

## Nothing is Real With Andy Garcia, Julianna Margulies on 'City Island'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 2, 2010 - 2:51am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – A blue collar worker father who has a secret Marlon Brando obsession (gasp!), a son with an improbable fetish and a daughter who quits college to...strip, this is a normal day-in-the-life in the new film "City Island."

Andy Garcia is Vince Rizzo, a prison guard at a jail on City Island, a village within the Bronx borough of New York City. He is a family man, with wife Joyce (Julianna Margulies), son Vince Jr. (Ezra Miller) and college age daughter Vivian (Dominik Garc a-Lorido, Garcia's real-life daughter). Vince is somewhat frustrated with his life, harboring a secret desire to be an actor, in the mold of his hero Marlon Brando.

But he is not the only family member with a secret. Vince Jr. is a typical teen-ager, except for his strange internet fixation with porcine women. Vivian has lost a scholarship from her college so logically she becomes a stripper. And Joyce, the quintessential Bronx housewife, can't seem to stop her secret...smoking (double gasp!).



All in the Family: Andy Garcia (center) and (clockwise from top left) Dominik Garc a-Lorido, Julianna Margulies, Ezra Miller and Steven Strait in 'City Island'  
Photo Credit: Phil Caruso for   City Island, Inc.

To thicken the plot even more, Vince volunteers to take in a rehabilitating prisoner named Tony Nardella (Steven Strait), because he is his



secret son (no more gasps left). This all happens while Vince lies to Joyce to take secret acting classes with a autocratic instructor (Alan Arkin), where he meets a fellow student (Emily Mortimer), who has some secrets of her own. Can anybody be true to themselves in this picture?

What is essentially wrong is about City Island is all in the summary. Using the theme of "everybody having secrets" is perfectly fine, except when those secrets are utilized for cheap screenwriter's sensationalism. Why would a middle class college girl drop out of college, get breast implants and become a stripper, while her seemingly stable family basks on City Island? Now that would make a good movie. Here, it is a unexplained and exploitative plot point. And, since this is Garcia's daughter in the role, the strip club features no nudity. Right.

The main performances rise above the material however, and the two leads try harder than the screenplay deserves, as if they were willing it to be better. Garcia is having a good time with Vince and pulls off the blue collar aspect of him. Margulies is virtually unrecognizable as Joyce, it took the credits at the end to remind that she was playing the role. It's unfortunate that her character was relegated to the background of a cheap fling with Vince's secret son, there was potential beyond her constant shrieking.

And then there is the case of Oscar winner Alan Arkin and indy film fave Emily Mortimer. It was paycheck cashing a-go-go for these icons with Arkin barely phoning in his role as a curmudgeonly acting teacher. Mortimer is stuck with half a character as Vince's adoring acting partner. They hint around having an affair, but when confronted by the possibility Mortimer seems to turn into water, and then has one of the strangest "walking into the sunset" moments in recent movie memory.

Steven Strait, as Vince's erstwhile son, gets the unenviable assignment of being an ex-con that can't keep his shirt on. He is a hardened criminal as envisioned by a Vanity Fair fashion spread, low keyed to the point of no key. His scene at the strip club brought both of the film's absurd elements together again for the first time.



Forgettaboutit: l-to-r Dominik García-Lorido, Julianna Margulies and Andy Garcia on 'City Island'

Photo Credit: Phil Caruso for © City Island, Inc.

Finally, there are the comic stylings of Vince Jr.'s fat girl fetish. The concept dances on the edge of a knife the whole way through, desperately trying to make it seem wholesome and not insulting (as it was). It was an elaborate story arc, with dummy websites, YouTube-type videos and actresses pretending that it was in their best interest. This is not to say that this kind of quirk doesn't exist, it was just crassly shoehorned in for questionable (and no) laughs, and wore thin.

If the film would have focused more on Vince's quest to be an actor, it might have had more of a chance (why a need to keep such a quest secret? As a midlife crisis goes, it could be worse). These moments were the highlights, and seeing Andy Garcia do a video audition had promise, even though the result was predictable. In the narrative forest of emotional high concepts, it felt down to earth.

One more thing: it's time to retire the Soprano-esque exclamation of "oooooh." It is played out as a climax on City Island, repeated over and over, a reminder of the entire movie's tendency to travel on the road most taken.

*"City Island" continues its limited nationwide release in Chicago on April 2nd. Check local listings for theater locations and show times. Featuring Andy Garcia, Julianna Margulies, Alan Arkin, Emily Mortimer and Dominik García-Lorido, written/directed by Raymond De Felitta. Rated "PG-13."*

[Click here for the HollywoodChicago.com interview of Andy Garcia.](#) [15]



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]

Senior Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

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