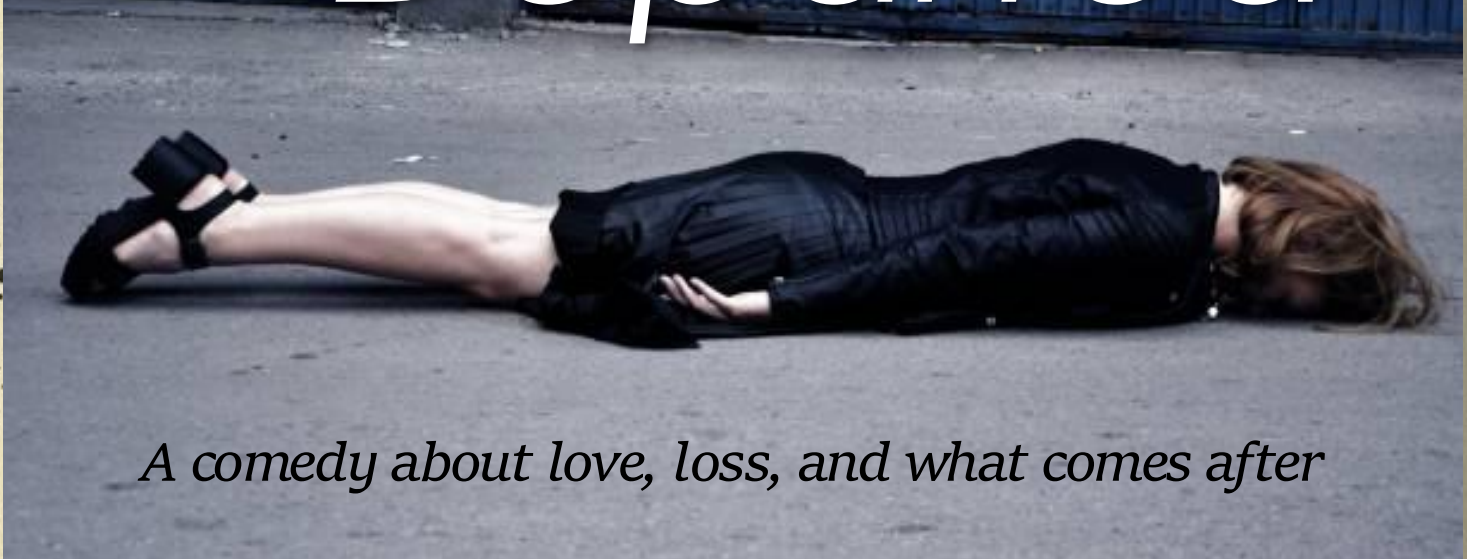


# “Nearly Departed”



*A comedy about love, loss, and what comes after*

From writer/director Mike Bencivenga

# About “NEARLY DEPARTED”

**GENRE:** Supernatural  
Romantic Comedy

**RATING:** PG-13 or R

**WRITER/DIRECTOR:**  
Mike Bencivenga

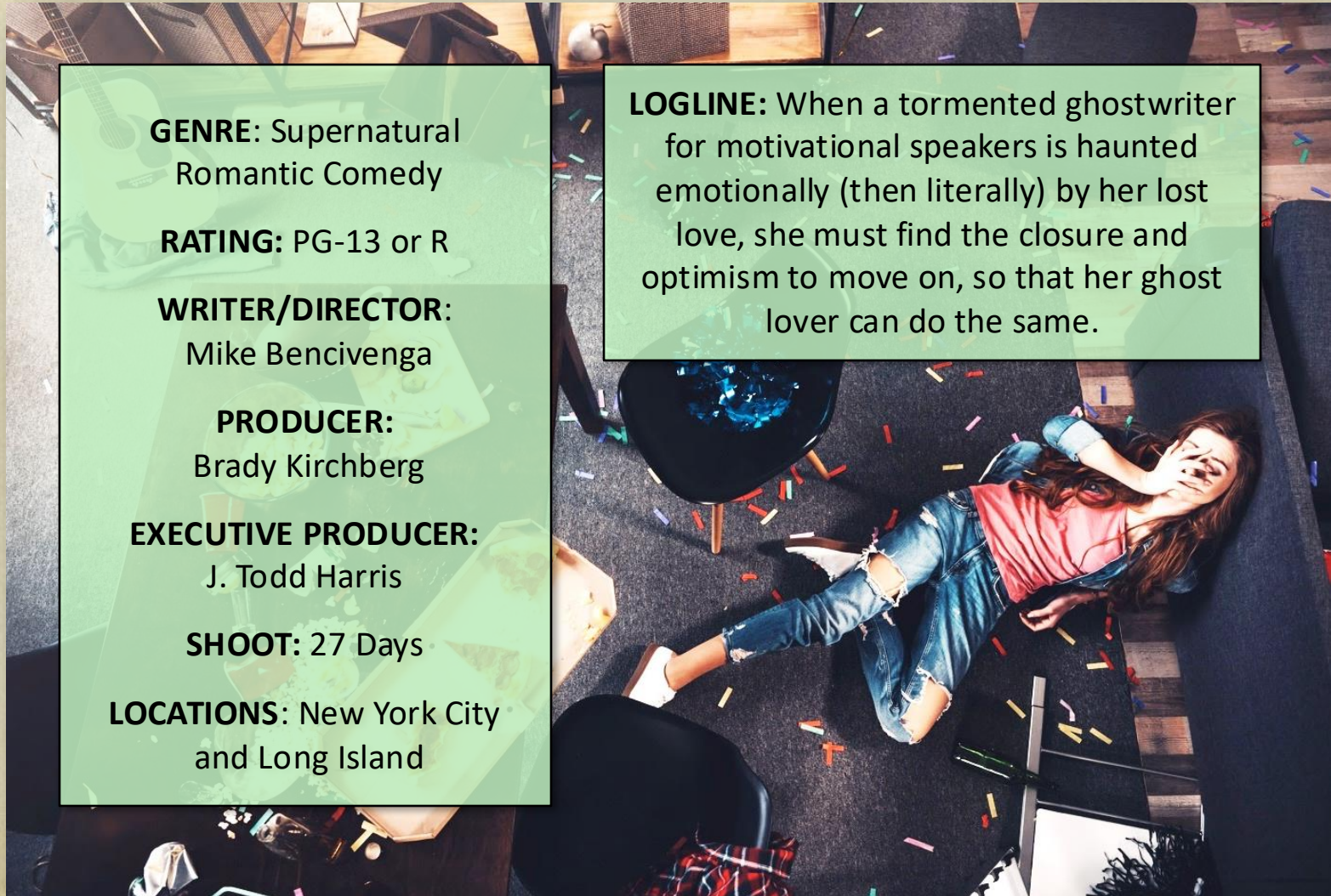
**PRODUCER:**  
Brady Kirchberg

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:**  
J. Todd Harris

**SHOOT:** 27 Days

**LOCATIONS:** New York City  
and Long Island

**LOGLINE:** When a tormented ghostwriter for motivational speakers is haunted emotionally (then literally) by her lost love, she must find the closure and optimism to move on, so that her ghost lover can do the same.



# So what's the story?



*Brenda fell for Emily. Hard. Not only was this her first same-sex relationship, but also Brenda's first time in love ever. Serious stuff.*

*But way too serious for Emily, so she ended it. Brenda longed to get her back, but, tragically, Emily became ill and died before they could reconnect.*



*This double dose of despair drives Brenda to drink. A lot. What she doesn't realize is that Emily's ghost is hovering nearby, watching her go to pieces. Emily wants to help, but Brenda can't see or hear her. Bummer, right?*



*As Brenda's rotten luck would have it, she gets hired to write speeches for a relationship guru, Sharon Steel, to help boost her sagging radio ratings.*



*Sharon's appalled by the 'hot mess' sent to work with her. But Brenda's bitter thoughts on love bring a harder edge to Sharon's stale message. And her listeners love it!*



*To celebrate, Sharon invites Brenda to her estate for the weekend. Brenda, misreading her vibe, thinks Sharon's flirting and impulsively kisses her. Shocked, Sharon tells her she invited Brenda there to meet her son, Reuben. Oy!*

*Meanwhile, Sharon's home turns out to be a portal to the great beyond. So, the ghost of Emily finally appears to Brenda. And she's pissed!*



*When Brenda gets over the shock of seeing her, Emily explains she's trapped and unable to move on because Brenda won't let her go. "Get on with your life," Ghost Emily pleads, "So I can get on with my afterlife."*

