

## Emilio Ferrari Interview

### STUMPED? MAGAZINE



### EMILIO FERRARI INTERVIEW

EMILIO FERRARI: It's a small independent film. Most movies I produce are pretty much just me. I don't like to have too many people on board as far as producers or executive producers. I go raise all the money and my company guarantees the film. As a distributor, my distribution company—

**CHRIS NEUMER: Is it the type of thing where you're actually selling the overseas rights—**

EMILIO FERRARI: Everything. We do domestic—

**CHRIS NEUMER: I mean before you've actually—**

EMILIO FERRARI: No. Only if I raise the money beforehand. If I don't have all the money then I'll go and pre-sell a part of it. I have the same formula I use for all my movies. I do about three a year, two or three. If I can get all the funds raised, then great. We go shoot it and I guarantee the film so my investors don't lose their money. Then my distribution company will come on board at pretty much the same time I come on board to produce it and they'll do whatever they need to do. So production and distribution can go side by side.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Using this as an example, I'm not saying that you've done this, but I know that there are a lot of people out there who as soon as you get Heather and Jerry cast you can just turn around and sell the international rights to it and you've got your budget right there.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Right, we don't do that because we are a distributor so we want to make money as a distributor. Giving up all your rights, you don't make any money. You just give up your rights. I have pre-sold. That's what we call a pre-sell. I do pre-sell films. The one I'm doing next I'm pre-selling part of it. It's a bigger one. This movie is only a six million dollar movie so it's not really that big of a budget for me to go out and pre-sell it because I already had most of the money in place before. In that case, I want to hold on to all the rights. As distributors, we sell each country separately. We have clients in every country. So I don't really go out and sell the entire foreign rights. Then they're making money and not us. As a producer I make some money, but really, the cheese comes from distribution. That's where I really make my money.

**CHRIS NEUMER: On something like this film, where do you expect this film to make its money? Domestically or overseas?**

EMILIO FERRARI: It's a comedy. It's a romantic comedy. We're trying to make it a physical comedy as much as we could. It's something that Brian [Herzlinger] and I sat down ahead of time and talked about it. It was something that we worked on in the script. And we're still working on the script as we go along, we're still changing it. Comedies don't do very well abroad because of the language barrier. But physical comedies do well because they transcend all language barriers. And that's something we were really sure about, that we want to have enough physical comedy in the film so that I don't have a problem when I go abroad. I think that most of the money is going to come from North America but with the dollar being so weak I think that we have a better chance that 70 percent of the money is going to come from abroad, 70-80, and the rest of it is going to come from North America.

**CHRIS NEUMER: So when you got the original script, was that something where you specifically punched up the physical humor?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Honestly, when I first read the script I hated it. I didn't like it and one of the deals I made with my executive producer was, "I'll come on and do this with you but I get to fix the script." So I came on and fixed the script. First I did a pass on it. Then I had Brian do a pass on it. Then he and I sat together and took another pass on it. And we're still working on it as we go along. And it's gotten better and better and better as we go along. That's what happens when you shoot a film. It's a process. You go through the process and your actors give you input. And you pick the things that you feel work with the script. And we've done that pretty much all the way through and Brian and I have been pretty cool with each other.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It's interesting that you mention that you hated it at first because—**

EMILIO FERRARI: I hated it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It's interesting because, here you are and you've turned a script you didn't like into something that you like. There are so many guys out in LA that are just writing scripts and sending them around—and I'm not saying all of them are good—but you found a script you despised and decided to film that instead of getting a halfway decent script that would require less work. Was there a core idea to this one that you liked?**

EMILIO FERRARI: The idea of the script, the story, was great, but the way it was written was bad.

