

KINO
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MOMMA'S MAN

A film by Azazel Jacobs



Official Selection
2008 Sundance Film Festival
2008 Rotterdam Film Festival

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PRESSBOOK

Press Contact:
Rodrigo Brandão at rodrigo@kino.com

Kino International
TEL: (212) 629-6880 ext. 12
FAX: (212) 714-0871



MOMMA'S MAN
Synopsis

Momma's Man chronicles the increasingly anxious dilemma of Mikey (Matt Boren), a young husband and father who stops off at his parents' loft during a business trip to New York and finds himself emotionally unable to leave. Unsure of his own motivations, he makes up excuses about why he's staying – his flight is delayed; his flight is canceled – but while his doting mother (Flo Jacobs, the director's mother) is more than happy to enable his procrastination, his father (Azazel's father, venerable avant-garde filmmaker Ken Jacobs) grows suspicious of his son's change of plans.

Ignoring their concern, Mikey moves back into his old room. He immerses himself in childhood memorabilia, dodges his wife's panicked voicemails, and even attempts to resurrect old neighborhood buddies (at least one as hair-raisingly adrift as he). And as the days go on, Mikey becomes more and more entrenched in his adolescent sanctuary. But as his life builds to a darkly comic pitch reminiscent of Jacobs' fellow 'downtown' auteur Jim Jarmusch, this young father realizes that he must choose between life as it is and life as it was.

A tribute to Jacobs' parents and their work as much as to the (lost) New York of his childhood, *Momma's Man* is an acutely perceptive, deeply personal take on a universal experience: the fear of growing up.

MOMMA'S MAN
A film by Azazel Jacobs

94 minutes
35mm
1:85
Dolby SR
In English



MOMMA'S MAN

CAST

MATT BOREN – Mikey
FLO JACOBS – Mom
KEN JACOBS – Dad
RICHARD EDSON – Tom, the neighbor
DANA VARON – Laura, Mikey's wife
NAN ARCILESI
ELEANOR HUTCHINS – Bridget
AND
PIERO ARCILESI – Dante

CREW

Written and Directed by AZAZEL JACOBS
Produced by HUNTER GRAY and ALEX ORLOVSKY
Executive Producer – PAUL MEZEY
Executive Producer – TYLER BRODIE
Cinematographer – TOBIAS DATUM
Editor – DARRIN NAVARRO
Composer – MANDY HOFFMAN
Music Supervisor – JOE RUDGE



MOMMA'S MAN **Director's Statement**

Momma's Man began as a way of documenting the place where I grew up – in a rented loft in downtown Manhattan where my folks have been living for over 40 years. Tribeca, a neighborhood once overrun by artists, is now rapidly changing into some sort of St. Moritz. A young banker has recently bought the building, and though my parents have rent control, I know someday I will have to walk past the building and wonder who lives there.

This truly pains me, and I hoped that the film would, in some way, allow me to reconcile with the inevitable. I wanted to use Momma's Man as a way of letting go, a way to forever be able to visit the place and time, at least in two dimensions. It is a story about a man roughly the same age as me, who lives in California, also like me, who visits his folks and then refuses to leave. But he has a wife and kid whom he is abandoning, which I do not, and he has a nowhere job, which I do not. And he's left behind his childhood dreams, which I haven't.

I wound up casting my parents to play the parents – really because I couldn't picture anyone else in their bed, in their kitchen, in their place (though Peter Falk and Shelly Duvall would be in my movie-movie version of it.) Though they've both had a life involved in film, they have no acting ambitions and it took me being a spoiled child to get them to play the part.

My parents, Ken and Flo Jacobs, are both artists – my mother with paint and my father with film. They are also a team; their work is first and foremost for each other. They have spent their lives avoiding telling stories, in fact avoiding telling – their focus has been in the abstract, more interested in meeting halfway with the viewer. What you walk away with usually corresponds with how much you give, pretty much opposite of most narrative films where the focus is usually on getting characters from A to Z.

This is not to say that my father's films exist completely independent of narrative film. In fact, much of them have used Hollywood movies as a basis, taking apart and reshaping, adding dimension and revealing buried meanings. In this way, my aspirations cross with his – having undoubtedly been inspired by him from the beginning. For Momma's Man I chose a character without artistic aspiration, someone who has opted to be "normal." I was hoping that inserting this type of character into my parent's actual lives would inspire some unusual and vital sparks.

