
STEVEN FERNANDEZ
MICHELLE BATISTA
LOVE AND THE GAME
Be careful what you wish for
PRESS KIT
A FILM BY DANIEL ALI
COMING SOON
LoveAndTheGameTHEMOVIE.com

For More Information

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Steven Fernandez and AD and Michelle Batista as Paz.

Technical Specifications

Country of Origin:	USA
Year:	2020 Running
Time:	38:14
Rating:	Not Yet Rated
Mastered Format:	HD Cam-SR /
1920x1080 / 23.98psf	
Available in:	4K Pro Res and HD Cam
Aspect Ratio:	2:35.1
Sound:	5.1
Language:	English

Links

Official website:	www.loveandthegamethemovie.com
Official Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/loveandthegamethemovie
Official HD Trailer:	https://youtu.be/pk5moHcEYsM
Hashtag:	#loveandthegamethemovie

Credits

Cast

AD	STEVEN “CHECK” FERNANDEZ
Paz	MICHELLE BATISTA
Spanky	ASHANTE JORDAN
Monkey	GUILLERMO FERNANDEZ
Paul	DARWIN ROMAN
Johnny Cooke	HASSAN ALI
Marco	DAVID RICCA
Matthew	FRANKIE ROSADO
Bat	SHARRIEFF ALI
Little Girl	ISABELLA ALI
Benji	KAREEM JEFFERSON
Flaco	JABBAR JEFFERSON
Lucas	FREDRIC TAYLOR
Little Boy	HASSAN ALI JR.
Mafia Gumba	GABRIEL DROUET
Young Monkey	MATTHEW OLIVERA
Waitress/Bunny	CATHERINE ROJAS
Ignacio	DI SHAWN J. GANDY
Thug	COREY BRUMFIELD

Crew

Director	DI SHAWN J. GANDY
Writer/Producer	DANIEL ALI
Executive Producers	DWAYNE SMITH
	NICHOLE TAYLOR
Creative Consultant	DERRICK WHITE
Editor	MICHAEL MAURICE
Director of Photography	MICHAEL MAURICE
Art Director	LAURA MUHAXHERI
Casting Director	DANIEL ALI
Original Music	DANIEL ALI
	DWAYNE SMITH
Sound	JONATHAN TRAVIS
	BLAIR JENNINGS
Gaffer	COREY BRUMFIELD
Colorist	MICHAEL MAURICE

Logline

The story of Adriano, an Afro-Brazilian drug kingpin torn between a violent but lucrative world and the woman he's loved his entire life. But when love is involved, be careful what you wish for, you might just get it.



Michelle Batista as Paz.

Synopsis

Based on the novel by Jersey City author, Daniel Ali, who also wrote and produced the film, Love and the Game is the story of Adriano de Souza, AD, a young, Afro-Brazilian Street hustler torn between a lucrative but violent world and Paz Montenegro, the woman he's loved his entire life. When fate reunites the two of them after years apart, even though Paz is now married to another man, neither can resist the attraction and soon they put it all on the line for love. But the Game don't stop, and AD is running out of time fast. The two lovers wrestle with their own pain and secret coping mechanisms as they struggle to balance life with betrayal and deception. Love and the Game exposes the truths of fast-life allure and the American lust for power and material gain, but also offers a unique and timely perspective of the conflicted, inner humanity of many of those who get caught up but whose voices are often muted.

Production Story

The Concept

Be careful what you wish for, you might just get it.

In the life that AD has chosen, there is no room for sentiment. It's a world based on rules that can and often do determine life or death, and his success is derived from strict adherence to those rules. But after nearly ten years at the top of the dope game, he's come to a crossroads and standing right in the middle is Paz, the one woman he's loved since they were kids. They say LOVE conquers all, but in "The Game" Love can be a death sentence.



Steven Fernandez as AD, Matthew Olivera as the young Monkey

"For me, it all starts with the book. I was so captivated by the story and the way Daniel Ali breathed life into the characters. I literally could feel their humanity, it was like being in the story with them. So, when he approached me about doing the film, it was a no brainer. We're all very excited about this project and I think the public will be too." -Di Shawn J. Gandy, Director

"For far too long people of color have relied on others to tell our stories for us. But how can we ever expect it to be done right if we don't take control of the narrative? That was my goal with the book and the film. With the help of a brilliant and varied team, both in front and behind the camera, this short has a life of its own; embracing the complex humanity of many who get caught up in the struggle for economic relevance in the American urban reality. And when love is involved, all bets are off." -Daniel Ali, Writer/Producer

The Team

Founded in 2019, Gatekeeper Creative Works is a collective of like-minded creators in an industry mix of writers, filmmakers, directors, and producers dedicated to the development and showcasing of creative minds from within the inner cites across America, particularly those who reflect the socio-economic values of the group and a similar commitment to the Black and Latino communities. Love and the Game is the first film produced under the GCW banner, but it won't be the last. Several projects are in the works, including a second film, now in pre-production, based on another book from Daniel Ali, titled, Across the Middle. Michelle Batista who played Paz in Love and the Game has already signed on as the female lead.

"I know that I don't fit the conventional ideal of how to make a low budget film, and there's always somebody there to tell you what you can and cannot do. And just like with Love and the Game, I can either wade through conventional funding channels, which would mean lengthy delays and absolutely no guarantees or I can charge ahead and self-fund the film. If covid has taught us nothing else, it has shown us that we are living in a time when unconventionality is where its at. Now is the time to take the bull by the horns and break out of the mold of how things used to be done and create new options for ourselves to tell our stories."
-Daniel Ali

Gatekeeper is particularly interested in reaching the youth, inspiring those interested in creative writing and filmmaking and exposing others to the possibilities within the medium. Today there are countless numbers of talented, creative young people with something relevant to say, but they simple do not know how. The team at GCW believe it their obligation to reach those young people and help them make their voices heard.