**CHRIS NEUMER: So, idea good, script bad.**

EMILIO FERRARI: The executive producer was also one of the writers, so it's really hard to go to him and say "Your script sucks." Because the script actually—the way it was written sucked, but the whole message and idea of it was really funny. And that's what I told him. I said, "Look. This has to change." But it's really hard when a first time writer can't change his script, especially when he's putting up a lot of money [to get it made] too. So, what I did was, I changed half of it, and I let the director come in and change the other half, so it didn't look like it was me trying to change the guy's script. I had to be really careful. I didn't want to make him feel bad because he had a bad script, but I liked the idea of the script and I liked him, and I thought the movie could turn out to be really good. And the other thing is, as a distributor I would never put my clients' money in a movie that I think would lose money. Obviously I'm not psychic, I can't tell you how much it's going to make, but it's still a calculated risk. As a distributor I can still calculate, bottom line, how much money I'm going to make. I can still calculate that part rather than just being a producer and just going out to make a movie just to make a buck. Distribution is really the key for any movie I make, whether I produce, direct, or write. And I do pretty much all of them.

**CHRIS NEUMER: So what are the important elements of the way that this one goes down in terms of making money? Is the cast really important?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Cast is really important. When your budget is under six or seven million your cast is pretty much the key. You also need a good script and a good story and you want to make sure you make a movie where the budget qualifies for the actors you have in the film. If your budget is higher than the actors, then it's an uphill battle and you will lose money. Even if the movie sells you'll still lose money, which is a big problem. So you want to make sure that your cast qualifies for the budget. A movie like [Baby on Board] where the cast does qualify—again, it's a comedy and comedy is pretty much the riskiest type of movie to make. I personally don't do that many comedies. I've only done one comedy before this and that one did really well. I was really lucky.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Am I correct in assuming that action and horror would be the two easiest to make money on?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Well, it depends, but genres help you. Comedy's not exactly a genre that helps you unless you're making a huge comedy with huge stars, in which case it does. If you have Eddie Murphy or Jim Carrey then you can get away with it, but comedy is the only genre where names don't help, the movie actually has to work. None of these names are big enough individually for a movie of this size, but collectively as an ensemble they really help. But individually, I couldn't sell either of them separately. I could never sell Heather Graham on her own. It's just not going to work. I could never sell Jerry O'Connell on his own, it would never work. Or John Corbett. Or Lara Flynn Boyle. Together they make an interesting cast, and they've never been together in a movie. So I thought it would be an interesting mix. John Corbett has never played the part he's playing in this film. It's the complete opposite of what he plays, so I thought it would be interesting. And putting that cast together, bringing Brian on board, it just kind of came together. And we're shooting this movie really fast. We've been going boom, boom, boom. We're shooting in four weeks. A movie that should have taken six weeks to shoot, we're shooting in four weeks. It looks great. Chicago is very cold. Not crazy about the weather. We have a great crew and I handpicked all of them, especially the keys.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Let me just stop you right there. What are the key positions for you? I know each producer has a different list.**

EMILIO FERRARI: My key people, obviously my First A.D. [assistant director] and my director of photography are really important to me. My director of photography, I've done two movies with him before. I brought him in and hooked him up with Brian because he's someone that works very well with first time directors. He's someone who will advise the director to take extra shots. He's a crafty guy. He's kind of a director himself in a way. He's worked

with me on bigger stuff. I did a movie with him with Kristin Dunst [Luckytown], so I know the guy really well. I brought him in from LA. I hired the First A.D. who was the best A.D. I could find and these are the two most important parts to me as far as having a first time director. Because I have to cover my ass you know? Even though Brian is good, actually physically making a movie is very different than thinking about it or being creative or being talented. They're two different things. So those are the things that he came and helped and made Brian's life easier.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Do you have any onset producers that are here when you're not?**

EMILIO FERRARI: I have a production supervisor that I hired. I brought her on. Carrie. And I have a production manager, Omar, whom I brought on. But unlike most movies where your production supervisor and your production manager have a lot of control, on this movie I pretty much have the control because I'm on set every day. So I sign for everything.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That's right because you guys were off for the last few days.**

EMILIO FERRARI: On a movie of this size I can't take a chance. As a producer I'm not on set all day every day, that's not what I do. My job is to put it together and let them go out and shoot it. But on this particular movie, a lot of my movies that I'm personally involved in, I'm there to make sure that I'm not going over budget because I personally guarantee these films.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Give them the Ferrari grant?**

