

## News

DE NIRO, KEATON, HEIGL SHOOT FILM SCENES

# 'Wedding' spices up Italian steakhouse in Greenwich

By Neil Vigdor  
Staff Writer

Gabriele's Italian Steakhouse created a feeding frenzy for the past two days in Greenwich.

Not because of the veal chop or pan-roasted gnocchi.

Paparazzi and celebrity seekers swarmed to the swank Church Street restaurant, pining for a glimpse of Robert De Niro, Diane Keaton, Robin Williams, Susan Sarandon or Katherine Heigl on the set of the new big-budget comedy "The Wedding."

The stars didn't disappoint.

"I saw De Niro because he came out for a cigarette when I was smoking," Sue Slocum, a paralegal who works on Sherwood Place, said Tuesday.

Sherwood Place runs parallel to Church Street and has a view of the back of the restaurant, where the film's cast and crew milled about in the beating sun, all under the watchful eye of a hulking security guard.

Williams made a cameo Monday on the closed set of the movie, which is scheduled for release in October 2012 and is being directed and produced by Greenwich High School graduates Justin Zackham and Clay Pecorin.

The filmmakers chose Gabriele's — the former longtime home of Luca's — for interior shots of the wedding reception that is supposed to take place at a country club.

The restaurant closed for three days, the first for setup and Monday and Tuesday for shooting.

"It's a privilege to have them here," said Danny Gabriele, the restaurant's owner. "Out of all the places in Greenwich, they chose us, which was a great thing."

The densely packed neighborhood just north of the Post Road in central Greenwich was transformed into Paramount Studios-light, with Escalades shuttling the celebs to and fro and an assemblage of extras piling into a convoy vans.

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"If anything, I think it's great for business because it brings more attention to an area that might not get it," said Nancy Waesche, owner of Pinky, a women's accessories shop in nearby William Street.

Waesche was out walking her golden retriever Honey at lunchtime Tuesday when she stopped to check out the action. Not long before, Keaton arrived on the set in the passenger seat of a van, smiling through the window.

"I'm a big fan of Diane Keaton," Waesche said.

De Niro and Keaton play a divorced couple who pretend to still be married for the wedding of their adopted son, played by Ben Barnes, who is known for his role as Prince Caspian in "The Chronicles of Narnia."

Barnes' character marries Amanda Seyfried, of "Mamma Mia!" and "Mean Girls" notoriety.

Heigl, who attended New Canaan High School and is known for her roles in the television series "Grey's Anatomy" and the comedy "Knocked Up," plays the biological daughter of De Niro's and Keaton's characters.

The movie also stars Topher Grace, the Darien-raised former star of "That '70s Show."

Grace and Heigl dined Monday night at Polpo restaurant, another celebrity hangout on Old Post Road No. 3.

True to their roots in Connecticut, which has become a prime destination for Hollywood because of its tax credits program, the movie's producers picked a number of locations in Greenwich to shoot.

Two Ton Films, Pecorin and Zack-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Actor Robert De Niro walks from the back of Gabriele's Italian Steakhouse on Church Street in Greenwich on Tuesday. Scenes from the movie "The Wedding," starring De Niro, Diane Keaton, Robin Williams, Susan Sarandon, New Canaan native Katherine Heigl and Darien native Topher Grace, were filmed at the restaurant.

ham's production company, is collaborating with Millennium Films on "The Wedding." In 2008, Zackham gave the graduation speech at Greenwich High School.

Zackham wrote and served as executive producer of "The Bucket List," the seize-the-day comedic drama pairing Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman.

Millennium Films sold the distribution rights of "The Wedding" in the U.S. and U.K. to Lionsgate, as first reported Tuesday by Variety.

The town waived a midnight-to-6 a.m. filming curfew so the producers could shoot a pool scene Friday into Saturday at Burning Tree Country Club.

Filming also took place at a home in the Stanwich neighborhood last month, which is about the same time that Gabriele said filmmakers approached him

about using his restaurant, which opened back in February.

Gabriele hung out on the set Monday and Tuesday, rubbing elbows with the cast.

"I met all of them. They were all great people," said Gabriele, whose family has owned the Luca's and now Gabriele's property for 30 years.

Next door to the movie shoot, at The Greenwich Exchange for Women's Work, a nonprofit consignment shop on Sherwood Place, the frenzy added a little spice to the dog days.

"I think it's a bit exciting," said Susan DeLuca, who has been working at the shop since April. "It's a good thing for Greenwich."

Staff writer Neil Vigdor can be reached at [neil.vigdor@scni.com](mailto:neil.vigdor@scni.com) or 203-625-4436.