

Tony Danza & Mario Lopez arrive in Lewiston to film Great American Media holiday feature 'Rewinding Christmas'

LEWISTON TO BE, WELL, LEWISTON IN NEW FAMILY MOVIE

BEHIND THE SCREENS WITH JOSHUA MALONI

Though they would've enjoyed being in New York City to celebrate the Knicks' first NBA title in more than 50 years, Tony Danza and Mario Lopez said they were thrilled to be in Lewiston and working together on a new holiday feature for Great American Media.

The stars of "Rewinding Christmas" spoke to the media on Sunday, as filming began on their "Great American Christmas" project.

Lopez, star of "Saved by the Bell," "Pacific Blue" and "Access Hollywood," has become a fixture in the TV rom-com genre, having starred in a half-dozen over the past six years. He led the 2025 Western New York-filmed "The Christmas Spark" and served as executive producer on "Chasing Christmas."

"The people are so nice here; always very welcoming," Lopez said. "The film commission has been great. They really roll out the red carpet. It's beautiful, and we have a lot of fun coming out here."

"The great thing (is) I've always wanted to work with Mr. Danza here, who I've always looked up to. Great, great guy – just as nice as he is off camera, as well."

"And it's kind of a bonus, because this weekend I get to see him perform again, which I've seen him perform in L.A., but he's going to be at the Seneca Niagara Casino Friday and Saturday. ... It's a great show. It's a one-man show. He's singing, he's dancing – it's fun."

Danza, the star of iconic sitcoms "Who's the Boss?" and "Taxi," has recently been a part of the more serious "Power" franchise ("Power Book III: Raising Kanan").

"I was in the office, and I saw the posters from (Lopez's) other movies that he starred in here, and I was thinking, 'I think I could fit into this. This is pretty good,'" Danza said. "I'm also a big fan of Mario's. I mean, I know he goes on about me, but I'm also a very big fan of his. Everything he does."

"And now I met his son – and he's out! The kid's in," Danza joked about Mario's son, Dominic, who also stars in "Rewinding Christmas." "Wait 'til you see this kid. He's going to steal the picture."

Lopez, who is producing this feature, said, "It's very much a family affair. There's three generations represented. My actual son is playing Tony's grandson, which is a lot of fun. There's going to be some singing and dancing, a little element about that."

"My leading lady is a very nice lady named Taylor Kalupa. She's been working on a show right now, coincidentally, here in Buffalo, so there's a lot going on here in Buffalo. It worked out. She's going to be here for like a month or so."

"And then this other nice young lady, an actress named Natalia Cigliuti, she's playing my sister. I love the family element there."

In "Rewinding Christmas," "My character comes back home to kind of visit his dad. He was up for a big promotional job. It didn't exactly sort of work out. He has a 'come to Jesus' with his son. ... He's now a single father. He meets this lady who he's kind of now interested in, and kind of staying. When he does that, his father decides to kind of sell the place and throws everything into a bit of a monkey wrench and turmoil," Lopez said. "I don't want to give too much away. We all end up kind of figuring it out; and it's all about family and love at the end of the day, and kind of focusing on priorities and what's important."

He added, "I love the whole holiday element. And again, representing family. And Tony's an icon and represents all these great values. That's what we try to represent in this film."

Danza said, "I own a nightclub. ... I certainly identify with this performer who happens to own his own place and is trying to keep it alive."

Lopez noted, "We wrote it, actually, with Tony in mind, and after seeing him perform back in L.A. And if you come this weekend, you'll get to see kind of a taste of what you're going to see in the film, too, because that's sort of mirrored that with this character."

Danza doing double-duty

At 8 p.m. June 19-20, Danza will present "Sinatra & Stories" inside The Bear's Den Showroom at Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino.

"People don't know, but I knew Frank Sinatra," Dan-



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Film stars Tony Danza and Mario Lopez meet with the press outside of 155 S. Fifth St., Lewiston, while making "Rewinding Christmas," a holiday 2026 feature for Great American Media. "First time working together, which I'm really excited about; first time we're working together here in Lewiston," Lopez said. "The people have been really, really, really nice," he added. "It's really fun to be here," Danza said. • Licensed Real Estate Salesperson Dana Fideli with Tony Danza. Fideli's listing, at 155 S. Fifth St. – and her "For sale" sign – were a focal point of a scene filmed Sunday in Lewiston.

za said. "I ended up somehow, in a crazy turn of events, being around him. And so, I wrote this show about it. We do a lot of the great music that he made famous, and there's tap dancing."

