



# One Man, Two Superpowers, Three Ex-wives, Four Autopsies

“Let’s put aside the rumors and the accusations for a minute, let’s look beyond your overblown mythology, the illustrious personalities you magnetized, the deals you pulled off, the millions you burned through, your crazy ambition...”

—Narrator, *Ten for Grandpa*

## **Ten for Grandpa PLOT SYNOPSIS**

David Karr: husband, father, White House press reporter, film producer, powerful millionaire, defense contractor, corporate CEO... Soviet agent? *Ten for Grandpa* is a fast-paced, introspective look at the enigmatic life of a most influential ancestor. A list of unanswered questions leads our narrator through an analytical and often comedic look at the life of his complex grandfather and the events surrounding the man’s untimely demise. Was he an existential hero operating outside the everyday constraints of society, or a loose canon willing to indiscriminately betray associates, friends and family members in the service of his obsessive ambition? The consequences of secrecy on the family emerge as our narrator tries to decipher if his forbearer really was a manipulative antihero or simply a victim of a McCarthy witch hunt and State Department character assassination. Was his most precarious choice deciding to do business with the USSR at the height of the Cold War, or was he really a vehicle for international deception and skullduggery? With a multifaceted approach, the film reconsiders the romanticized, popular conception of the secret agent. *Ten for Grandpa* deflates the quixotic convention of a dapper playboy, and replaces it with an elusive serial-husband who had as much difficulty dealing with the blurred lines of rivaling international superpowers as he did raising his own children. Far from answering these impossible questions, *Ten for Grandpa* evokes the specter of unknown lineages and the unseen forces that inform our personalities and family lives. At its core, the film is a snapshot of a fascinating ancestor, and the skeletons that rattle away in our closets.



David Alpay, Geza Kovacs and David Huband star in *Ten for Grandpa*

Shot on Super35mm film on nine custom sets in a Toronto soundstage, *Ten for Grandpa* follows the life of a suspected spy through four decades in a high-octane seven minutes. *Ten for Grandpa* premiered at the 2009 *Sundance Film Festival*, on January 17th. Stars David Alpay and David Huband, writer-director Doug Karr, cinematographer Guy Godfree and producers Edward Boyce and Heather K. Dahlstrom are available for interviews. For more information or to schedule an interview or press screening, please contact Jamie Proctor 917-566-2256.



## PRINCIPAL CAST



### **David Alpay as the Narrator**

Alpay got his feature film debut when Atom Egoyan cast him in the starring role of his Armenian genocide film, *Ararat*. From that propitious beginning, Alpay went on to star opposite Robin Williams, Laura Linney and Christopher Walken in Barry Levinson's *Man of the Year* and was accused of adultery and high treason by Jonathan Rhys Meyers in his recent nine episode arc on *The Tudors* (Showtime). His last collaboration with Karr was starring as jilted lover Lonnie Dobbs, in Karr's 2006 film *Anniversary Present*.



### **David Huband as David Karr**

Huband's rich feature film career includes roles in *Breach*, *Cube Zero*, *Wrong Turn*, *The Ladies Man*, *Frequency*, *Police Academy 3* and *Tommy Boy*. His television work includes *Kung-Fu*, *Robo-Cop*, *Top Cops*, *The Newsroom*, *The Red Green Show* and *Street Legal*. Huband recently starred opposite Russell Crowe as boxing announcer Ford Bond in Ron Howard's *Cinderella Man*. His last project with Karr was as a schizophrenic mental patient in Karr's 2003 film *The Straitjacket Lottery*.



### **Catherine Black as Katharine Karr**

Black has acted opposite Christian Bale in *American Psycho* and worked with director Amy Heckerling in *Loser*. She has also worked extensively on the small screen, including co-starring in the ABC/Disney MOW *Mr. Headmistress*. Select television credits include *Show Me Yours* (Showcase), *I Love a Mummy* (YTV), *Blue Murder* (Global TV), *In a Heartbeat* (Disney/Family) and *Odyssey 5* (Showtime). Black recently wrapped production of *The Forlorn*, a feature film about the Snowshoe Party from the ill-fated Donner Party, in which she stars opposite Crispin Glover.