They showed me an incredible amount of trust while we were filming. If issues arose during particular scenes, I could always go to an era in narrative filmmaking that there is a deep love for – Do it like Paul Muni, Dad – Mom, today you're Loretta Young. I think they got a kick out of the whole process, at least watching me in it. And for me, it was a chance to bring them into my own work, after growing up in theirs.

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MOMMA'S MAN
Director's Statement

(CONTINUED)

I wrote the part of their son, Mikey, for Matt Boren, who I had worked with on my first feature *Nobody Needs To Know*. He was someone that I thought of from the first line on, who I believed could say a lot without saying much, and who would bring as much to the part as he would take in. He also looked a bit like I did when I was a baby. For the rest of the roles I used either the real person it was based on, or actors that brought with them their own particular styles, hoping to create a cross-section/mish-mash of realities where some interesting things could emerge.

It wasn't until I began editing that I realized I might have veered into something I didn't have control over. I had just broken the news to my girlfriend, Diaz – who I made my previous film with – back in LA that plans had changed: I would be cutting the film in NY and would have to extend my visit there. I had already been in New York, staying at my parents place, in my childhood bedroom for the three months it took to prep and shoot. My life was eerily similar to Mikey's, and though my relationship with Diaz was/is a strong one, I was definitely testing it.

Shortly thereafter, I woke up to something called Bells Palsy, a condition that causes temporary partial facial paralysis. Suddenly, half my face was frozen, and I in turn was frozen, in New York, at my parents, unable to work. Doctors don't know what causes it, in fact they hardly know much about it at all, but basically the only remedy is to just stay in place and wait for it to pass. Just stay.

Diaz came to New York and brought me back to the west coast, where I took 5 weeks off from the film, and then when I felt strong enough, began cutting from over there. The paralysis left slowly, as the film took shape, finally disappearing completely when I locked picture.

What does it all mean? I have no idea other than that maybe this one came from somewhere I didn't fully know, or wouldn't fully understand until I lived it.

—Azazel Jacobs



MOMMA'S MAN

About the Production

The idea of Momma's Man was spurred by a visit of Azazel's to his parents. After waking up one morning and finding coffee and cereal waiting for him, he wondered why he ever moved out. What began as just a funny idea quickly found a different course when taken seriously. The idea that the man would also have a wife and baby just added more weight to the story.

While at the Sundance Film Festival in 2005 Azazel met with producer Alex Orlovsky, who was there with Half Nelson. The two knew each other slightly from the Tribeca neighborhood (Orlovsky at the time lived around the corner from Azazel's parents) but spoke more at the festival, and soon after Orlovsky received a copy of Azazel's 2005 film *The GoodTimesKid*.

The GoodTimesKid, a film made for ten thousand dollars with a cast/crew of six, was a big hit with Alex, who said he was interested in doing the next one. By that time a first draft of Momma's Man had been completed, to which Alex also responded well. The two began discussing casting and financing possibilities, creating a list of possible actors to play the roles, but it soon became clear that the location in itself was so particular that only the loft's true inhabitants, Flo and Ken Jacobs, could play those characters.

Of course all the possible equity investors and production companies quickly lost interest in the prospect of a film without stars. With the idea of making this film on a low budget starring the director's parents, Alex thought this might be a perfect project for Artists Public Domain (APD), an organization for which Alex had served on the board the last few years. The rest of the APD board loved the project and agreed immediately to finance and produce the film.

The script continued to evolve throughout, and with the input of APD producers Orlovsky, Hunter Gray and Paul Mezey, it only got better in Azazel's opinion. This was the first time he had ever worked with producers, and it took him a while to believe that such positive, productive relationships were even possible.

A lot of the challenges in the production became beneficial. Shooting in such a small, cramped space limited the size of the crew, and a limited crew meant no continuity/wardrobe person; thus it was decided to shoot in chronological order.

Shooting continuously was a huge help in the directing of Azazel's parents. Though they had both spent a lifetime in film, this was their first experience with narrative filmmaking and it allowed things to evolve along with the story. Shooting in sequence also appealed to Matt Boren and Aza, as it really allowed them to organically follow Mikey as he regressed further and further into his childhood.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Production

Also a first for Azazel was the opportunity to concentrate only on directing. At first it felt like a luxury, being free of the paperwork and other hassles that came with the super small productions he was used to, but soon it became essential for fully diving into the issues and situations he hoped to explore. It wasn't just a matter of feeling supported, but also of being pushed to put his honest all into the film. It was a once in a lifetime experience that he nevertheless hopes to repeat again and again.



