan / Associated Press 2003

Andy Griffith likes his bedroom scene in "Play the Game."

as a high school kid: 'Should I call her? What if she says no? If she says yes, what should I do?' I decided this was a story that needed to be told."

The 83-year-old star of the iconic TV series "The Andy Griffith Show" and "Matlock" evidently agreed. Griffith rarely leaves his North Carolina home these days, but he flew to Los Angeles for the 25-day shoot. Griffith's contribu-

tions to the film proved especially apt because, Fienberg says, " 'Matlock' was my grandfather's favorite TV show and Andy was his favorite actor." His grandfather did not live to see the movie, but Fienberg jokes, "That's probably a good thing, because the moment I would have called my grandfather to tell him Andy Griffith was playing him in a movie, that would have given him a heart attack anyway."



Marla Sokoloff and Paul Campbell star in "Play the Game," written and directed by Northwestern University business grad Marc Fienberg.

Out to L.A., with his MBA

By Nina Metz

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

If you follow the boulevard of broken dreams far enough, it bottoms out in Hollywood, where rejection and failure jostle for space alongside hundreds of thousands of movie scripts that will never, ever get made.

For the aspiring filmmaker, that's not a good final destination. Sometimes, a counter-intuitive approach is in order.

So, how does a guy with zero experience and not a single contact break into the movie biz? Believe it or not, an MBA might be the ticket. It worked for one guy.

Lincolnwood native Marc Fienberg, 39, didn't attend film school. After a career in e-commerce and financial services, he quit his job five years ago and moved with his wife and baby to Los Angeles, where they had no connections, professional or otherwise: "Everybody thought we were crazy."

Oddly enough, it was his business degree from Northwestern that helped Fienberg make his first feature film.

"It definitely helps raise the money and helps you talk the talk to investors," he told me during a trip home to promote "Play the Game," a romantic comedy that opens Aug. 28 in Chicago. (Check back in two weeks for Michael Phillips' review.)

Fienberg is the screenwriter; he is the film's director and producer as well.

Here's how he did it.

The film is based partly on Fienberg's bachelor years in Lincoln Park, where he and his grandfather were single and looking for love.

"I started off just as a writer, and I tried to sell the script. When that didn't work, I realized, well, I can raise money just as easily as these other independent producers." The budget is reportedly in the \$3 million range.

"My investors want to make money on the film; they weren't the type [who] just wanted to make a movie for the sake of making a movie, so it helped that they knew someone with a financial background—that I knew how to make a profit on a business and had done it before—was bringing the project to them.

"Once I raised the money, I realized, hey, that makes me the producer, and I get to decide who's going to direct, and I thought, 'Nobody's going to direct it as well as I am.'"



Writer-director Fienberg made a career change and moved with his family to a tiny Los Angeles apartment.

His experience behind the camera is slim: "This is my first film, but I did make a couple of short films just as practice to sort of dip my toe in the water. They're terrible short films, but it gave me enough experience to feel confident walking onto a set with Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts." Newbie or not, Fienberg did snare recognizable names. The cast also includes Marla Sokoloff ("The Practice").

Cynics can rest easy. Fienberg is self-distributing, which costs yet more dough that he has to raise. And consider this acknowledgment: "It was difficult even with the MBA, I have to say—more difficult than I ever expected, and the sacrifices I had to make were much bigger than I ever expected." He and his wife now have four children.

"It's not easy," he says. "We live in a tiny little apartment, and we live a very frugal lifestyle."



Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts star in 'Play the Game,' opening Aug. 28 in St. Louis.

'Nice Jewish Boy' on his new film 'Play the Game'

Director, writer Marc Fienberg found inspiration for film close to home

BY CATE MARQUIS
SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT

Perhaps you have seen the cute fliers for the sneak preview of the new romantic comedy *Play the Game*, in which a mother pleads, in comic fashion, for you to see the movie by her son, "a nice Jewish boy."

That "nice Jewish boy" is writer/director Marc Fienberg, whose first feature-length film stars Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts in a playful comedy about a grandson, David (Paul Campbell), who is a ladies' man sharing his dating tricks with his lonely grandfather.

The story about love at any

age was inspired by Fienberg's own grandfather. Along with writing and directing, Fienberg produced the film and is handling distribution. He says he clearly struck gold with his cast.

"I was really lucky. It was all the script," he said during a recent interview. "It was a unique story and unique characters. Actors like Andy (Griffith) and Doris (Roberts) don't take parts just for the money, they are looking for

roles they have not played before. Andy told me he took this for two reasons: He got to have a bedroom scene and the character didn't die at the end of the film. He wanted to play a senior character who was all about the positive aspects of living into old age, dating and still looking for companionship."

Fienberg describes actress Doris Roberts as an activist for seniors, who refuses to star in films that stereotype older people.

"The role of Rose (Doris Roberts' part) was originally much smaller. When I learned she was interested, I added scenes for her. She was impressed and took the part," said Fienberg.

Rose is not the only lady to catch Grandpa Joe's eye. First there is Edna, played with comic style by Liz Sheridan, who previously played Jerry Seinfeld's mother on the

FIENBERG

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Seinfeld TV series.