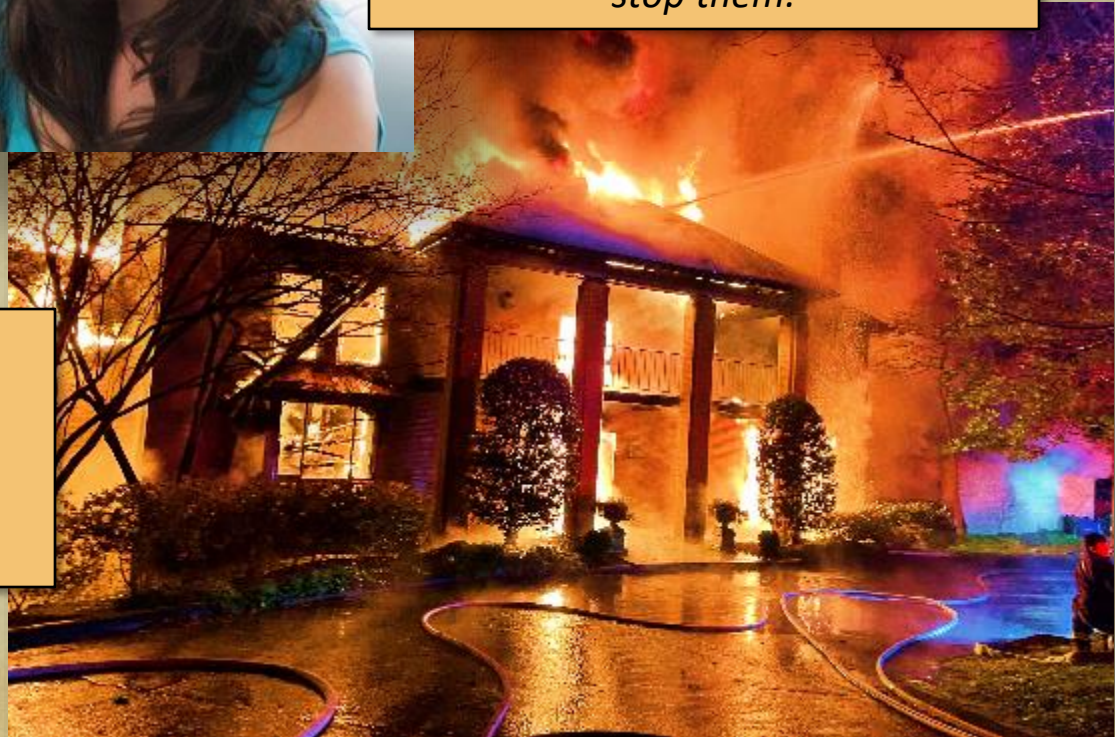


*Brenda decides to take Emily's advice and 'move on' by having a fun fling with Reuben.*



*But Ghost Emily won't let her. "You don't need sex!" she barks, "You need love." Brenda ignores her and goes after Reuben anyway. Furious, Emily starts a fire in the mansion to stop them.*

*It works, but when Sharon sees all the damage, she flips out and fires Brenda.*



*Getting canned is just the wake-up call Brenda needs. She quits the booze, quits writing for other people and finally shares the tender 'goodbye' with Emily that they both needed. And Brenda finds the strength she needs to let her go.*



*To reclaim her life and voice, Brenda tells her 'ghost story' at a Spoken Word show. And Emily's spirit makes sure Sharon's there to hear it.*

*The 'love doctor' is so touched by the tale that Sharon forgives Brenda and boldly asks her out for coffee.*



*Startled but delighted, Brenda says 'yes.'*

# Casting “NEARLY DEPARTED”



The story follows Brenda and Emily from new love, to nasty break-up, to hard-won healing. It’s a journey filled humor and pain. The actors playing the roles must bring every shade of their tumultuous romance to life.

The important third lead, Sharon Steel, and the juicy supporting role of Jack Masters (Brenda’s former boss), will give those actors the chance to lovingly lampoon the many superstar life coaches out there, like...



Marianne Williamson



Tony Robbins

# Not just another 'Ghost' story



Many successful movies in the past have told supernatural love stories, ranging from the highly sentimental...



To the

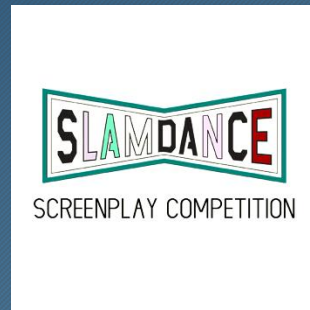


decidedly silly.

NEARLY DEPARTED is a comedy that has more in common with these recent, genre-redefining hits. Take a look at what a reader for THE BLACK LIST said about the script.



*“NEARLY DEPARTED is an incredibly poignant, incredibly lovely romantic comedy with a ghostly twist.”*



The screenplay for NEARLY DEPARTED has won over 30 top honors at script competitions, beating out both comedies and straight dramas.