MOMMA'S MAN **About the Cast**

MATT BOREN (Mikey)

Actor and writer Matt Boren is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School Of The Arts. He spent his childhood in Framingham, the son of two theater-obsessed parents. Matt's mom watched "General Hospital" religiously and Matt fell in love with the character Anna Devane. She was a detective and he pretended, at 9 years old, that he was her partner in crime. It was this obscure, die-hard obsession with Anna Devane that cracked Matt's head wide open. He had to be a writer and an actor so that he could meet her. Matt is currently developing a TV series, "Rabbit Hole," about a guy who goes through the looking glass only to become the crime-fighting partner of a beautiful female spy. Tony Krantz is producing and Finola Hughes – Anna Devane herself – is playing the lead.

Matt has a recurring role on CBS's "How I Met Your Mother." A few years ago he wrote, directed and starred in the play "Camel Lot" at the Old HBO Workspace in Los Angeles. That play, about his childhood in Massachusetts, led to a TV deal with Fox. Matt wrote a show called "Dirtbags," his first TV pilot script. After months of development, the show was picked up for a pilot with Melissa Joan Hart and Balthazar Getty playing the leads. Although the pilot did not go to series, Matt's childhood fantasy of creating TV shows was born. He has since sold shows to NBC and ABC and is currently in discussions with Broadway Video about his theater-developed series, "Rich Whores: A Fairytale."

Matt is on the board of The Art of Elysium, a Los Angeles-based charity that brings art and artists to children in hospitals. Every year he co-writes a holiday play with the likes of Joaquin Phoenix and Kirsten Dunst as well as with patients from the hospitals. Momma's Man marks the second time Matt has worked with Azazel Jacobs, the first being Azazel's first feature Nobody Needs To Know.

KEN AND FLO JACOBS (Mom and Dad)

Azazel's parents, Ken and Flo Jacobs, are both artists. Flo is a painter and collaborator with Ken, who has been making avant-garde films since the mid-fifties. Along with Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, and Peter Kubelka, Ken Jacobs's films exemplify the provocative and innovative spirit of experimental cinema.

He studied painting under Hans Hoffman, was an influential teacher of famed author and artist Art Spiegelman, and in 1969 helped found the cinema department at Binghamton University, from which he retired in 2002 as a Distinguished Professor of Cinema.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Cast

KEN AND FLO JACOBS (Mom and Dad)
(CONTINUED)

His films include *Blond Cobra* (1959-63), *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son* (1969), *Star Spangled To Death* (1957-59, completed 2003-4), and *Razzle Dazzle* (2006). Jacobs's films are shown extensively throughout the world, including multiple times at the New York, Berlin and Rotterdam film festivals as well as the Whitney Museum Biennial, and he has received numerous grants and awards. In December of 2007, *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son* was named to the National Film Registry.

DANA VARON (Mikey's wife Laura)

Born in New York City and raised in New Jersey, Dana Varon went to college in Miami where she earned a degree in Theater Arts. Aspiring to act and play rock music, she returned to New York, working on plays, prints, soaps, commercials for Blockbuster, MTV, Verizon, voiceovers for The Cartoon Network's "Daria," and films, including *Life On the Ledge*, *Descent* and *The Deafening Silence of a Very Bright Light*, for which she also composed a song. Dana is also an accomplished singer/songwriter/guitarist who has worked with Muzz Skillings of Living Colour, Roger Che of Bad Boy Entertainment, and others. She also recently recorded her own album and is currently working on a new music video for her song "In Deep" with Jonathan Gershon, who has worked on videos for Wax Poetic & Norah Jones and Walking Concert. "In Deep" was picked as one of four songs to launch Sony Ericsson's walkman phone MySpace page. Dana opened for the band Ozomatli at last year's Sundance Film Festival.