"Liz is probably the most similar to her character than anybody (in the cast). She is in her late seventies and she is still just as wild and crazy as I think she was in her twenties when she dated James Dean," Fienberg said. "The moment she heard she was going to have a bedroom scene with Andy Griffith, she was sold."

The tongue-in-cheek mother's plea promoting the movie is very funny but a bit fictionalized: Marc Fienberg does not really live with his parents but with his wife and three children. In fact, his wife was pregnant with the couple's third child during the filming and it was a race to see which would arrive first, the baby or the end of the film shoot.

In *Play The Game*, David's dad (Clint Howard) is clearly

delighted to have his oft-estranged son follow in his footsteps, saying he was "born to do this." The son is less sure about the family profession and, in the film, father and son have a rocky relationship. That is far different from Fienberg's real-life relationship with his own father but that assumption about following in a family profession is something that comes out the director's own experience.

"I come from a long line of accountants," he said. Fienberg studied the family profession in college, got the degree, then just as he was poised to take his first professional job, suddenly took off to travel the world. He returned to work as a writer, settled on the East Coast but when he decided that a career in film was what he really wanted, he and his wife just pick up their lives and new baby and relocated to Los Angeles, without jobs or family awaiting them.

The risk appears to be paying off.

People who have seen *Boytan Beach Club*, by Susan Seidelman, a hit of the Jewish Film Festival from a few years back, may notice the common theme of dating and re-discovering love among the retired. If fact, the film makers of *Boytan Beach Club* are helping spread the word about this film.

Given the way the film is being promoted with that very funny "Jewish mother" flier, it was a bit surprising that the film does not have explicitly Jewish content.

"In the early version of the script, the grandfather, who was based on my own grandfather, spoke a little bit of Yiddish here and there and, you know, there was a lot more Jewish stuff in there," Fienberg said. "Then, as time went on and I got more feedback, I realized that it was sort of taking away from the story

for non-Jewish audiences. It is kind of a universal story. It is more about seniors playing around than about Jewish seniors getting back in the game. So I made the difficult decision, and it was a difficult decision, because it was based on my own Jewish grandfather, and that was a big part of who he was. I am learning that show business is indeed a business and sometimes you have to make those decisions."

But Fienberg added that he thought that there were plenty of indirect hints that would lead the audience to guess the characters were Jewish.

Still, quirky little tidbits in the film were directly inspired by Fienberg's grandfather, who unfortunately passed away before the film was finished.

Like the Popeil "Pocket Fisherman," a scene in the film in which Griffith and Campbell, playing grandfather and grandson go fishing.

When Fienberg was a kid, he and his grandfather would often go fishing. But they would always use those odd-ball miniature fishing rod and reels combos sold on late-night TV in the 1980s, Fienberg explained. When Griffith and Campbell pull out those "Pocket Fishermans" in the scene and plopping down on the bank for a little angling, you cannot help but laugh.

Fienberg also noted that his grandfather always called movies "talkies," although no one else did, and refused to change. So Griffith's character calls movies "talkies," too.

It's little touches like that which help make *Play The Game* a warm-hearted character. Fienberg finished up his chat by urging everyone to check out the film's website at www.playthegamemovie.com. Since he seemed like such a nice Jewish boy, I felt it all right to include that.

Films echo love's agony, ecstasy

BY SHANI MCMANUS
STAFF WRITER

Although spring is still weeks away, love is in the air. Particularly at the movies.

Two good films opening throughout the tri-county, South Florida area Feb. 27, examine the many facets, foibles, and fabulous fun associated with romantic relationships and falling in love. The two movies, however, couldn't be more different. One is a hilarious comedy about "senior sex" and the need for love, at any age, while the other is darker, more intense, and reflects the agony of unrequited love.

Moreover, the two films' directors couldn't be more dissimilar. One is a young, talented newcomer, who makes a few mistakes in the film that are easily forgiven, because you're laughing so hard. The other director is an award winning, skilled professional who turned out an excellent work of art. Both directors borrow heavily from their Jewish roots, with one film revolving around a Brooklyn Jewish family.

In "Play the Game," starring Andy Griffith ("Matlock," "The Andy Griffith Show"), Doris Roberts ("Everybody Loves Raymond," "Remington Steele"), and Liz Sheridan ("Seinfeld," "Alf"), David, a twenty-something ladies' man, tries to teach his lonely, 84-year-old widowed grandfather, who lives in a retirement community, some dating tricks, and how to



Top left, Andy Griffith and Liz Sheridan in the romantic comedy "Play the Game." Top right, Joaquin Phoenix and Vinessa Shaw are pushed together by their Jewish parents in "Two Lovers." Submitted photos

"play the game." While the "tricks" totally backfire on David, who's pursuing the woman of his dreams, Grandpa Joe becomes the Don Juan of the senior community. When Joe meets up with Edna (Liz Sheridan), who spikes his drink with Viagra, Joe has his first sexual encounter with a woman in years. The scene finally confirms the fact that seniors still not only "do it" — but also enjoy it. In the end, Grandpa teaches David the best way to win the game of love is not to play games at all.