EMILIO FERRARI: I've done about two dozen films, and I didn't bring these guys on until later because I was able to put it together without them. Someone was saying that when I first came to Chicago that I hired my production coordinator before I hired a PM [production manager] Because I didn't need him at the beginning. I don't want to spend money giving someone \$5,000 a week for something I already know how to do. So I came on board early because I had the time and I put the whole thing together without a PM, without a line producer, because I didn't need it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Sort of old school.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Yeah, I wanted to save money. I want the money in the movie and in the actors, rather than just paying frivolous people. Even though I need the people I need, I have a national agreement with all the unions with my company, so I have to go union no matter where I go and that's great, but there's certain areas where I can save money and I will, and I do. Another key position is my production manager, because he's the one taking care of a lot of the stuff...

**CHRIS NEUMER: Well, they're all important, but the AD and the DP...**

EMILIO FERRARI: The AD and the DP are more important for me for the director, to make sure we're getting what we need. Because at the end of the day they can cover my ass if the director misses something. I have a really good editor that started the day we started shooting.

**CHRIS NEUMER: So you've just been cutting as you go along?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Every time we miss something we come back and get it. And we've missed a few things.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That's the way to do it.**

EMILIO FERRARI: We've made mistakes with the eye lines and come back and fixed it. You couldn't do that if you don't have an editor on staff. I brought my editing equipment from LA because I have a lot of AVIDs and stuff and post equipment stuff and I brought it in and set it up here. I have my own equipment here and brought the editor from LA so we can shoot as long as we want and it's not costing us any more because it's all my own equipment. I'm not talking about using FinalCut and all that stuff, that's very amateur. I'm talking about using the big AVIDs that we use in all our films. The studios use it. So we're doing that right now and by the time we finish shooting, we'll have a rough cut of the film. It's not going to be exactly what the director wants or what I want but at least it will be all compiled and not just sitting around. Timing is very important to me. Six months from the day I start to the day I finish everything is the most. And then while I'm finishing I'm going on to my next film. I'm directing that so the post production will overlap the preproduction of my next film. And at the end of the year I start my third film which will overlap the next film in exactly the same way that this one will overlap. So it's kind of the same kind of timing thing where I make sure that the timing matches. And my budgets are all between five and 10. I've never crossed 10 million. A lot of my movies stay at 10.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Is there a reason for that?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Yeah, there's a reason for that: control. The bigger the budget, the more compromises you have to make. Brian pretty much has free reign to do whatever he wants and the reason is that I gave him the opportunity because I don't have a bond on the movie. If there was a bond on the movie, people would make his life a living hell. I don't have four producers telling me what to do. I don't have to go to four people to discuss it. So I try to stay within 10 million because I can own the movie outright. I'll own the distribution rights outright, which is really important. On a movie under \$10 million, you can cut all the frivolous expenses, like five executive producers, ten producers, co-producers. Those are all bullshit credits.

**CHRIS NEUMER: So there are no associate producers on this film?**

EMILIO FERRARI: There's one executive producer, there's one producer, and that's it. There's nobody else on it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That's sort of the Fernando Meirelles school of behind-the-scene and below-the-line filmmaking.**

EMILIO FERRARI: I grew up with film. I was a First A.D. in high school so I grew up in the production side of it. I hand-picked all my keys myself and that's why we're doing well.

**CHRIS NEUMER: And it's amazing how often the two sides, production and creative, don't match and need a little bit of help.**

EMILIO FERRARI: No, they don't. They never do, but there's a compromise you make. The creativity and the commerciality all have to come together in a mix and mesh together because one can't work without the other. If you get too creative, you go over budget and you don't have a finished film.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It's also interesting because you have some people, like someone I was talking to who said, "Have you heard of this film being shot in Chicago." And I said, "Yeah I know all about it." And they said, "That producer must have a great life!" And I said, "Why do you say that?" And the guy said, "Well, he's this great producer. It's got to be something out of *Entourage!*"**

EMILIO FERRARI: It's funny you mention *Entourage* because it's my favorite show.