RICHARD EDSON (Tom the neighbor)

Richard Edson's first feature film role was as Eddie, one of the lead characters in Jim Jarmusch's 1983 cult hit *Stranger Than Paradise*. Richard then had small but memorable roles in other big hits such as *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), John Hughes' *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986), Barry Levinson's *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987) and, in 1989, Richard starred as Vito in Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*. In 1993 he played Spike, one of King Koopa's henchmen in *Super Mario Bros.*, and in 1995 he had a part in the sci-fi thriller *Strange Days*. More recently, he has appeared in the remake of *Starsky & Hutch* (2004) and starred with Tom Arnold in *The Kid & I* (2005). In addition to his film success, Richard has had a fascinating career in music, as the original drummer in the New York post-punk band, Sonic Youth, and three years as the drummer for the rhythmic dance band Konk. He currently lives in Los Angeles where, in addition to acting, he is active in music, writing and photography.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Cast

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PIERO ARCILESI (Dante)

Momma's Man is Piero Arcilesi's first acting experience. He was the subject of a small documentary Azazel Jacobs made in undergraduate school in 1993, which was spurred by Piero enlisting in the army.

Closer to brothers than best friends, Piero and Azazel grew up together in lower Manhattan at a time when it was scarcely populated and few other kids their age were to be found. They experienced many firsts together, bonding especially over a shared love of The Clash.

For many reasons, around their teenage years Aza and Piero set out on very different paths, but still always felt connected. As Momma's Man was being conceived and written, Piero was released from prison and their friendship resumed. At some point that, and he, became an integral part of the story.

ELEANOR HUTCHINS (Bridget)

Eleanor Hutchins is a New York-based actor whose film credits include On the Road with Judas, Half Nelson, Margarita Happy Hour, The Motel, and Milk and Honey, all of which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Another film in which she stars, Stay Until Tomorrow, was developed at the Sundance Labs. Eleanor's television credits include "Law and Order" and "Law and Order SVU."



MOMMA'S MAN
About the Filmmakers

AZAZEL JACOBS

Screenwriter/Director

Azazel Jacobs, son of avant-garde filmmaker Ken Jacobs, was born in 1972 and raised in New York's lower Manhattan surrounded by important and innovative artists. He went to undergraduate school at the film department of SUNY Purchase and graduated in 1995. His thesis film, *Kirk and Kerry*, won Best Short film at the Slamdance Film Festival in 1997 and recently became part of the permanent collection at the Donnell NY Public Library.

In 1999 he moved to Los Angeles to study in the directing program at The American Film Institute. While getting his Masters he made his first feature-length film, *Nobody Needs To Know*, which had its world premiere at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2003.

Two years later he premiered his second feature, *The GoodTimesKid*, at the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles. The film was co-written with Gerardo Naranjo (director of *Drama/Mex* and the upcoming *Voy A Explotar*) who also starred alongside Azazel's longtime girlfriend Sara Diaz.

The super low-budget film was a hit with critics and audiences alike and was recently named #2 of the Top Ten Films of 2007 by the New York Post. It is scheduled for a DVD release by Benten Films in Spring 2008.

In the August 2007 issue of *Filmmaker Magazine*, Azazel was listed among the "25 Directors To Watch." *Momma's Man* is Azazel Jacobs third feature film.

ALEX ORLOVSKY

Producer

Alex Orlovsky is best known as the producer of Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson*. The film premiered in August of 2006 and went on to win three Gotham Awards and two Independent Spirit Awards. Its star, Ryan Gosling, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor.

Previously, Alex was the producer of *Point and Shoot*, which screened at the Tribeca and Hamptons film festivals. He is currently in post-production on Gerardo Naranjo's *Voy A Explotar*, and has a number of other projects on the horizon, most notably *Blue Valentine*, winner of the Chrysler Million Dollar Film Project, to be distributed by THINKFilm.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Filmmakers

ALEX ORLOVSKY
(CONTINUED)

In addition to his feature work, Orlovsky recently produced *Smother*, an experimental film by fine art photographer Luis Gispert, which starred Steven Bauer (*Scarface*) and Taryn Manning (*Hustle and Flow*). He also produced Gispert's previous film *Stereomongrel*, the first project to shoot inside the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art. That film premiered at the museum in the fall of 2005. Alex currently sits on the board of Artists Public Domain (APD), a non-profit organization dedicated to the production of innovative film and media projects. He has also produced numerous shorts, music videos and a television pilot for the cult public access show "The Kid America Adventure Hour."

HUNTER C. GRAY
Producer

Hunter Gray is a partner of Verisimilitude, a New York-based film production company. Gray is also a co-founder of Artists Public Domain, Inc. (APD), a not for profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization established to assist creative endeavors in film. APD funds and produces feature films and documentaries, donates post-production facilities, and provides the funding for awards and programs at the Independent Feature Project.