In a phone interview with "Play the Game" director Marc Fienberg, who was in Delray Beach to publicize his film, the Chicago native said the film was actually inspired by his beloved grandfather who lived in Century Village in Deerfield Beach.

"A lot of the senior experiences in the film was

based on my visiting him and listening to him," Fienberg said. "I was lucky enough to spend time with him before he died."

Fienberg's mother, who's in Boca Raton pushing her son's film, has been making the rounds with Fienberg to local synagogues distributing fliers that request: "Please help my son, and see the film — he's not a doctor, or a lawyer — he's in this crazy artistic business."

A lifetime member of Hadassah and ORT, Fienberg's mother even set up a meeting with members of a Boca Raton Hadassah chapter, so that her son could talk about his film.

"They're spreading the word," he said. "I need to say how amazed I am that Hadassah and the Jewish grapevine is more powerful than any TV [advertisement]."

In "Two Lovers," starring

Joaquin Phoenix, Gwyneth Paltrow, Vinessa Shaw, and Isabella Rosalini, Phoenix plays Leonard, a deeply disturbed and heartbroken photographer, who moves back to his Jewish parents' apartment in Brooklyn after his fiancée abandons him when it's discovered both carry the gene for Tay-Sachs disease.

Leonard parents' try to fix him up with a nice Jewish girl from the neighborhood (Shaw), but Leonard falls in love, instead, with his new neighbor, non-Jewish Michelle (Paltrow), who's having an affair with a married man, and has emotional problems of her own. When Michelle breaks his heart anew, Leonard, who has attempted suicide before, faces the decision to either end his life, or settle for second best.

Director James Gray

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Awesome Exclusive Interview with Marla Sokoloff

Danville-raised actress and musician stars in romantic comedy, *Play the Game*, in theaters Friday.

PETE CROOKS



PHOTO BY VAL PATTERSON, FROM MARLASMUSIC.COM

It's been a few years since *Diablo* put Danville-raised actress and musician Marla Sokoloff on the cover. That's when she was a regular on the ABC TV series, *The Practice*. Since then, Sokoloff, 28, was featured on *Desperate Housewives*, released an album of music, got engaged, and, most recently, took a role in the indie film, *Play the Game*. Her new movie, a romantic comedy featuring some surprising randy action in a senior citizen retirement center, co-stars Andy Griffith, Doris Roberts (*Everybody Loves Raymond*), and Liz Sheridan (*Seinfeld*)—and opens Friday at the [CineArts Theater in Pleasant Hill](#), the UA Cinema in Emeryville, and the [Embarcadero Cinema in San Francisco](#).

***Diablo*: Hi Marla, I wanted to start off by asking what it was like to work with all these**

Hollywood veterans. But looking at your IMDB.com bio, I notice that you have been doing TV and movies for 16 years.

Marla Sokoloff: Wow! That's crazy! 16 years—it doesn't seem like that.

***Diablo*: But Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts have been working for more than 50 years. What did you pick up from them between takes?**

Marla Sokoloff: Obviously Andy Griffith has so much experience, and he could not be a sweeter man. But my favorite stories were from Doris Roberts. She used to work with some really famous actresses on Broadway, and they would play tricks on each other on stage. Not for fun—in this kind of very competitive, mean way. Like gluing the zipper on a dress and trying to make people mess up their lines. Crazy stories!

***Diablo*: One of the wildest things I have seen in a movie this year is the sex scene between Andy Griffith and Liz Sheridan, who played Jerry's mom on *Seinfeld*. When you read this script did you wonder how those scenes would play?**

Marla Sokoloff: I thought it was really funny to have sweet, adorable Andy Griffith talking about a blow job. And there's never been a movie with seniors in lingerie or half-naked, so it was a whole different trip.

But I also really liked my role. I don't want to give too much away—but it was nice to play a character who wasn't just the nice girl next door, but has a little more going on. She's playing the game too.

***Diablo*: Here's another detail that I liked. Your character and her romantic interest bond over Cadbury Curlywurl bars, which I discovered in Australia a few years ago. They are just like a chocolate-caramel candy bar in the states called the Marathon bar, which was discontinued in the 80s.**

Marla Sokoloff: Funny thing about the Curlywurly. When we were on set, everyone made such a huge deal about those candy bars. They had been sent over special from England, and there were only two and we had to save them for the shot. But a few months later, I was in Cost Plus World Market and they sell them there.

***Diablo:* OK, lets chat about the East Bay. How often do you come back to visit?**

Marla Sokoloff: Usually about twice a year—my dad still lives there as well as my grandparents. But I've been up there quite a bit recently, because my best friend, who I've known since the sixth grade at Los Cerros, got engaged the same day as I did, so we've been going to each other's showers and parties.

***Diablo:* You got engaged the same day? Was that planned?**

Marla Sokoloff: No! But our fiancés proposed within an hour of each other. They don't know each other; it was just a coincidence, but it has been fun to share the experience.