**CHRIS NEUMER: What is your ethnicity?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Italian.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Well, Ferrari. You have a swarthisness for you. Well there was this producer on *Entourage* that lives in this enormous house that had all these beautiful women, and actually I'm looking at your watch right now...**

EMILIO FERRARI: (laughs) That's my Bentley watch, man. It matches my Bentley.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That's a good line.**

EMILIO FERRARI: I have a nice house, yes. I have a really nice house in the Hollywood Hills.

**CHRIS NEUMER: But do you ever find yourself engulfed by the image of that producer in *Entourage*?**

EMILIO FERRARI: No, not at all. I work very hard, so I like to spend money. And I make a lot of money which is good. But it is rough. You're on set, I'm actually involved. I actually do the work, unlike most producers who come on, put it together and leave. I'm actually involved. I know pretty much everyone who works for me. I know their names. I know where all my money is being spent. I actually remember where all the money is being spent. Because I actually catch everything when my supervising manager approves something and it comes to me and I catch it. I'm just good at it. I've always been good at it. My accountant checks everything 80 times before she brings it to me. I always catch mistakes. Small mistakes, but a mistake is a mistake. It's not a big deal. It's just that that is my job. I try to save as much money as I can, because at the end of the day, as much money as I put on the screen is what I get out of it. After we shoot the movie everyone's gone and I'm the one stuck with the film. And I actually have to sell this film so I have to make sure that I have something I can sell otherwise people won't give me money. Nobody's going to write me a ten million dollar check and say, "Go make a movie." If I can't actually sell the film—you can only do that once or twice and then you're out of the business. But I work very hard and yeah I have a beautiful house in the Hollywood Hills, I have a lot of nice cars, I have a lot of toys.

**CHRIS NEUMER: And very nice watches that match the cars.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Lots of watches.

**CHRIS NEUMER: And you don't feel in any way closed in or—**

EMILIO FERRARI: I'm not a stereotypical Hollywood kind. I travel a lot. I'm in New York a lot. I go to the markets and stuff. I don't go around telling pretty girls what I do. That's not what I do. I kind of find that bad. There's a certain part of LA that is extremely Hollywood.

**CHRIS NEUMER: A certain part? That would be the part between the ocean and downtown?**

EMILIO FERRARI: (laughs) No, I'm talking about the mentality of the people. There are a lot of great people in LA who are big stars, actors, producers, who are very mellow and low key and very chill and you try to be humble and just keep working. I'm a young guy and I want to just keep making movies until I get to a movie that actually does break out and does really well.

**CHRIS NEUMER: You've been doing this and making movies for a while and keeping them at or under budget—**

EMILIO FERRARI: Always, always.

**CHRIS NEUMER: These are the hallmarks of a true, I don't want to say studio producer, but is it at the point where you want to make the jump to Neal Moritz level, Jerry Bruckheimer level, something like that where you are a true brand?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Well, in a way I am. Those are big, big, big producers. But what I do is a little bit different. I pretty much operate like a studio does. I have my own production entities, I have my own distribution entities, I have my own post-production entities, and I own all of these. And I have a stockbroker. So, I can pretty much start something and finish it in house. I don't have to go get anyone else. That is different from all the other big producers do. They just produce from the studio and then take their check and go home. I actually own my stuff.

**CHRIS NEUMER: I guess my question was: is it a compromise you'd be willing to make, to give the rights to Sony so that you could make a \$100 million movie?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Yeah. Money is really irrelevant. A good movie is a good movie, regardless of the budget. I look at the film and the best I can do to make that movie so that it looks good on screen.