Hunter has recently produced three feature projects: *Memorial Day*, *Momma's Man* and *Voy A Explotar*. Past credits include associate producer on *Half Nelson* and executive producer on the documentaries *You See Me Laughin'* and *The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack*.

Gray is also active with many fine arts organizations. He is on the board of Independent Curators International in New York and LAXART in Los Angeles, is a member of the Producer's Council for the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and a member of the Contemporary Acquisitions Council of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC.

PAUL MEZEY
Executive Producer

Paul Mezey is a New York-based independent producer and founder of Journeyman Pictures. Mezey has produced many critically recognized films, including Joshua Marston's *Maria Full of Grace*, which received a 2005 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actress, and Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson*, which received a 2007 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actor.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Filmmakers

PAUL MEZEY
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In addition to 2008 Sundance Spectrum selection Momma's Man, Mezey is also a producer of Sugar, which will premiere in the Dramatic Competition. Projects currently in development include Cold Souls by Sophie Barthes, The Girl by writer/director David Riker, and Joshua Marston's upcoming feature The Fortress of Solitude, based on Jonathan Lethem's acclaimed novel.

Other producer credits include Jim McKay's Angel Rodriguez (HBO Films), starring Rachel Griffiths, Everyday People (HBO Films), and Our Song; Spring Forward, directed by Tom Gilroy and starring Ned Beatty and Liev Schreiber; The City (La Ciudad), directed by David Riker; the Mississippi Blues documentary You See Me Laughin', directed by Mandy Stein; and The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack, directed by Aiyana Elliott, winner of the Artistic Achievement Award for documentary film at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival.

Paul Mezey received the IFP/West Motorola Producer's Award at the Independent Spirit Awards in 2001 and was selected by Variety in 2004 as one of the "Ten Producers to Watch."

TYLER BRODIE
Executive Producer

Tyler Brodie's executive producer credits include Pi (1998), The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack (2000), You See Me Laughin' (2002), Memorial Day (2008), Voy a Explotar (2008), and Momma's Man (2008).

TOBIAS DATUM
Cinematographer

Tobias Datum was born in Frankfurt, Germany and attended the American Film Institute. His films as DP include How The Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer, which screened in the Dramatic Competition at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, and Drama/Mex, which was featured at the 2006 Semaine de la Critique at Cannes and in the Toronto Film Festival. He presently lives in Los Angeles.

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MOMMA'S MAN
About the Filmmakers

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DARRIN NAVARRO

Editor

Darrin Navarro was so taken by Azazel Jacobs' second feature, *The GoodTimesKid*, that after its 2005 AFI Festival premiere he approached the director and told him that, should he ever decide to work with an editor, he really wanted the job. Less than two years later they were at work on *Momma's Man* in Darrin's Burbank, Calif., apartment. Previously, Darrin had edited the independent drama *Hate Crime* and William Friedkin's *Bug*, for Lionsgate.

MANDY HOFFMAN

Original Music

Mandy Hoffman spent two years at the well-regarded music department at Pasadena City College, where she won two awards: best electronic musician and faculty honors in composition. She has scored four productions: *The Weird Sisters*, a video installation for artist Lori Schindler; *Quake*, a short by Pete Shanel; and *The GoodTimesKid* and *Momma's Man*, both features by Azazel Jacobs. Mandy is currently studying film scoring at UCLA Extension, one of the country's most esteemed specialty programs of its field.

PRODUCTION – Artists Public Domain

Artists Public Domain, Inc (APD) is a supporting organization and public charity as recognized by the IRS in section 501(c)(3). APD was formed to assist in creative endeavors in the arts, specifically those relating to film and video. APD supports the Independent Feature Project (IFP) with cash donations that directly fund grants to filmmakers and programs at the IFP. APD also funds and produces short films, features and documentaries. The organization also donates post-production services and office space to low budget features and documentaries.

Artists Public Domain is run by a board of five people, all of whom have other full time jobs in film. The board is made up of Tyler Brodie and Hunter Gray of Verisimilitude Films, Paul Mezey of Journeyman Pictures, Alex Orlovsky of Hunting Lane Films, and Michelle Byrd of the IFP. APD has no employees and no board member is paid for their time, allowing for low overhead and all of its resources to go directly to projects and grants. In the last year APD has supported film and video projects of fiction, non-fiction, and experimental nature ranging in budget from \$8,000 to \$120,000. While there are no strict guidelines as to what projects are selected or how they are executed, they all seek success in conveying the vision of the artist as opposed to creating commercial profit.