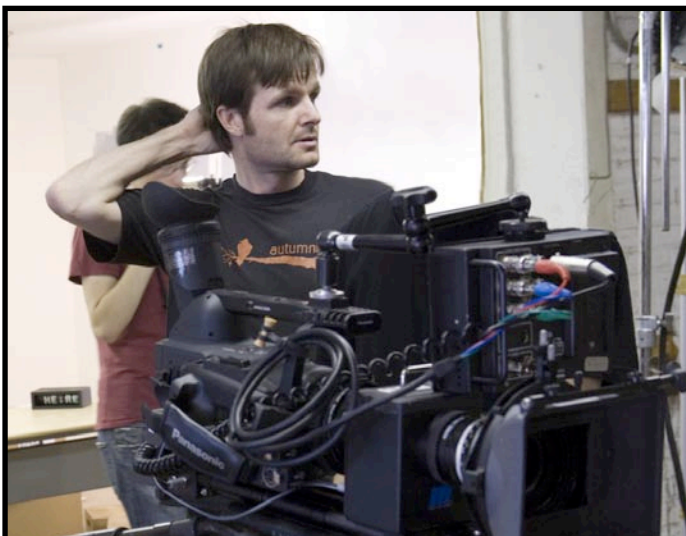


## WRITER/DIRECTOR'S BIO

**Doug Karr** has been creating original independent films since 1997. Karr's 2006 film, *Anniversary Present* was featured in the *Best of Raindance Film Festival Shorts DVD* and called "the funniest of the bunch" (*Time Out London*). Karr's other credits include award winning documentaries *LSD25* and *The June Bug Symphony*, as well as the hour long *Lifecycles: a story of AIDS in Malawi* and the 2007 follow up film *The Face of AIDS*. The writer of four feature length screenplays, his recent script *My Thermonuclear Family* won the Grand Prize at the *2007 Filmmakers International Screenplay Competition*. His films have been seen by audiences around the world and on numerous television channels, including IFC, Bravo! and The CBC.

## PRODUCER'S BIO

**Heather K. Dahlstrom** has been producing films since 2000. Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario, she graduated from the Confederation College Film Production Program. Previous credits include the feature film *Taken* and short films *Gummi*, *Snaps* and *Off the Menu*. Heather is currently overseeing the development of six feature film scripts, as well as participating in the production of *You Are Here*, a feature film with zeroFunction Productions. Dahlstrom is currently a Development Executive for Torch Head Productions in Toronto. Torch Head has previously produced a TV pilot for the Food Network (*The Bachelor's Guide to the Kitchen*), as well as co-produced *Ten for Grandpa* for Bravo! with Chop Wood Carry Water.



## PRODUCER'S BIO

**Edward Boyce** is an independent film producer and director. He has produced short films (*Ten for Grandpa*), independent television programming (*The Face of AIDS*), commercials (*The New York Times*, *Vitaminwater*, *Playtex*) and music videos (*Kaki King*, *Sonya Kitchell*). A McGill University Civil Engineering graduate, he leaped to a career in print journalism. Inspired by his lifelong Buddhist practice (he once lived for six months as a monk at a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery), he accepted a job offer at *The Shambhala Sun* magazine, working for several years as an editor and writer. He kept his interest in independent filmmaking alive and over time became a proficient self-taught film editor. Working at a boutique editing house he helped send numerous independent features to Sundance and other festivals (*Book of Love*, *Open Water*, *Virgin*).

## TEN FOR GRANDPA: DRAFTED INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Maybe it was something about having to rediscover himself in a new city after the end of a long relationship. Maybe it was just the fact that growing up in Europe and Canada he'd never used his US passport much until moving to New York City, but suddenly, at 26 years old, filmmaker Doug Karr wanted to know a lot more about his American grandfather: David Karr. He had died just before his grandson's birth and the younger Karr had always been slightly haunted by this enigmatic ancestor on his father's side. But now, suddenly, it was actually keeping him up at night. With a little bit of Google searching and rooting through newspaper archives he quickly realized that Grandpa had been a serious player in some pretty weird ways on some large world stages. But strangely, the more he researched and asked around, the more the true outline of the man seemed to blur into the shadows. Karr was left with a handful of questions that were beginning to intrude and wheel their way around his own life.

