

HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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The revolution begins within

Hudson County native brings his Cuban people back home

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"The hardest thing is to look in a mirror and see the ghost of what you never wanted to be." That is one of the torments plaguing Tomas, played by Kamar De Los Reyes, who is the lead character of *Love & Suicide*, which was co-written and directed by former Union City native Luis Moro and Lisa France.

"Tomas goes to Cuba and discovers the one thing between love and suicide," said Moro.

So, what is that one thing between love and suicide? You'll find out when you see the film, which opened Friday May 26 at the Mayfair Theatre in West New York and will run until Thursday June 1.

The 85-minute independent film is the first of its kind to be filmed on the island of Communist Cuba.

With beautiful images of the waves engulfing the shores, historical architecture, and the "viejita," old lady, smoking tobacco on the front steps of her home, Moro's film captured the spirit of present-day Havana.

Many of the island's exiles still long for their home country and can now see it for the first time in the film. "A lot of it is based in true events, we didn't have to make it up," said Moro. "It was just what unfolded as they went along with the story."

Filming in Cuba? The cast and crew of eight had been accepted into the 2003 Havana Film Festival for Moro and France's previous film called *Ann B. Reel*, about a rapper inspired by the *Diary of Anne Frank*.

"I always wanted to do a movie in Cuba and we were only there for three weeks, so we shot for three weeks straight," said Moro. "You work hard; independent filmmakers don't fool around." Some of the remaining scenes of the movie were shot in New York City, but a majority of the picture takes place on location.

At a recent screening at Las Vegas' Desert Film Society, the film opened to a packed audience and garnered rave reviews.

"There was a man there who was an exile and he said to us, 'I thought I could never go home again, thank you for letting me go home,'" said France.

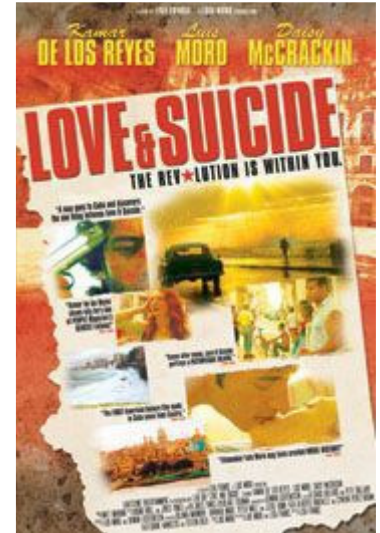
The phenomenal cast of characters included Havana locals as extras.

De Los Reyes, of *Days of Our Lives* fame, delivered a very engaging and honest performance.

"As far as actors go, he is going to be the next A-List Latin actor. He really delivered," said Moro. "The foundation is there with the soap and independent film worlds."

De Los Reyes was approached about the project after filming ended on *Ann B. Reel*, which his girlfriend was a part of.

Personal project Born in Cuba, Moro immigrated to the United States with his parents when he was very young and was raised among the adopted Cuban community of Union City. It was during his 3rd grade school play at Washington School that he caught the performing arts bug.



LOVE & SUICIDE – The first narrative feature film shot in Cuba, by Americans, since the Cuban Embargo, Love & Suicide opened on May 26, at the West New York Mayfair Theatre and will run until June 1.

Moro worked in real estate and held a show for 10 years on the local TV station Univision, but in the last eight years he worked on film and stage productions across the country.

"I still do stand-up once in a while and got a couple of opportunities in movies," said Moro, who landed a small role on the film For Love of the Game with Kevin Costner.

"I'll never forget what [Costner] told me: 'just keep your eye on the ball because there are so many distractions,'" said Moro.

Moro now resides in California with his wife and five children and continues to balance his inspiring career with his loving family life.

France and Moro became the best of friends about eight years ago and have worked on numerous projects together.

"Louie is my best friend, and when a person can't go home to their country and see their family, I don't even know what kind of experience that is, so this project is very personal for me in that respect," said France as she fought back tears.

Political spotlight

The film has been receiving good responses since entering numerous film festivals starting earlier this year, and it has also brought up the controversy involving America's relationship with the neighboring island nation.

Love & Suicide is the first American feature picture to be filmed in Cuba in the 46 years of the Cuban Embargo, which bans all travel and trade from the United States to Cuba.

"I personally think this film is going to represent peoples' opinions about the embargo and I think it will have a major part in lifting the embargo," said Moro.

Moro still has some family members in Cuba. Due to the embargo, Moro's family has had to go through other countries to see their relatives, some whom they haven't seen in years.

"[The government] won't let my 84-year-old grandmother go to Cuba to see her dying son - that's ridiculous. I can't even visit my uncle because the government doesn't consider him my family. How many families have been destroyed by this embargo?" said Moro.

Moro has been outspokenly critical of America's political leaders in respect to the embargo, especially those representing the Hispanic community.

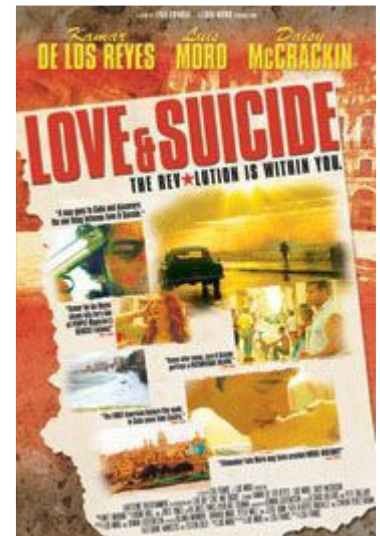
"[The politicians] are not representing anybody; not the people in Cuba, the United States or the United Nations," said Moro. "For 46 years Castro has blamed the embargo for Cuba's condition when it's because of the embargo that we're this way. For 46 years it has not worked, and Cuba just made a deal with China for travel and oil. Cuba is going to do just fine without the us."

Moro invited some of Jersey's most powerful political Hispanic leaders like Senator Robert Menendez, a longtime proponent of the embargo, and Assemblyman and Mayor of West New York Albio Sires to the premiere.

Other screenings have taken place in Miami and the Bahamas, and more are scheduled for other upcoming film festivals in New York and California.

The Mayfair, however, will be the first theatrical release.

"It's the first theatrical release for an independent filmmaker from Hudson County; it's amazing. It's like being a rookie in a major league ballgame," said Moro.



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