OFFICIAL SELECTION:  
Festival du Film de Paris  
AFI Film Festival  
Austin Film Festival  
Sidewalk Moving Picture Film Festival  
Cleveland International Film Festival  
Sonoma Valley Film Festival

WINNER 2004 VERONA FESTIVAL SCHERMI D'AMORE  
Best Actor Anthony LaPaglia

WINNER 2004 NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL  
Best Actor Anthony LaPaglia

WINNER 2004 PRISM AWARD  
Best Festival Film  
Best Actor Anthony LaPaglia

WINNER 2004 FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL  
Audience Award  
Best Film

*Happy Hour*

*"Terrific performances infuse this well-written comic drama with a realistic ease."*  
—Sheri Linden, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

*"The great Anthony LaPaglia is never less than 100 percent convincing."*  
—David Christie, LA WEEKLY

*"Captivating."*  
—Phillip Jordan, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

*"Absolutely Authentic."*  
—Robert Draper, GQ and other publications

And writer/director Mike Bencivenga has successfully blended comedy and romance in the past. Most notably in his film HAPPY HOUR.



# “HAPPY HOUR” – Reviews



## NEW YORK MAGAZINE

*“Mike Bencivenga's film has the rich characterization and observant sensibility of classic literature.”*

## FILMS IN REVIEW

*“Director Mike Bencivenga has turned a low-budget indie into a golden experience. His tight, always-in-control direction and intense dialogue between three people who really matter to each other, makes you feel you're eavesdropping.”*

## THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

*“Terrific performances by Anthony LaPaglia, Eric Stoltz and Caroleen Feeney infuse this well-written comic drama with a realistic ease.”*

HAPPY HOUR won prizes at festivals around the world. It had a limited theatrical release before moving to NETFLIX and AMAZON PRIME where it's currently available. We believe that NEARLY DEPARTED will enjoy similar success.

# About the Team

## Mike Bencivenga – Writer/Director



Mike Bencivenga is an award-winning writer/director in theater, film and television. He's authored 11 full-length plays, including **BILLY & RAY** which was produced Off Broadway and directed by the legendary Garry Marshall. Mike's debut feature, **LOSERS IN LOVE** (1993), won best film at the Houston Intl. Film Festival. His next film, **HAPPY HOUR** (2003) starring Anthony LaPaglia and Eric Stoltz, won top festivals honors before going into theatrical release. Mike's written a dozen original screenplays, several TV pilots and is a multi-Emmy winning editor/producer at WABC-TV in NYC.



# More of the Team

## Brady Kirchberg - Producer

Brady is a New York-based producer, specializing in narrative and documentary content. In the narrative space, Brady has worked on numerous award-winning series, TV pilots, and independent features, a number of which have premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Some notable works include **HIGH MAINTENANCE** (HBO), **A KID LIKE JAKE** (Sundance), **THE SOUND OF SILENCE** (Sundance), **TOPSIDE** (Venice and SXSW), **ADAM** (Sundance) **COMPLETE UNKNOWN** (Sundance), **LITTLE MEN** (Sundance), **LOVE IS STRANGE** (Sundance), and **BILLY ON THE STREET** (Emmy-nominated season).



## J. Todd Harris – Executive Producer



J. Todd Harris founded and runs Branded Pictures Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based development and production company. He's produced or executive produced over 50 film and TV projects, including the Oscar-nominated **THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT** (2010) and **THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7** (2020). He's had five Sundance Film Festival entries, including **BOTTLE SHOCK** (2008). Todd is a 25-year member of the Motion Picture Academy, was a member of the Broadway League (2015-18) and is a member of the Producers Guild. This project re-unites him with Mike Bencivenga, with whom he produced the award-winning film **HAPPY HOUR** (2003).

# Director's Statement



*“As a filmmaker, I guess you'd call me a humanist. I'm much more interested in emotional collisions than car crashes. NEARLY DEPARTED is based on a loss I suffered that haunted me for years. While the story deals with grief, it's also very funny. I like to mix comedy and drama because I feel laughter is what gets us through the rough patches in life. And, as a supporter of LGBTQ+ rights, I've portrayed the same-sex romance in the story as natural and beautiful. Not a source of dramatic conflict as it's too often depicted in other films.”*

**Mike Bencivenga**

# The Marketplace



**Movieweb.com and other industry sites say that the rom-com is having 'a major resurgence' with post-pandemic audiences. It remains one of the most popular genres on all streaming services.**



**And NEARLY DEPARTED promises to have broad audience appeal beyond its LGBTQ+ themes because of its multi-generational cast and the universal themes of love and loss explored in the story.**

# In Conclusion

We feel certain that an inclusive rom-com like **NEARLY DEPARTED** will offer audiences the laughter, hope and healing we all need right now.



**CONTACT FOR THE PROJECT**  
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