As a writer and filmmaker it didn't take long until he simply decided to fold this historical riddle



David Karr (Huband) pauses in the hall of the Moscow National Hotel

into his work: "I was longing to interact with someone I could never actually know, and nobody seemed to fully understand him, so I let my imagination fill in the holes. The script came very quickly because in many ways it was a cathartic letter to the past I'd been wanting to write for months."

The finished script was titled *Ten for Grandpa* and was literally based on ten questions Karr wished

his grandfather could answer for him. It was a bit of a reality check when Karr realized that to make the movie he'd have to portray many living members of his family. These are the people that he values foremost in the world. Karr explains, "Directing a film is so collaborative and we had an incredible team, but it was intense to loosen the reins and let other people portray your own family. Thankfully the final film is a very close reflection of my original inspiration, I think the actors and the production team came to share my fascination with David Karr and sort of joined the family for a bit."

One of the most arresting things about *Ten for Grandpa* is the seamless visual journey the camera takes through different times and locations. The story and the narrator travel uninterrupted through a kitchen window, into a hotel hallway, into a Klu Klux Klan Grand Dragon's lair, into Grandma's apartment, into a morgue, and on and on. It's a theatrical effect that gives the film the energy of a metaphysical daydream. Planning these different transitions from scene to scene took a lot of creative thought and everyone from the producers to the art director felt they had some input (and claim some credit), but the man who actually had to get the pictures on film did most of the heavy lifting. Director of photography Guy Godfree spent a week doing a pre-visualization with storyboard software. He meticulously planned every shot and even drew out the exact set dimensions for the art department.

Godfree and Karr have collaborated on numerous other films and commercial projects, so they were comfortable pushing themselves this time to try new ideas and take the risk of stumbling. Godfree explains that "most of the ideas we had seemed totally out of reach, but somehow we managed to get almost all of them." A huge factor in allowing them to push the envelope creatively was how Allyson Smith's production design was closely integrated with the technical challenges. The complex, winding paths of the camera meant that not only did the sets have to be convincing, they often had to move and swing away. Karr's appreciation of how well this worked is evident: "She simply outdid herself. Working with little to no sleep for weeks at a time Allyson managed to oversee the creation of lavish sets evoking Paris in the



## DRAFTED INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS, CONT.



*Narrator (Alpay) stands sandwiched between a couple of KKK members on his way to grandma's Manhattan kitchen.*

early 1980s, Moscow in the 70s, New York in the 40s as well as the Upper West Side and Nova Scotia in present day."

She wasn't the only one going the extra mile. As a lifestyle choice, low budget independent filmmaking does tend to be a sleep-deprived theater of the absurd. Karr has a history of stretching the budgets of his films to extract as much production value as he can, and stretch he did. In November of last year, he and producer Edward Boyce drove up to frozen Toronto in a battered, borrowed old BMW and then shared a one-bedroom apartment for the month with Boyce camped out on an air mattress in the closet. With the budget maxed out Boyce explains how "everyone called in every favor they could. We had to get crafty; we bought thousands of dollars of set dressing: furniture, drapes, jewelry, bedding, etc.,

and then carefully repacked it and took it back to the store after we finished shooting. It think it was actually someone's job title: Buy and Return Supervisor." Guy Godfree used every connection he had to scrounge together the film and camera packages to allow him and Karr to continue their devoted relationship to the medium of Super35mm film. They had to shoot short rolls, and some of the stock was a little old but in Boyce's opinion "they made it look like the best stuff coming out of Hollywood."