**CHRIS NEUMER: But there are certain things that money will allow.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Sure, money's important. And I go out and I look for money and I do what I can. Having a studio, you don't have to worry about money. But you give up owning the film. At a certain point in my career, I'll probably... the movie I'm doing next is a \$10 million movie. And I'm directing, I wrote the script, I'm distributing it. It's pretty much all in-house. The budget didn't come because I wanted to make a bigger movie. The budget came because that's what I needed to actually make the movie. So, money's important, but I don't just a movie based on how much it cost. I judge it based on what I need below the line and how big of actors can I attract to a film like that. And sometimes if I need to I'll go up to 20 or 30. I have another film that I'm trying to make called *Waco* with Rupert Wainwright, who directed *Stigmata* and the producer is Lawrence Bender, whose the producer of pretty much every Tarantino movie. And it's a bigger budget and hopefully towards the end of the year that's going to come to fruition, but again you put so many things in the pipe line and you don't know what's going to click.

**CHRIS NEUMER: You said earlier that you never have done more than a \$10 million movie.**

EMILIO FERRARI: I would love to make a bigger movie if the right elements come together, but what's more important to me is to work with people that I actually like. I hate to work on a film where I hate someone. I want to work

with someone I like and I have a great time when I make my movies. Go on the set and ask anyone if they had a good time.

**CHRIS NEUMER: If I was you, I'd want to hate people, because now I'm in a position of power. If I don't like these people, I can get rid of them.**

EMILIO FERRARI: But I don't want to. I want to have a good time when I make movies, and this film has been a really good time for everyone that's worked on this film. I don't think anybody... I think you could go and speak to anyone, even the PAs and I don't think anyone had a bad experience. Sure, it's rough, but in the end everyone gets along and there are no assholes making people's lives difficult. I'm not the kind of guy that will go on set and fire people. This is not an egotistical trip here. I feel if someone's not doing their job, or someone else is doing his or her job. And that to me is unacceptable. I either need to fix it or get the hell out. There's only two ways of handling it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: The one thing, and maybe you don't need this since you're not dealing with studios, but I was talking to John Woo and he's the nicest, most congenial guy, I was sure that if I poked him he would giggle. He's the sweetest, nicest guy. And he's been making movies all these years and he said, "Let me introduce you to my producing partner," Who's always produced him for the last 30 years: Terrence Chang. Terrence Chang... it's not that he's an enormous prick, it's that he comes off as an enormous prick. He was very nice to me but he had that air about him of "Don't fuck with me."**

EMILIO FERRARI: People don't fuck me on the set either.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Is it the type of thing where you have both roles pushed into one?**

EMILIO FERRARI: It's a balancing act. I set the ground rules for this movie. It's my way. The buck stops with me. I decide what happens, when it happens, how it happens. But I still give my keys the freedom to do what they need to do. All my keys hire their own staff. I don't interrupt them, because they are responsible for them. So I let people do what they are good at and I don't interrupt. But if they make a mistake, then they answer to me. Everybody pretty much knows that if they cross me or do anything there will be hell to pay. But at the same time, yeah I'm young and aggressive...

**CHRIS NEUMER: ...you forgot good looking. We'll add that in later.**

EMILIO FERRARI: We'll add that in later. The thing is nobody cares about the money except for the guys whose money it actually is. All the guys who are responsible for it. My staff does it fine. They go over, they make extra

money. But it's my job and the few people I have on staff to tell me if we're going over. I've been on set almost every day. If I wasn't they would have gone over every day for sure. It's not the director's fault, it's just that everybody wants to shoot more because they want it to look better, but there's a line you don't cross. So I'm actually on set every day at the end of each day to make sure that doesn't happen. Honestly, it would have happened every day otherwise. It's nobody's fault, it just would have happened. And we've gone over certain days, which is okay. Because I have that all in the schedule. Also, I want to make sure I have a film so if something is missing and I don't think they need to reshoot it, I have Brian reshoot it. As a director he and I get along really well so it's not an ego thing for him. I'll just sit there and tell him certain things I don't like. You can take it or you can leave it, it's just my opinion as a producer. I'm sitting there looking with him at the monitor saying, "Maybe this will look good." It's just my opinion. And he's very good at picking things up that he thinks will help the film as a director, and that's one of the reasons I picked him as a director. And I'm easy to work with too. He comes to me and says, "Look I want to do this, I want to do that," and I say, "You can do anything you want as long as we don't go over budget or it doesn't require an extra setup or we have to move." For example, we just changed something where we're shooting outside. We don't need cops, but we're going to do it really quick. Those are the things we look at. But at the end of the day, I have to have a really good time and I have to actually like the people I work with. They don't have to be my friends, but I have to be able to get along with them at least for that part of the film. That's really important. I don't want to work on a movie where I'm having a miserable time. It's not worth it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Nobody does.**

EMILIO FERRARI: It happens all the time. It happens all the time.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It never comes through in the final project, ever. You can never, ever tell ever.**

EMILIO FERRARI: I walked out of movies that I didn't pay for.

