

## PRESS RELEASE

June 1, 2011

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### **The much anticipated made-in-Michigan film premiere of LEONIE!**

–Your coverage of this event is invited –

**WHAT:** Red carpet arrivals at the Michigan premiere of LEONIE! on Monday, August 1 at Emagine Theatre in Novi, Michigan.

**WHO:** An all-Michigan cast from the film: Mary Rose Maher, Paige Pilarski, Genevieve Lang, Carrie Kot, Jeff Barron, Megan Wolf, Samantha Lang, and writer/director Joseph Robert Maher.

**WHEN:** Monday, August 1, 2011  
Film Star Arrivals: 6 PM  
Screening: 7 PM

**WHERE:** Emagine Theatre  
44425 West 12 Mile Road  
Novi, Michigan 48377

**CONTACT:** Barbara Middleton, executive producer: (586) 243-6199  
[barbaramm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barbaramm@sbcglobal.net).

Vic Faust, co-anchor of Action News on WXYZ-TV Detroit will MC the Premiere event.

Based on a true story. In late 1800s France, Leonie Martin (Mary Rose Maher) is a young bourgeoisie woman with a difficult nature who causes great emotional stress and suffering for her mother Zelig (Carrie Kot). Leonie wreaks havoc with the religious superiors in the monasteries she tries in vain to enter. Her extreme emotional outbursts and stubborn nature begin to ease when she meets and befriends a caring younger nun Sister Jeanne Marguerite (Paige Pilarski). She lovingly helps Leonie endure the many trials and tribulations of her hard life filled with chronic illness, an agonizing skin disorder and severe learning disabilities.

The touching story “Leonie!” also stars Jeff Barron as Louis Martin the father of Leonie whose devotion for her is manifest in his unflinching belief in the goodness of his troubled daughter. Genevieve Lang, Megan Wolf and Samantha Lang play the affectionate sisters of Leonie who, after the death of their parents, grow up to one-by-one

heartbreakingly leave Leonie to enter the Carmelite monastery from which Leonie is barred.

Film star and Oscar voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Dolores Hart, calls Leonie!, "A totally heartwarming story". Hart was Elvis Presley's first on-screen kiss and hailed as the next Grace Kelly. In the early 1960's, she left Hollywood fame and fortune to enter the Abbey of Regina Laudis.

"Leonie!" is directed by Joseph Robert Maher from a screenplay he wrote based on the life of Leonie Martin of Alencon, France, sister of the patron saint of France, St. Therese (Martin), known the world over to Catholics as the "Little Flower". It stars an all-Michigan cast of eighty seven actors with Mary Rose Maher from Dryden, Paige Pilarski from Romeo, Genevieve Lang from Rochester Hills, Carrie Kot from Emmett, Jeff Barron from Farmington Hills, Megan Wolf from Rochester Hills and Samantha Lang from Rochester Hills.

The film is produced by Holy Trinity Productions I with its founder, Barbara M. Middleton, serving as executive producer. Leonie Martin captured the heart of Middleton and she knew she had to produce a film on her life story.

Some of the more striking features of the film are the spectacular settings used in most of the scenes. In Romeo, Michigan a restored late 1880's French architecture historical home called "Sisson's Fancy" served as the setting for the Martin's French bourgeoisie estate in Alencon, France. Over the years the owners, Ron and Diane Jesmore, collected artifacts from the 1880's period to place throughout their home. This made for the perfect setting for the story in the film. The stunning home fit perfectly for the time period of the story.

Other unique locations used in the film are the 135 year old Bunert Schoolhouse located on the property of Warren Woods Tower High School, the Monastery of St. Therese in Clinton Township, and St. Mary's of Redford Parish in Detroit.

Perhaps the most intriguing backdrop in the film is a cloistered religious community's Monastery in Toledo, Ohio. The monastery of the Visitation is under what's called Papal Enclosure, meaning guests cannot be allowed to enter the monastery enclosure. However, the Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair of the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio granted this once in a lifetime permission.

"In the movie, people will see for the first time, life behind the walls of a monastery in the United States that has preserved the original observance and habits since the founding of their order by St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantel in the 1600s." Barbara Middleton said. "It's my understanding that no other U.S. production company has ever been allowed behind the walls of a cloistered religious community."

Writer and director, Joseph Robert Maher couldn't wait to begin shooting in the Toledo monastery. "It is one of the most extraordinary places I've ever been." He said. "The

monastery is magnificent and the austere lifestyle these sisters live with such joy is truly amazing. I couldn't wait to share this place with the rest of the world."

The actress who portrays the life of Leonie Martin, Mary Rose Maher, was discovered by Barbara Middleton, after seeing her perform live on stage in the lead female role of "The heritance", a musical with members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2007. She was 14 years old at the time, and only 16 years old when filming began for Leonie! in the summer of 2009. Later, Middleton invited Maher's father, Joseph Robert Maher a former entertainment executive from Beverly Hills, California to write and direct the feature film.

Other members of the creative filmmaking team include director of photography Luke Kuschel of Gregory, production designer Caitlin Callaghan of Troy, editor Brien Dux of Berkley, sound editor Doug Schiete of Clarkston, and producer David Brockman of Rochester Hills. The music is composed by Eduard Perrone of Detroit.

LEONIE! is a film for ALL AUDIENCES  
[www.leoniemovie.com](http://www.leoniemovie.com)

LEONIE! will be distributed nationally in theatres after the Michigan premiere and is currently in negotiations with several distributors.

Please contact:

Holy Trinity Productions I: Barbara Middleton, executive producer: (586) 243-6199  
[barbaramm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barbaramm@sbcglobal.net).

Marked media vehicles may park on the walk near the front doors of the Emagine Theatre in Novi, Michigan.

B roll of the movie Leonie! for media release is available.