"I bring out my secret weapon: my ukulele. 'Oh yeah, oh baby.' I'm telling you – and by the way – romantically, that thing's a ray gun! (laughs)"

"It's an attempt to give people their money's worth, and a whole show. We've got a great band, too. The band is bad!"

"It's a show," Danza said. "I like to think of it as like those old TV variety shows where you have a host and a lot of different acts. Well, I'm the host and all the different acts!"

"It's fun," Lopez said. "I've seen him in person. He puts on a great show. It's so much fun. I'm going with my family. A lot of us here are going to go."

"It's required!" Danza said.

"You should definitely check it out," Lopez said.

Hollywood returns to Lewiston

Danza and Lopez were working inside and outside the house at 155 S. Fifth St., a historic Lewiston property currently for sale through Licensed Real Estate Salesperson Dana Fideli of Keller Williams Realty WNY.

"This house right here – I don't know where else you're going to find this," Danza said.

"It's been here since 1817 – that's crazy!" Lopez said.

Fideli, who was on set, said, "It was amazing. Everybody on the whole production set was so accommodating and so great."

"The homeowners for the listing, they were there. They came into town with their boys to see it all go down, and they were really, really excited."

"Everybody was just wonderful on set."

"It's thrilling. It's exciting for them to come to our little hometown of Lewiston – and to have one of my listings featured in a movie is pretty neat."

Fideli said the film crew reached out to her a few months ago when scouting locations.

"They wanted to come and meet me and take a walk through of the house and see if it might be a good fit for them," she said.

"It's a huge house, so it worked out really well for the movie."

"In the Village of Lewiston, especially, we have so many of these historical homes that are just filled with character," Fideli said. "This one is an oldie. It was built in 1817. As I mentioned, it's a large home – it's almost 4,000 square feet with six bedrooms and three-and-a-half baths. It's got some really great character that comes along with the older homes."

"They have all of the original wide plank hardwood floors. My sellers, they put so much time into kind of bringing this home back to life. I helped them buy it a few years back, and they fixed it up. It was going to be their forever home, and plans changed, and so now, unfortunately, they're going to sell, and hoping that another family loves it just as much as they do."

On the sidewalk and across the street, residents tried to catch a glimpse of the stars.

As thrilling as it was for them, Danza said he felt the same way.

"You know, I've been doing this a long time and this is very exciting," he said. "Playing the casino is a thrill."

"It's interesting: As you get older and you're doing it longer and longer, it becomes more valuable. It's not going the other way. You want to savor every moment of it, you know?"

"Like I said, I'm just really happy to be part of this. I really like the script, and I think we may be able to make a Christmas movie that goes on – that they play every year."

"Yeah, that's what I think is special about this one – I think you will be able to see it every year," Lopez said. "It's got all the elements; it checks off all the boxes."

"We're going to dance and sing!" Danza said.

Also included Sunday was the Belden property on South Fourth and Cayuga streets.

Buffalo Niagara Film Office Film Commissioner Tim Clark said, "The location manager, Erika Frase, scouted a lot of different locations, and then when the producers came in, Erika and myself and (producer) Mark (Roberts) went through; and the minute he rolled into town, he realized this is it – it's a very perfect, small-town-America look for a Christmas movie. I think the locations and the quaintness of the community were the things that really drove the producer to fall in love with the place."

Oftentimes when a production crew visits a community like Lewiston, the name in the movie winds up changing. For example, in the Hallmark Channel's 2025 picture "A Newport Christmas," the Village of Youngstown doubled for Newport.

However, Clark noted, "They did change this from a fictitious location to Lewiston – the Village of Lewiston – so, Lewiston itself becomes a character in the story. It's pretty cool."

"Rewinding Christmas" is directed by Jody Hahn from an original screenplay written by Megan Henry Herzlinger and "Chasing Christmas" director Brian Herzlinger.

This won't be the first feature to shoot in Lewiston. In 2015, filmmakers Tony Glazer and Summer Crockett Moore made "The Morning the Sun Fell Down" (also known as "Morning Sun" and "After the Sun Fell") at the Barton Hill Mansion and Apple Granny Restaurant. The movie starred Neil Bledsoe, Chasty Ballesteros, Danny Pudi, Diana DeGarmo, Joanna Bayless and Lance Henriksen, with a cameo by former mayor Terry Collesano.