***Diablo:* You have played a bride in movies and TV shows—*Big Day* was an entire prime time series about your wedding day. How does the make believe experience compare to the real deal?**

Marla Sokoloff: I have played a bride six times, so getting fitted for my real dress seemed anti-climactic. But then, it was delivered to my house a few weeks ago, and I tore open the box and tried it on and just started crying. I thought, "It's really happening! Finally!" (Laughs)

***Diablo:* Are you going to be married up here?**

Marla Sokoloff: No, we're going to get married at a restaurant in LA in November.

***Diablo:* So when you come back through the East Bay, where do you like to visit?**

Marla Sokoloff: I do my eating tour of the East Bay—I go to the Rising Loafer in Danville and the Brass Bear Deli in Alamo. And there's an Irish pub on Telegraph Avenue that has the best chili I've ever had.



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JIM reviews film "PLAY THE GAME" – An Unexpected TREAT in the Contests of Life =

By jimchudnow@sbcglobal.net
Created Jul 27 2009 - 10:46pm

"PLAY THE GAME" – An Unexpected TREAT in the Contests of Life =

Rating 9 of 10 stars (based on an advance screening of a film to open 8-28-09) =

Very little was known about this film before it screened. It tells the story of David (PAUL CAMPBELL), a smooth-talking car salesman who works for his dad (CLINT HOWARD) from whom he was estranged for years. He was raised mainly by his Grandpa Joe (ANDY GRIFFITH), whom he regularly visits in a nursing home. Paul believes in playing games, both to sell his cars & to deal with pretty women who are like playthings to him. To help keep widower Andy interested in life, he tries to get HIM to play mind games with women in the nursing home. When Andy tries that, he gets much more than he bargained for from resident Edna (LIZ SHERIDAN) & less than he hopes for from Rose (DORIS ROBERTS). But, when Paul chances to meet Rose's granddaughter Julie (MARLA SOKOLOFF), he falls hard for her— tho she confounds him by her initial disinterest in him. The film tells the story of the very FUNNY & often sweet evolving relationships between the characters. Andy & the other seniors are dynamic, the young people are wonderfully natural & believable, & the film's a real GEM of unexpected delights.

... After the film, there was a fascinating Q&A with the film's writer – director – Producer MARC FIENBERG. He spoke of growing up in the Chicago area & getting an MBA in business at Northwestern University, which is one reason the film as written is set in Chicago (tho it was necessary to film it elsewhere). He told how, after creating & then selling new companies for years, he tired of the business world & preferred to do more CREATIVE things...

... Marc originally wrote the basic script like 12 years ago, & it's taken literally 5 or so years to try to get the MONEY to make this film. As he said, it's been a horrible experience from the financing standpoint, & still MORE financing is needed to roll out the film beyond the initially-planned 55 screens in 15 cities — & that has been the case despite the fact he has all kinds of BUSINESS contacts set up thru the years (so he can easily imagine the difficulties of capitalizing films by average people who don't have such contacts)...

... Andy Griffith's character is in part based on Marc's OWN grandfather who LOVED living life & wanted to remain active in mind & relationships even as he grew into his senior years. Paul's character is just in PART based on Marc's OWN life, wherein he was almost a "stalker" towards a girl who eventually believed his interest in her was sincere & became his wife & mother to their kids after he STOPPED playing sort of "games" in how he acted...

... The film started when CLINT came on board, which helped engender some real financial interest, which in turn helped lead others join the project. After being initially hesitant to take the role, Andy loved the life-affirming & natural SCRIPT so much, he eagerly got on board as the shy-to-rakish "ladie's man" at the nursing home, loving how it treated seniors with dignity & interest in having an animated life despite their chronological age.

... Marc spoke glowingly of how GREAT it was to work with the cast, & how he had to learn to TRUST his older actors & "step back" & let THEM help "guide" how their characters acted & interacted, because they knew what to do to keep things "real". As to the younger people, he did test out loads of actors— but Paul & Marla immediately "STOOD-OUT" from the crowd as just the "RIGHT" people for their roles, & it was a happy situation that they turned out to also have a fine "chemistry" with each OTHER as their characters...

... The Q&A host made a number of salient points about the film & its clever script (which gives a finely realistic rather than "gross-out" view of seniors & what they want out of life), & said he was actually surprised by the "TWIST" at the very end, which put some main characters in a "new light"...

... Marc hopes that word-of-mouth will help support the roll-out of the film in late August, because, besides the way it helps give a POSITIVE view of older people, he also wants to justify the faith of his investors & hopes that leads to his being able to make a bunch of OTHER films in the future... I think you'll very much ENJOY his creation, & be as impressed by its numerous fine & unexpected elements...



PLAY THE GAME

Starring: Andy Griffith, Liz Sheridan, Paul Campbell, Marla Sokoloff and Doris Roberts

by: John Delia



I don't remember when I have laughed so much at a showing of a [movie](#) involving older people. Well, *Play The Game* did it for me! The wonderful little story took me by surprise, kept my attention throughout and provided me with some great [entertainment](#). To tell the truth I didn't know Andy Griffith and Liz Sheridan had it in them to pull it off. Pull off what you say? Well it may be gross to some and engrossing to others, but in the world of sex, yes oldsters still do it.

