

De Niro & Stiller Film in Greenvale Store

by David J. Criblez

December is a busy month for Victor Talbots Formals of New York, located at 47 Glen Cove Road in Greenvale. However, Monday, December 6th was day like no other for the tuxedo store. As proprietor Victor Scognamiglio opened the doors at an unusually early 5:30 AM, he prepared his shop for the silver screen as Universal Studios took over his store for a location shoot for the forthcoming comedy, set in Oyster Bay, entitled, "Meet the Parents," starring Robert De Niro and Ben Stiller, directed by Jay Roach ("Austin Powers"). The film is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2000.

"In early November, we were approached by a location scout from Universal Studios, who was looking for an upscale tuxedo place with an English flair that would be conducive to the film for Mr. De Niro's dress attire," explains Mr. Scognamiglio, "Within 24 hours, thirty executives came flying in from California, everyone from script writers to the director all the way down to the electricians. They came in, took measurements and pictures of our store from top to bottom. At this point and time, they were filming at a house on Pound Hollow Road in Brookville. Before I knew it, I signed a contract allowing them to use our facility."

Awaiting the Rain and a Phone Call

The scenes filmed at Victor Talbots required rain therefore Mr. Scognamiglio's shop was on call based on the weather reports. "Once they found out it was going to rain, they called us in less than 24 hours, to let us know they were going to shoot. We had to open the store at 5:30 AM. When I arrived, the entire parking lot was filled with production trucks. There were people all over the building. The crew was putting lens filters over the windows, special generators were running, there were

cable lines all over the place, there were literally close to 75 working people in the store. Nassau County Police was here and they even closed down Glen Cove Road for a period of time because of the high level of noise. A policeman would periodically go outside to stop traffic until they finished shooting a scene," he stated.

The day was a long one, but well worth it Mr. Scognamiglio claimed: "At 7 AM, Ben Stiller walked in, got a feel for the part and got comfortable with the set. Then at about 9:30 AM, Robert De Niro came in very relaxed, in street clothes, and looked around. Mr. De Niro made some suggestions, which were immediately attended to. By 10 AM, Mr. De Niro came in dressed in a charcoal gray cut away with hickory striped trousers, a gray vest, gold tie with a beaver top hat."

When asked if he dressed the stars for their roles, Mr. Scognamiglio said, "They have their own wardrobe people, who work in terms of period pieces. Plus, they work on the costumes in advance."

The plot of the movie is centered around Robert De Niro's character, the father of the girl Ben Stiller is marrying, who wants his daughter to marry her old boyfriend. Stiller gets accused of various mishaps that occur even though he's not responsible for them causing him to be misunderstood, hence the friction begins.

Four Scenes Filmed

A total of four scenes were filmed at Victor Talbots and Mr. Scognamiglio was able to witness them first hand. "In a classic De Niro styling, there's a scene upstairs by our dressing rooms where De Niro looks to both sides then goes inside the dressing room where Ben Stiller is changing and gives him a tremendous tongue lashing. That dialogue lasted about four minutes. Ben Stiller is squirming and looking up in the air wanting to say, 'Hey, this is not me!' but really couldn't do that. There was

a strong chemistry between Mr. De Niro and Mr. Stiller," he described.

"In another scene, De Niro's son finds some contraband and blames it on Ben Stiller when it actually was his. Meanwhile, Ben Stiller is suspicious that De Niro is involved in some sort of secretive business. There are some great scenes which are very humorous," Mr. Scognamiglio continued.

The question is...did Mr. Scognamiglio get in the movie? But, of course... "Both myself and my manager Darren DeRosa were in the movie," he explained. "We had non-speaking roles doing background activity, such as fitting people and conducting business. In fact, they used both us and our store in its entirety. They didn't change the name of the store or the environment inside. They even used me as its proprietor. They kept everything as is. I guess they liked our look. They even paid us for a union scale wage as actors and compensated the store for the lost time."

Business as Usual

Interestingly enough, Victor Talbots managed to service their customers throughout the shoot. "We had a temporary trailer outside for people returning their tuxedos. Plus, we were fitting people in between takes," said Mr. Scognamiglio, "There was a lot of commotion. Many local merchants were curious, some customers came by. People wanted to know what was going on. But, by the time the film crew left at 9:30 PM, the store looked perfect."

Although Victor Talbots has been in business for 15 years, this was the first time the store is being featured in a film, however, it may not be the last. "This was an incredible experience and I would absolutely do it again," Mr. Scognamiglio claimed, "In fact, they put us into a registry of film making sites. So we're ready to go!"

(see Victor Talbots' ad on p.3)