The Music

One of the most iatrical aspects of producing a successful film project is the music associated with it. It says something about the visuals and creates the feel of the film, its emotions.

“I wanted the music to have a life of its own. I wanted the listener to be able to visualize the story simply by listening to the soundtrack.” – Daniel Ali

To achieve that Daniel Ali turned to his lifelong friend and partner, Dwayne Smith, co-founder of Madman Entertainment and the film’s executive producer for the score and soundtrack. With a good mix of hard driving hip hop representing the rawness of the street and soft unassuming tracks that blend effortlessly into the background, the LATG soundtrack hits the mark dead center. Prominently featured is Chicago based rapper, and MME anchor, The Godd, whose hypnotic vocal style on AD’s theme, “I’m Real” eerily heightens the sense of danger hiding around every corner.

Lead Actors

“Being a new filmmaker, taking on the responsibility of casting actors to bring the story to life can be intimidating. But with the help of director, Di Shawn J. Gandy and his extensive contacts in the industry, the process was made much less taxing. It became a simple process where I could sit back and let my instincts take control.”

The trickiest casting challenge in Love and the Game was finding two actors that could bring out the duality in both characters. The story of the gangster has been told a thousand times, but whenever it comes to the Black or Latino criminal, we’re always portrayed in a very simplistic, one dimension way. I site the example of Don Corleone in The Godfather. He was a criminal, but his criminality did not block out his humanity. We needed a leading male that could make AD someone the audience could empathize with despite his life choices.

The character of Paz had to be played by a woman who could be dignified, and skilled enough to have her conflicted vulnerability manifest itself seemingly unintentionally. She had to possess a strong sense of morality but still be a victim of her own passion and desire for what the heart wants. Not an easy thing to pull off.



Steven Fernandez as AD.

Steven is a popular New York actor who has appeared in a variety of films and web series including the 2020 Vimeo On Demand movie *The Stuff*, currently featured on Amazon Prime, the Amazon series *The Ave*, the popular comedy *Sole Kings*, and Spike Lee's Netflix project, *She's Gotta Have It.* He is also a talented artist and clothing designer with his own line of unique designs under his Trucking Fly Wear brand. Love and the Game is his first leading role.



Michelle Batista as Paz

Michelle is a very talented actress from Hew Jersey, now living and working in New York. She has been featured in several short films and stage productions including *The Walking Nightmare*, *Vignettes*, *The Motherfucker with the Hat*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Anytown USofA*. Staunchly proud of her Afro-Latina roots, Michelle is also a community activist known for her active stance against homelessness, food insecurity, police brutality and the general struggle for equal justice on behalf of people of color.

Filmmakers

Di Shawn J. Gandy – Director
Di Shawn hails from New Jersey. He is a founding member Behind The Veil Productions. He is an award nominated playwright, and has served as producer, director, actor, and a coordinator with several theaters and entertainment companies. Love and the Game is Di Shawn's directorial debut in film. He presently serves as a writer for the award-winning series for Best Screenplay Prospect Park, created by Courtni Saizon. He studied acting at Woody King Jr.'s New Federal Theater in NY, George Street Playhouse Education in NJ, and at the Actor's Approach Academy with Jared Kelner, the creator of the Actor's Approach Craft Technique Toolbox.

Daniel Ali – Writer, Producer
Daniel is the founder and CEO of Gatekeeper Creative Works, a company dedicated to the development of urban artists and their creative projects. He is the author of the amazon five-star rated novel, Love and the Game, which is the basis of the film. Ali also wrote the script for Love and the Game the Movie and produced it as well. He is a founding member of Madman Entertainment which provided the film's soundtrack. He also produced and co-wrote much of the music with his partner and the film's executive producer, Dwayne Smith. Love and the Game is his first film production. He is currently working on second film, which he wrote, produced, and directed, based on his novella, Across the Middle.



On the set, first day of shooting, (September 18, 2020)

Writer's Statement

As a writer, I am very interested in being authentic, raw, and as honest as possible in my writing. Just because we may be engaged in a work of fiction doesn't mean that we should lose sight of the reality we live in every day. Art should do more than just reflect reality; it should be used to change it when needed. We should always be pushing the envelope. I saw Love and the Game as an opportunity for me to explore those boundaries in a way that was still entertaining and engaging for the viewer.

When I first published the book, Love and the Game, I felt confident that I had done a good job, but I was overwhelmed by the immediate response the received. Right away I began getting calls telling me that the story should be adapted into a film. At first, I took it all in with a smile and a nod, but after a while, I began to agree, and we went to work. But it all started with that theme, that voice in my head that kept saying, "who, out there, is speaking for us?" You see, I know what's happening out here in these streets. You can't live in a place like Jersey City and not know. I'm out there with the young brothers every day. I have empathy for them, not because they're criminals but because they're victims of a criminal society.

Like AD says, *"…Wit' that corporate advertisin' machine comin' at you day and night, how you gon' settle for less? You gon' walk away from the chance to get your piece of the pie? It's like one of them rappers said, 'Around my way, either you got a wicked jump shot, or you slang crack rock.'* That's what I'm talking about, telling the truth, and let the chips fall where they may.

I wholeheartedly believe, not only is there is no reason, but I absolutely have no right to wait for somebody else to tell me what I can or can't do, especially creatively. Whatever it is you want to do, make a record, a film, recite poetry, paint a picture, write a novel, whatever; if you have the vision and the desire to do it, you have no right to sit it on it because somebody else doesn't see what you see. If we have to self-fund, so be it. Don't be afraid to just step up to the plate and swing for the fences. Even if you strike out, at least you're in the game.