The story goes something like this: Ladies' man David (Campbell) teaches his dating tricks to his lonely, widowed grandfather Joe (Griffith), while using those same tricks to meet Julie (Sokoloff), the woman of his dreams. While David's foolproof techniques prove to be anything but, the same techniques quickly transform Joe into the Don Juan of the retirement community leading to an unexpected intimate affair with Edna (Sheridan). Soon it's up to Joe to teach David that sometimes the best way to win the game of love is not to play games at all.

I liked the feisty little film as all the characters were interesting, the actors on their mark and the directing brilliant. I was totally amazed by the performance of Griffith as the old timer lost in memories in his retirement home. In *Play The Game* he shows how spry an 82 year-old can be with a memorable characterization that is enchanting and admirable. Check out his very suave [dance](#) steps for laughs.

All that have seen Liz Sheridan (*Seinfeld*) before know what a great comedian she is and in this film she shines even more. I loved her performance as the forward woman that goes after Joe and teaches him some new tricks. She's also the one who brings Joe back to the reality that life has some [downfalls](#) as well.

You will probably recognize Doris Roberts from "Everybody Loves Raymond." Here she plays the lonely widow that picks up the pieces. Seeing her in this film reminded me of how many times I have seen Roberts in the over 100 appearances in film and TV. She is the consummate actress that most all have come to love.

The film is written and directed by Marc Fienberg who treats the film with a loving hand, making his characters enjoyable to watch. His ability to bring out the best is shown in the performance of both Griffith and Campbell.

The film does contain some sexual material and some brief language, so be cognizant of this when bringing youngsters along.

FINAL ANALYSIS: A [great film](#) for those in love and a look at life's realities. (4 of 5 stars)

Filmmaker knew how to get Andy to act randy

BY CINDY PEARLMAN

One wonders what Aunt Bee would think. In "Play the Game," Andy Griffith has a semi-explicit sex scene.

Somewhere, Gomer is shocked, but not Skokie native Marc Fienberg, the film's writer and director. "Andy loved the idea of doing a bedroom scene where he didn't die," he says. "He talked about how he wanted it to be playful, fun and even nerve-racking — the way it is for many seniors."

1 *Is it true that this film is based on your own grandfather?*

It is based on my grandfather, who talked to me about his idea of love, dating and even sex at his age. My initial reaction was "Grandpa, I don't want to hear about this stuff." But then I realized that it's touching, endearing



Marc Fienberg based "Play the Game" partly on times he spent with his grandfather in Chicago.

and sweet to have a senior talk about finding love. ... It hit me that this would be a sweet movie.

2 *People don't think about senior citizens having sex.*

Not only do they do it, but they enjoy doing it. ... When you start spending time in a retirement community, you realize that these seniors live life more than some younger people do. They live every day as if it could be their last. ... They were raised in an era where

not much was permissible. Now, they're making their own choices and loving their new lifestyle.

3 *What was it like to direct Andy Griffith in a sex scene?*

Andy is a conservative man, but he also lives a vibrant life. He wanted to send a message that life is not over at 80. Yes, to see Andy kissing Doris Roberts is shocking to some. We just ain't in Mayberry anymore.

4 *So when you were growing up in Skokie, was it your dream to get Opie's father in a compromising movie scene?*

I did live in Skokie and went to Niles West High School. I also lived in Lincoln Park. That's when I developed a relationship with my grandfather. He lived at the Breakers near Lawrence and Sheridan Road. We were two bachelors on

the town. We didn't go to clubs because that was a little too loud for him. We hung out at his retirement community and those are some of my best memories. I'd take him to Wrigley [Field] or dinner, or we would go socializing on the town.

5 *What did your grandfather tell you when it came to wisdom about women?*

He helped me become less of a game player. He pushed me to take a chance and talk to a certain woman. I pushed him to do the same. It's funny, but seniors have the same issues we had in high school. It's still about "Does she like me?" But I saw that the relationships my grandfather had brought him back to life. Love gave him the reason to get up in the morning and find that woman again.

Big Picture News Inc.

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090826/REVIEWS/908269995>



Grandpa Joe, an elderly widower (Andy Griffith), re-enters the groves of love when he decides to court Rose (Doris Roberts) in the comedy "Play the Game."

A comedy of errors about sex and the single septuagenarian

Mayberry's Sheriff Andy turns randy in silly romp 'Play the Game'

BY ROGER EBERT
FILM CRITIC

It's "The Andy Griffith Show" meets "Seinfeld" in the sack in "Play the Game," which shows Andy is not too old to star in a sex comedy, I guess. Griffith plays Grandpa Joe, who lost his beloved wife two years ago. Now his grandson Dave (Paul Campbell) thinks it's time for him to start dating again. After all, he isn't getting any younger.

