## **INTERVIEW**



## RICHARD BRANCATISANO

By Kristina Foster

Richard Brancatisano sits inconspicuously in a quiet back-street café in Waterloo. He looks just like a regular guy in a faded t-shirt and jeans, but this handsome actor is anything but.

Brancatisano lights up the big screen in the indie rom-com Alex and Eve, in which he plays a Greek Orthodox man who falls in love with an Islamic Lebanese girl, played by Andrea Demetriades. Set in Sydney's western suburbs, the characters' relationship becomes challenged by the disapproval of their families.

"The story is about love overcoming generational differences. It's very relatable," he explains. "My father is Italian and my mother is Australian, and they would have experienced similar situations."

Brancatisano grew up in suburban Carlingford in Sydney's Northwest, attending the prestigious Kings Grammar School, His father was a doctor and his mother a schoolteacher. When asked if his parents ever meddled in his relationships and wanted him to marry an Italian girl he smiles broadly and laughs. "No. My parents have always been so supportive of everything I do". Brancatisano has been dating singer/songwriter Erin Marshall for several years. "My girlfriend is Australian but my parents wouldn't care what nationality or religion she is."

The parents of *Alex and Eve* in the film forbid their children to continue their relationship. Eve's mother plans for an arranged marriage to a Muslim man from Lebanon; Alex's father threatens to disinherit him.

"It gives you an insight into two different cultures, their beliefs and their practices, and you really walk away from the film loving both cultures and understanding them more," the 32-year-old points out. Alex and Eve offers a timely, feelgood insight into Islamic family life within a much-misunderstood multicultural pocket of Sydney.

Starting his career on *Home and Away* and starring in two seasons of recently cancelled US TV series *Chasing Life* before scoring his role in *Alex and Eve*, Brancatisano's acting career has followed a solid upwards trajectory.

"I remember auditioning for the role in *Alex and Eve*. I was in a hotel room in New York, on a publicity tour for *Chasing Life*, and I had a Skype call set up with Andrea and the director, Peter Andrikidis. It was the worst Skype call ever," he recalls. "The call dropped out several times. At one stage whilst reading the

script I couldn't see them at all. With all the technical difficulties, Andrea and I joked around and didn't let it get to us. I think that's what got me the role."

On screen Brancatisano sizzles with his co-star, Demetriades; their infectious chemistry provides a hopeful tonic for Sydney singletons and ticks all the boxes for hopeless romantics. From their characters' meeting at a harbourside bar to their kiss on a Bridge Climb date, the recognisable settings enhance the local charm of the story.

On set, Italian Brancatisano was surrounded by Greeks actors constantly giving him advice on how to 'play a Greek'. "Tony (Nikolakopoulos), who plays my Greek dad George, was always joking around. In the scene where my character gets caught in church admiring someone else's wife, he kept really slapping me around. He said he was treating me like a real Greek son," chuckles the actor.

Alex and Eve is in cinemas now.

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