**CHRIS NEUMER: You've been doing this for a while, what is it that when you look back you go, "Everything clicked. This is what I want. The experience was perfect from beginning to end and it's the project that you look back and want to most emulate?"**

EMILIO FERRARI: The funny thing is, I haven't done one film where everything has just worked. Everything perfectly. Doesn't work. The films that I make sometimes that are great to make, don't click at the box office.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Okay, most proud thereof.**

EMILIO FERRARI: I did a small independent film called *I Know What You Did Last Winter* which was an extreme sports film that I made with my own money. It was the most profit I ever made because I shot in 15 days with around 300 stunts. It's impossible to do. Everyone told me it was impossible. I went all over the world and I made it and it was great and it made money.

**CHRIS NEUMER: You shot it in 15 days?**

EMILIO FERRARI: 15 days altogether.

**CHRIS NEUMER: But not together, back-to-back.**

EMILIO FERRARI: No, not together.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Okay.**

EMILIO FERRARI: No. I shot 15 days together in California, then I went to Alaska for 2 days then I did another 5 or 6 days all over Europe. But a movie with almost 250 stunts, people said it's impossible, you can't do it. But I made it and it's the most challenging thing I've ever done and I actually made 90 minutes of it. So, it was very hard. That was the hardest thing I've ever done. Trying to make a movie with no money with all those stunts. Making a movie about people talking is easy, you can take four locations and shoot. Trying to make a movie with 100 locations with 5,000 people with 200-300 stunts where people are getting hurt all over the world, that you need a lot of money. And I made that movie for under one million and sold it everywhere and made my money back. I'm very proud of that film. A small film. But I have a lot more movies, I haven't really, my career is still kind of on its way, I haven't really gotten to a point where I can pick all the movies I want. I can say, "Hey, I'm doing it now." Now I'm starting to do that. The one I'm doing I handpicked it. I met this woman, I wrote the movie about her. It's a true story. It deals with animal abuse. It's a great movie that humane societies have come onboard to try to help me make it. These are the kinds of movies I like that are based on people's stories. Comedies, I'm not crazy about comedies. I like true stories, dramas, I like stuff that makes you cry, that makes you laugh. Comedy of course makes you laugh. But those are the kinds of films that. And this one will be fun because I get along with all the actors, they're all great to work with, which is also very important. You want to work with actors that you actually get along with and I get along with all of these actors, they're friends of mine, we've hung out, which is important. I hire actors where I know their agents well. When you make a six million dollar movie, it's good to have all of those things.

**CHRIS NEUMER: I wasn't originally thinking this, but you had originally cast Ian Ziering in this project, and he dropped out... or he's no longer in it. And in a weird way, he seems like a nice enough guy but it seems like for the production this is actually a positive thing.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Let me tell you the story, Ian is my neighbor and he's a good friend of mine. I brought him on to do this part but he had a previous commitment with Lifetime and Lifetime would not let him out of the deal they had. Actually they were not shooting the days we were shooting but they had him on hold. He had some issues with Lifetime and they wouldn't let him do it. He really, really wanted to do it. I spoke with him yesterday and it wasn't his fault. He's a good friend of mine. He would have flown himself on a private plane but they would not let him out of the deal. And that's something that he and the producers have issues with that and he's still pissed about it, but he wanted to do it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: I've only encountered him once or twice and he's a lovely man but there's a certain panache to his name; he's working on Lifetime.**