Grandpa Joe is pretty much on standby in his retirement home. He'd like to get cozy with Rose (Doris Roberts of "Everybody Loves Raymond"). But he's unprepared for the wiles of Edna (Liz Sheridan, who played Seinfeld's mom on TV). She supplies Joe with Viagra, and he more or less seduces her on autopilot.

Dave considers himself a babe magnet. He's a genius at fast-talking himself into relationships that, alas, have a way of ending once he's run through his prepared material. He's also a whiz at selling cars, but at least then when he makes a sale, the victim drives it off the lot.

The screenplay, written by first-time director Marc Fienberg, fervently stays true to an ancient sitcom tradition. We somehow suspect Grandpa Joe will end up with the adorable Rose, and whaddaya know, Dave finds genuine love with Julie, Rose's granddaughter (Marla Sokoloff).

And that's about it, except for a closeup of Andy Griffith that I could easily have lived without. I've admired Griffith ever since "No Time for Sergeants" (1958), but the one thing I must admit I've never wanted to do was regard his face while he's enjoying oral sex from Seinfeld's mom.

I have a good friend whose own dad discovered Viagra in a retirement home and would call his son almost daily to recount his latest adventures. He called once when I was in the room with my friend, who urgently told him, "Dad, I've told you, *I don't want to know!*"

I told him the old one about the old lady who runs naked into the TV room of her retirement village shouting, "Super sex! Super sex!" One of the guys perks up and says, "I'll have the soup, please."

'PLAY THE GAME'

★★

David Paul Campbell
Grandpa Joe Andy Griffith
Rose Doris Roberts
Julie Marla Sokoloff
Edna Liz Sheridan

Story Films presents a film written and directed by Marc Fienberg. Running time: 105 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for sexual content and language). Opening today at Landmark Century.



Self-proclaimed babe magnet Dave (Paul Campbell) finds love with Julie (Marla Sokoloff).

by Stephen Schaefer

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/bostonherald/access/1848785031.html?dids=1848785031:1848785031&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS>

Grandpa inspired director

By **STEPHEN SCHAEFER**

MOVIES

"Play the Game," today's comedy about sex and the senior citizen, was inspired by writer/director Marc Fienberg's 89-year-old grandfather, a widower who re-entered the dating scene.

"I thought it was a touching story, but admittedly

studios don't look at stories with seniors as box-office gold," said Fienberg, 39, who took five years to finance the film.

As a Hollywood outsider, Fienberg's first hurdle was getting Andy Griffith to play the befuddled grandparent who finds his libido revived by Liz Sheridan (Jerry's mom on "Seinfeld").

"I sent it to his agent who

eventually sent it to him," Fienberg told the Herald, emphasizing "eventually."

Griffith couldn't resist the role.

"Andy told me afterwards there were two things he loved: He got to have a bedroom scene, which at his age was interesting, and he didn't die at the end of the film. I don't think he was joking."

The 83-year-old Griffith's previous film, the critical indie hit "Waitress," had him dead by the final credits.

As for Opie's dad having sex, Fienberg warns of his PG-13 rated comedy, "If you expect Andy Taylor, know

we're not in Mayberry anymore."

For the one-time Boston resident, the next hurdle was getting his movie into theaters.

"Play the Game" won the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival's audience award, which was followed by a Florida test run last winter.

The comedy ran three months and played 22 theaters. "That's when we knew we had something. It was word-of-mouth," Fienberg said. "The senior grapevine is more powerful than any Twitter."

— cinesteve@hotmail.com

New film 'Play the Game' based on Jewish family's life

By Cate Marquis
St. Louis Jewish Light

A new romantic comedy about seniors in search of love, "Play the Game," which opens today at the Leawood Theatre, is the first feature-length film from Jewish writer/director Marc Fienberg.

"Play the Game" stars Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts in a playful tale of a grandson, David (Paul Campbell), who is a ladies' man sharing his dating tricks with his lonely grandfather.

The story about love at any age was inspired by Fienberg's own grandfather. Along with writing and directing, Fienberg produced the film and is handling distribution.



Veteran actors Andy Griffith and Doris Roberts star in 'Play the Game,' opening today at the Leawood Theatre.

He says he clearly struck gold with his cast.

"I was really lucky. It was all the script," he said. "It was a unique story and unique characters. Actors like Andy (Griffith) and Doris (Roberts) don't take parts just for the money. They are looking for roles they have not played before. Andy told me he took this for two reasons: He got to have a bedroom scene, and the character didn't die at the end of the film. He wanted to play a senior character who was all about the positive aspects of living into old age, dating and still looking for companionship."

Fienberg describes actress Doris Roberts as an activist for seniors, who

see 'Play,' page 21

'Play the Game' features veteran actors

from **page 6**

refuses to star in films that stereotype older people.

"The role of Rose (Doris Roberts' part) was originally much smaller. When I learned she was interested, I added scenes for her. She was impressed and took the part," said Fienberg.

Rose is not the only lady to catch Grandpa Joe's eye. First there is Edna, played with comic style by Liz Sheridan, who previously played Jerry Seinfeld's mother on the "Seinfeld" TV series.

