

By ROBBY BERMAN

Blood is thicker than water in Mario Puzo's new TV miniseries 'The Last Don'

Would you be scared if two very ethnic-looking Jews from Bnei Brak came to your front door and said in a thick Yiddish accent, "We have a message from the *Mishpaha!*"? Probably not. That's because to most Jews, the word "family" doesn't have the connotation that it has in the world of the Mafia.

The new TV miniseries *The Last Don* casts two Mediterranean-looking Sicilian men, with slicked-back hair, to deliver a message from a more ominous sounding family.

Courtesy of Reshet *The Last Don*, which aired in America in May, will begin airing on Channel 2 tomorrow at 10 p.m. One might have great expectations for a TV series that employs talented experienced actors and is based on a book written by *The Godfather* author, Mario Puzo. Don't.

The three-part six-hour miniseries is a contemporary drama which revolves around the most powerful crime family in America, led by their Don, Domenico Clericuzio (Danny Aiello).

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Anguished over the murder of his favorite son at the hands of the rival Santadio crime family, Don Clericuzio is shown in the first episode facing a terrible dilemma when his daughter Rose Marie (Kirstie Alley) requests permission to marry Jimmy Santadio. The Don reluctantly allows the union, then assigns his nephew Pipi (Joe Mantegna), along with his own sons, to carry out the murders of the whole Santadio family, on his daughter's wedding night. Rose Marie survives the massacre, but her five-hour-old bridegroom doesn't. Nine months later, Rose Marie gives birth to a baby Santadio.

The second episode concerns a beautiful film star played by a beautiful film star - Daryl Hannah. She's about to pull out, mid-production, of a \$100-million movie because she is being stalked by her ex-husband. He threatens to reveal a dark secret from her past if she has him arrested. The film studio threatens to sue the actress and promises her that if she doesn't finish the film, she will never work in the industry again. Her *deus ex machina* comes in the form of a Clericuzio family member, Cross. Madly in love with the actress, he has no qualms about kidnapping her ex-husband, forcing him to write a suicide note, and leaving him hanging by his neck from a tree.

THE unconvincing, adagio-moving plot never changes its tempo throughout the three parts. The leitmotifs of murder, love, loyalty and betrayal predictably repeat themselves ad nauseam.

Danny Aiello's lackluster performance as the Don just doesn't deliver. But he's in good company because neither do most of the other actors'. You never really feel the drama, you're never too concerned about the victims, and you're never too entertained.

Kirstie Alley, who plays the Don's widowed psychotic daughter, does convincingly cry, mourn and bitch throughout the series.

iron gates adorned with family escutcheons, and good old-fashioned blood.

So if you've been in Israel long enough that you're nostalgically starved - to the point where you've lowered your standards - for the American-Italian-mafioso genre, you might want to order in a pizza and indulge yourself with *The Last Don*.

The story is, however, replete with the requisite hand kissing, triple-cheek-kissing greetings, family meetings, over-the-shoulder whispers, Sicilian food, christenings, suicides, executions and their respective wakes, unsuspecting non-Italian wives and their respective beatings, Italian operatic music, wrought-

trusted"; "You have a tender heart ... never fear! Time will harden it."

The family Don doesn't have the traditionally raspy voice, and one can't help but envision him flipping pizza dough, like Danny Aiello did in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*.

The Last Don lacks the heaviness of an authentic *Godfather* film but moves slowly enough at times to

And Joe Mantegna, who plays Pipi, the main family executioner, does manage to endow his character with some charm. But most of the miscast actors portray characters that are fatally two-dimensional.

Every Sicilian in this miniseries gives cheesy advice to any other younger Sicilian who will listen. "Tell nothing of yourself"; "Love is an emotion that is not to be