EMILIO FERRARI: True. The only reason I gave him the role is because he's a friend of mine and I thought it would help his career and he knows that.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Is there ever any concern of yours where it's like, I don't want to work with Eric Roberts simply because it's Eric Roberts.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Yes. Ian's part was really small. I didn't think he was going to be a key in the film but he fit the role really well and I thought it would be good. Yeah he's not really a name anymore but he's a friend of mine and I thought he fit the part really well and the actors liked him. Heather liked him.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Who doesn't like Steve Sanders? I mean, everybody likes Steve Sanders.**

EMILIO FERRARI: To answer your question, no. It wouldn't have hurt the film. It would have actually helped the film a little bit and it would have helped him a lot... which was my reason for putting him in it. It was my idea not his. He didn't even know I was shooting a film. I called him and said, "Look I got a part for you, you want it or what?" and he read the script right away and said, "I want it. I want to come down now." And then he said, "Just so you know I have this issue but I'll handle it, I'll take care of it." But he didn't handle it the right way and it is what it is. We have no hard feelings. We're good friends. I see him all the time, he's two houses down from me. But you're right. You don't want to put certain actors in a movie that automatically make it a B or C movie. You want to be very careful about it and you're right. If I would have put him in one the leads, that would have been an issue. But being in one of the smaller roles wasn't an issue. Again, a movie like this can either break out and do really well or not. There's a fine line that separates a comedy from being successful and not being successful. And nobody knows what the reason is. When you put it together and you edit it, it either works or it doesn't. That's something that's really scary about comedies. If this was an action thriller, or a drama, or a horror film I could by now tell how this movie was going to look. My sales guys would tell me,

“This is what we’re going to make on it. This is the upside, this is the downside.”

**CHRIS NEUMER: Are you trying to put together a 20-minute clip or something?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Yes, for Cannes. The movie actually won’t be ready for Cannes.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It’s coming up quick.**

EMILIO FERRARI: It’s in May. I leave April 5th for MidTV, which is a television market in Cannes. I’ll have a trailer for the film by then, and then when I come back, from May 15th to May 24th is the Cannes Film Festival/Cannes Market which we have a huge presence every year. I’ve been going there for about 12, 13, 14 years. I have a lot of my sales guys go there. I have a huge library of films. I own approximately 400 films. So we sell a lot of our movies and TV shows. But for that our movie is not going to be ready. I tried but I didn’t want to rush it. So what I’m going to do is cut a 20-minute promo for the film, on film and we’ll screen that there so people have an idea to see what’s coming up. And so when we finish shooting next week Brian and I, with the editor, will pick the scenes we want to show. It’s really me picking the scenes I want to show, but I want Brian to be there to do his director’s cut. I let the editors do their cut, then I let the directors do their cut, but I have total control over the cut of the film, not because I’m the producer but because I’m the distributor. Then I go in and change something if I want to change something. And then we lock the film, get the music and all the effects in and screen it at the next market, which will probably be Toronto. So, we want to get a film like this into festivals too and get the free publicity from that and if it clicks then we’ll get a North American deal. And we’ll get the studios to look at it and they’ll screen it in their own private screening facilities and then we’ll know who wants what. And what I normally do, domestically, is that I will pretty much always sell the film to a studio. Always. Whether it’s Lionsgate, Columbia, I work with pretty much any studio, whoever likes the film. And then for foreign, we do it ourselves. We are the distributors. We’ll go to the television stations and actually sell each country separately. And then based on how the deal is in North America it affects all my foreign deals. Because everybody looks at the US and how a movie performs for how it will behave in other countries. So if I get a good deal in the US that will increase my performance in other places. This is how we do it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That’s pretty much how the business goes.**

EMILIO FERRARI: Pretty much. We operate on a small level but we operate exactly how the studios do. Exactly. I have the same clients they do, they just may be less—it’s a little bit smaller... a lot smaller [with me]. But my company’s pretty much considered a place that studios actually buy from.