"Liz is probably the most similar to her character than anybody (in the cast). She is in her late 70s and she is still just as wild and crazy as I think she was in her 20s when she dated James Dean," Fienberg said. "The moment she heard she was going to have a bedroom scene with Andy Griffith, she was sold."

JEWISH CONTENT?

Fienberg, who studied accounting in college, instead began working as a writer after graduation, settling first on the East Coast but later relocating to Los Angeles to pursue a career in film. The risk appears to be paying off.

And while "Play the Game" is based on Fienberg's own family, the film has no explicitly Jewish content. "In the early version of the script, the grandfather, who was based on my own grandfather, spoke a little bit of

Yiddish here and there and ... there was a lot more Jewish stuff in there," Fienberg said. "Then, as ... I got more feedback, I realized that it was sort of taking away from the story for non-Jewish audiences. It is kind of a univer-



Andy Griffith and Liz Sheridan co-star in 'Play the Game.'

sal story. It is more about seniors playing around than about Jewish seniors getting back in the game. So I made the difficult decision I am learning that show business is indeed a business, and sometimes you have to make those decisions."

However, Fienberg added that he thought that there were plenty of indirect hints that would lead the audience to guess the characters are Jewish. Fienberg's grandfather unfortunately died before the film was finished.

This article was first published in the St. Louis Jewish Light.

08/27/2009

Los Angeles

The Hollywood Reporter

Review

by Frank Scheck

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/play-the-game-film-review-1004007305.story>

The Hollywood Reporter

Play the Game -- Film Review

By Frank Scheck, August 27, 2009 04:44 ET



"Play the Game"

Bottom Line: Andy Griffith comes a long way from Sheriff Andy and Matlock in this ribald senior sex comedy.

Close your eyes. Now, imagine your grandparents having sex.

That is roughly akin to the effect of "Play the Game," a cringe-worthy comedy about multigenerational romantic gameplaying that offers the dubiously entertaining prospect of watching Andy Griffith receiving oral sex.

Although the film -- receiving a limited national release following engagements in, where else, South Florida --undeniably offers cheap laughs, its most receptive audiences will likely be found in retirement-community auditoriums.

The comedy depicts the efforts of car salesman lothario David (Paul Campbell) to woo Julie (Marla Sokoloff), the prospective woman of his dreams, while simultaneously attempting to reintroduce his widowed 84-year-old grandpa Joe (Griffith) to the dating scene.

When David's time-tested stratagems result in one strikeout after another, Joe -- thanks to the miracle of Viagra -- becomes an octogenarian Don Juan, and hilarity ensues.

There's plenty of genuine humor to be mined from the subject of senior sex, as "The Boynton Beach Club" demonstrated, but debuting director-writer Marc Fienberg never establishes a coherent tone. Veering wildly from ribald slapstick to failed attempts at sophisticated romantic comedy and genuine emotion, "Game" only succeeds in stripping its younger and older characters of any dignity.

Griffith certainly gives it his all, and it's a novel experience listening to him deliver lines like "Grandpa's horny and he wants to have fun!" But despite the veteran actor's good-humored willingness to have fun, the role comes as a real letdown after his fine work in the recent "Waitress."

Campbell and Sokoloff are too bland to make us sufficiently engaged in their characters' courtship, and Liz Sheridan (Jerry's mom in "Seinfeld") garners some genuine laughs as the free-spirited sexpot who reintroduces Joe to the joys of sex.

Opens: Friday, Aug. 28 (Slowhand Releasing)

Production: Story Films

Cast: Paul Campbell, Andy Griffith, Doris Roberts, Marla Sokoloff, Liz Sheridan

Director-screenwriter-producer: Marc Fienberg

Executive producer: A. Charles Funai, Jim Rose, Eva Gordon

Director of photography: Gavin Kelly

Editor: Kimberly Generous White

Production designer: Chris Anthony Miller

Costume designer: Laura Brody

Music: Jim Latham

Rated PG-13, 105 min.

Festival Honoree: DORIS ROBERTS

Five-time Emmy winner to be honored at Sedona Film Festival



After nine years as Marie Barone on "Everybody Loves Raymond," which brought her international accolades as the most popular comedic actress in television, Doris Roberts returned to features as the star of two comedies for Twentieth Century-Fox, another for Miramax and then heavy drama for Hallmark, as well as a special segment of "Law & Order

Criminal Intent" written especially for her.

Roberts, who boasts four Emmy's for "Raymond" alone and a fifth for a dramatic portrayal as a victim of homelessness on "St. Elsewhere," continued her long career of diverse performances, by jumping into the title role of the Fox youth market comedy "Nana's Boy," then was snatched by Miramax to star opposite Garry Marshall in "Keeping Up With the Steins." Again selected by Fox for the forthcoming blockbuster, "They Came From Outer Space," she plays current teen sensation Ashley's Tisdale's grandmother in the story of aliens taking over a family summer vacation home.

In between, Roberts won critical acclaim as a wealthy New York society matron whose family tries to get her fortune in the "Privilege" special of "Law & Order Criminal Intent" for NBC, and another wealthy homeowner who takes in a group of homeless in the Hallmark drama "Our House."