The team could only afford five days of studio time and two of them had to be the shooting days. If the sets were going to get done properly, the night shift was going to have to be in effect, and the more hands the better. Producer Heather Dahlstrom used her local Toronto hook-ups to recruit an army of unpaid volunteers: "I used every trick I know. Any



## DRAFTED INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS, CONT.

time I was stumped on a problem, I would talk to my mentors: production managers, producers, production coordinators. It was so overambitious. I made a deal with the art department that whenever I was done with “business” for the day, I would help them paint, plaster and sand, as I used to work as a painter. Even with them pulling all-nighters we barely got it done. Johanna Renaud ran around the city bargaining for the set dressing in the day and working at night on the sets. She found the kitchen cabinets we ended up using in a dumpster.”

If you are going to try and make a convincing, beautiful period piece on a shoestring you want your friends around. Karr called on two principal actors that he knows and trusts: David Huband and David Alpay. Audiences know Huband from his role as the announcer in *Cinderella Man* and will recognize Alpay as the young star of *Ararat*. “David Alpay had just the right level of unrelenting intensity and devilish charm to play my on-screen doppelgänger. Since I didn’t have the option of torching Alpay with a burning car like I did on our last collaboration *Anniversary Present*, I knew I had to pair him up with an incendiary counterpart in the grandfather role. Ever since working with David Huband on my first narrative film, *The Straitjacket Lottery*, he’s felt like family, so it wasn’t much of stretch casting him as my grandfather. My only regret was writing a part for Huband which didn’t allow him to speak, but his highly nuanced silent performance was a testament to his immeasurable on-screen abilities.”

Alpay seized on the role as a chance to explore his own family questions: “At the time Doug approached me for *Ten for Grandpa*, I was getting my parents to open up about their parents—my grandparents—none of whom I’d ever met. It turns out my parents had never met their grandparents either. I felt that as a family we had a lot of unanswered questions. So when I read the script it was a perfect fit.”

After three days of around-the-clock set building, the nine different settings were ready for action. The 40 person crew descended on the studio, the lights went up and with the paint still drying on the walls that would be used in the afternoon, the actors took their places. As soon as everyone saw the agile and nuanced performances being delivered the entire production

team seemed to gel. David Huband explains how the complex technical shots felt like movie magic in their old-school purity: “The long tracking shot was fantastic to experience. Each person on set was responsible in his or her way to make the single take work. Rather



KGB members loom over one of Karr’s associates in 1970s Moscow

than rely on computer-generated trickery, we relied on good old-fashioned teamwork. It was wonderful to experience.”

When production finally wrapped, it was clear to everyone that they had all put good work in the can. Karr summed up everyone’s feelings when he described how a short film production can be a maddening taste of what the team could do on a longer project: “The amount of elements that had to come together for this two day shoot is staggering. Nine sets. 20 art department PAs. Over 50 people on set for the shoot. And then it’s over. It’s like building a car, driving it a mile and then taking it apart. It breaks your heart.”

With its acceptance into the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, *Ten for Grandpa* is poised to bring Karr and his team the kind of attention that will let them take that car for another spin, hopefully for a longer trip.



## FACTS AT A GLANCE

### THE FILM

Title: *Ten for Grandpa*  
Duration: 7:00 minutes  
Genre: Drama  
Language: English  
Original Medium: Super 35mm, Colour  
Screening Formats: HD CAM, HD CAM SR,  
Digital Betacam, Betacam  
SP, DVD  
Sound: 5.1 Surround Sound, Stereo  
Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1  
Release: January 2009

### FEATURED PLAYERS

Narrator	David Alpay
David Karr	David Huband
Katharine Karr	Catherine Black
Grandma	Ann De Villiers
Coroner/Grand Dragon	Geza Kovacs
Alden Karr	David Cormican

### KEY CREW

Writer/Director	Doug Karr
Producers	Edward Boyce Heather K. Dahlstrom Guy Godfree Doug Karr
Co-Producer	Jamie Proctor
Director of Photography	Guy Godfree
Music	Mark Kondracki
Production Designer	Allyson Smith
Costume Designer	Deirdra Morris
Story Editor	Edward Boyce



Edward Boyce, Guy Godfree, Heather Dahlstrom, Doug Karr, and Allyson Smith at Wallace Studios

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT**  
**WWW.TENFORGRANDPA.COM**

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