They can only make so many movies. There are companies like mine that make the rest of the movies that they buy. Then there are guys at the bottom that make all the little, little, little stuff that you will never see. It just goes directly to video or sells foreign. It never comes out in the U.S. or if it does there will be one or two DVDs at Blockbuster. Then there are the guys in the middle that make movies for between five and twenty million dollars. This is where I come in. They can buy movies like mine cheap and then release it. They're not spending \$40 million on a movie, because that's the minimum budget of a studio film. And I don't have the overhead they do, so they can buy my film for a few million, take the North American rights and release it and do very well with it.

**CHRIS NEUMER: When you said a studio can buy the film for a few million, what do you mean "few"?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Well depending on the size of the film it could be anywhere from a million to five or six or seven million.

**CHRIS NEUMER: What kind of ballpark figure do you expect on this one?**

EMILIO FERRARI: I would never say that. That's like jinxing yourself.

**CHRIS NEUMER: What would you be extremely happy getting for this film?**

EMILIO FERRARI: I would be extremely happy if I got my entire budget. That would be great.

**CHRIS NEUMER: That's sort of the high end?**

EMILIO FERRARI: It's more important how the movie is getting released. If the movie gets a wide theatrical release then I'll be ecstatic. I don't have to worry about money then because the studio's making a killing, and I'll be fine. If it goes directly to video, I won't be crazy but I'll be okay, because video is a big market too. It more has to do with how the movie is released and if they do a good job releasing the film. If they do a good job releasing the film then I'll make my money and that's more important to me because six million's not a big budget. I can recoup most of that in home video if I have a really nice deal because it's got the cast for it. It's kind of quirky, it's a funny comedy and it's an R-rated film. It will never be PG-13.

**CHRIS NEUMER: It's got good heads to put on the box.**

EMILIO FERRARI: They're not huge, huge heads. But good heads. And at the end of the day I cover my ass with that. Will I be able to go to cable and all that stuff? Yeah. Will I be able to go to HBO? I don't know. HBO is one of my

clients, so is Showtime, so are all those networks. They all pick and choose what they like. It's not a PG rated film so there's a lot of gross stuff in the movie. It's like when they did *Knocked UP* or *40 Year Old Virgin*, it's got that gross humor to it. And this movie does that too. So we'll just have to wait and see what happens. But I feel good about it, I'm excited. I go into the editing room next week. I get the composers, get the music put together and see how it looks. And then I just have to see the reaction I get out of my clients. I can tell a lot by the reaction I get out of my clients. Because the guys who come to watch my movies are the guys who make the decisions. And I don't have to worry about the audience because that's not my concern. My job is to sell to my buyers which are the guys who own the TV stations and the studios. Their job is to get it to the people. I make movies for guys like us, but if I have to convince the people, that's a lot easier job. I have to convince the studios and they're a lot harder to convince than the public. If I release the movie myself I have a better shot of making more money because I can relate to the audience. Studios are very different. They have their own particular agendas. They have their own political stuff. They didn't want a movie, I won't give you the name of the star, but I worked with a really big star and she had another studio film coming out and they kind of blackballed my film because they wanted that movie to be in the front. So it's a very political atmosphere. Nobody wants an independent film to come out and do better than their film... particularly if you have the same actor. So the studios have a different agenda when they buy a film, unlike me. My job is that I want people to love the movie and go see it, whether they go to the theatre or rent it. Studios work differently. They have to go through all this political stuff that they have to go through with all the other actors and producers before they release a movie. A lot of times they have really great movies that they never release because they have issues with whomever. My job is to get a good deal for the film so that the movie actually comes out, then actually get the money up front. I'll take less money for a better deal than more money for a shittier deal.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Thank you very much for your time. Anything else you want to add?**

EMILIO FERRARI: Did you hear about Brian's birthday? It was the first day of shooting and we had a huge scene where some chick threw a cake in his face. I don't know if you heard about it. I was joking about it. I had this beautiful Polish model that day working and I told her jokingly to go do it and she threw it not like lightly, but hard. Like 100 miles an hour. Knocked him over. And we gave him a present. It was a blowup doll. And he opened this box and a blowup doll popped out and condoms went everywhere.

**CHRIS NEUMER: Well, Brian does need that.**

EMILIO FERRARI: He does.