And now, Roberts stars in a new indie comedy, "Play the Game," making its Arizona premiere at the Sedona festival.

Roberts, whose pre-"Raymond" series and specials on television, countless features and 30 years on Broadway have made her one of the most beloved performers in entertainment, is no awards newcomer. In addition to the five Emmy's, considered the pre-eminent accolades in television, her artistry has been recognized three times as Best Television Actress by the national Viewers for Quality Television. Then, in 2001 alone, she was selected by the prestigious American Film Institute as one of five actresses of the year, won the 2001 TV Guide Award, the 2000 Beautiful People Award and was named Best Actress in A Comedy in the American Comedy and Los Angeles Weekly Awards for her stage performance in "24 Hours." To celebrate a lifetime of such achievement, on March 10, 2003, the versatile actress was immortalized with her own Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and, in April, of that year, St. Martin's Press published her memoirs, "Are You Hungry, Dear?" which became an immediate best seller.

"Play the Game" screens on Friday and Saturday.



Need Funding? Better Get Creative

With Venture Capital Scarce, Entrepreneurs Find Alternative Means

By EMILY MALTBY

Sean Conway needed to raise funds for his start-up, **Notehall.com**, an online marketplace for college students to buy and sell class notes. But a year into the venture he was broke and investors weren't willing to infuse the company with a capital boost.

Mr. Conway's grandfather contributed \$17,000 for marketing and operations, which allowed the company to hit nearly 8,000 users at Mr. Conway's alma mater, the University of Arizona, by January 2009. But the angels and venture capitalists remained skeptical.

"I had invested my life savings and I knew there was no turning back," says Mr. Conway.

So last March he submitted his idea to DreamIt Ventures, a sort of entrepreneurial boot camp in Philadelphia—funded by four economic development organizations—that provides office space and mentoring to fledgling business owners, and helps set them up with potential investors. Notehall.com, one of 10 ventures chosen to participate in the three-month summer program, walked away with about \$500,000 in investments.

Amid a stark climate for venture capital, small-business owners are finding more creative ways to get funding. Some are turning to boot-camp style programs like DreamIt Ventures, Y Combinator in Mountain View, Calif., or TechStars in Boulder, Colo. Others have found success appealing for funds via television, or even hitting up friends and relatives for cash.

Venture capital deals have been steadily declining since 2007 and are hovering at levels not seen since the mid-1990s, according to data from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the National Venture Capital Association. The amount of funding in the second quarter dropped more than 50% from the year earlier period.

Yet entrepreneurial activity can remain vibrant even in downturns. A June study by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, a Kansas City group that promotes entrepreneurship, found that periods of unemployment trigger individuals to launch their own ventures instead of applying to corporate jobs.

In this economy, entrepreneurs need to work even harder and put more effort into thinking outside the box.

After his success with DreamIt Ventures, Mr. Conway applied to be a contestant on ABC's Shark Tank, a television show that gives entrepreneurs a chance to pitch to investors and vie for their money. Through the show, which aired Notehall.com's episode last week, Mr. Conway landed the company an additional \$90,000 after agreeing to give up a 25% equity stake. "The last two weeks have been crazy," says Mr. Conway, who says he hopes for the company to reach 30 colleges by the end of the year.

Marc Fienberg, head of **Story Films Inc.**, a production company in Los Angeles, also found his enterprise wasn't garnering much respect from the venture capital community. So he tapped some acquaintances from his days at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and proceeded to network for about three years.

"I quickly realized that to do this, I'd have to reach outside my comfort zone," he says. "There was no room to be shy or humble."

In total, Mr. Fienberg says he pitched to hundreds of contacts,

many of whom scoffed at the idea and told him he was wasting his time. But eventually he found 17 people—made up primarily of Kellogg alumni—who were interested. He flew to meet each in person.

From 2007 to 2009, Mr. Fienberg says he secured between \$1 million and \$5 million. His company's first film, "Play the Game," recently landed in theaters and has grossed about \$500,000 in box office sales.

In this economy, entrepreneurs need to work even harder and put more effort into thinking outside the box, says Bo Fishback, vice president of entrepreneurship at the Kauffman Foundation.

Mr. Fishback is seeing a trend of more innovators competing online at NineSigma.com and InnoCentive.com. Large companies post challenges on these sites and award money to the winning inventor or problem solver.

Small projects from large companies can be lucrative. That's what William Volk found out after he joined a start-up called **MyNuMo LLC**, a company that produces games for smart phones. In 2008, he reached out to a venture capital firm that had invested in a company where Mr. Volk had previously worked. "I thought for sure we would get it because I had a track record," says Mr. Volk. But he wound up losing to a competitor seeking capital from the same firm.

Given his background in programming, an undeterred Mr. Volk contacted several companies to see if they'd be interested in a custom smart-phone program. "We were using those smaller projects to keep us going," he said. The projects financed the research and development for MyNuMo's game applications, which are now available online and as mobile-phone applications.

Revenue is expected to hit \$1.5 million this year. "We managed to create a higher number of titles than our well-funded competitors," Mr. Volk says.