

Interview Collection Part 7

Vin Diesel: Past Action Hero

2005.03.03

[MTV](#)

He's taken on the Nazis ("Saving Private Ryan"), personified the dark side of Wall Street ("Boiler Room") and boldly walked away from \$200 million franchises ("The Fast and the Furious" and "XXX"). Now, with bald head polished and biceps flexed, Vin Diesel faces his greatest challenge yet: changing a dirty diaper. With "The Pacifier," the action star that legendary director Sidney Lumet called "one of the best actors I've ever worked with" is looking to assert his sense of humor with a film for the whole family. If anybody can pull it off, perhaps it's the man who confidently strode into the 1995 Cannes Film Festival with a short film announcing his dream of being a movie star, and then became one.

MTV: How are you doing, Vin?

Vin Diesel: I'm healthy at the moment. Things can change.

MTV: With the role of Navy SEAL-turned-babysitter Shane Wolfe, you've traded in head-butts for hijinks. Is this your "Kindergarten Cop"?

Diesel: "Every Which Way But Loose," man. I think I went to see that movie with my family. It was a film that we all went to see together. I remember the films that we all went to see as a family standing out as being that much more eventful. Like "Pacifier," it plays off people's perceptions of previous characters. People's expectations. That was what was so clever about "The Pacifier." What I was looking forward to with "The Pacifier" was making a movie that the whole family could see together.

MTV: Word is that you were so good with the kids on set that they gave you a nickname.

Diesel: Yeah, "the Baby Whisperer," because when the babies cried they would call Vin: "We need you on Stage 6! We've got a 9-month-old infant crying. We can't get this take. Please, do something." All right, where's the baby? I'd come over, throw him in the air, say "Whee!" and it was all good.

MTV: This might be your first onscreen kids movie, but your diehard fans know that you were the voice of "The Iron Giant."

Diesel: Yeah, but the Iron Giant voice isn't a good one to lay on a 9-month-old or a 3-year-old. You've got to at least wait until they're 5 for that Iron Giant voice or it makes things scary.

MTV: So why this film? Why now?

Diesel: I needed to do a film that my niece and nephew could see. I needed to do a film that my godchildren could see. I needed to do a film that would dispel the fact that the only movie I've ever done was "Iron Giant" for these toddlers.

MTV: When your tough-guy character tries to take care of the five kids in this movie, they come up with some mean "Home Alone"-type scenarios to make your life hell. Did you torment your own parents when you were young?

Diesel: Oh yeah. I would stay out. The hardest thing was getting back home. I grew up in New York City, so the whole city was one giant adventure. The first production I'd ever done was when I was 7 years old and it happened for me. Sneaking out, basically terrorizing the neighborhood and breaking into a theater. I was that kid.

MTV: That story has been pretty well documented, how sneaking into that theater introduced you to acting and changed the direction of your life. There's a very similar subplot in "The Pacifier" with 14-year-old Seth (Max Thieriot) running away from home so he can secretly become an actor. Did you help write those scenes based on your own experience?

Diesel: That's funny that you say that. I never caught the parallel. How interesting, I didn't even realize that. That's brilliant. Not even when I was filming the scene did I think of that.

MTV: Since you had to knock so hard to get in Hollywood's door, you would seem to be someone who'd understand why people want to blur the lines between celebrity and fan. When your name was leaked as one of the many in Paris Hilton's Sidekick, did you understand why fans might desire your personal information?

Diesel: My name was there, but my phone number wasn't, thank God. I think that's scary. I think it's crazy that we have this Sidekick technology that somebody could ... I don't know. That's freaky. The Clark Gable

image of the actor on the huge studio lot is long gone, huh?

MTV: If "The Pacifier" hangs around the box office long enough, it could end up playing opposite Ice Cube in "XXX: State of the Union." Did you have any advice for Cube when he took over the franchise?

Diesel: I didn't think of that. You know me, I just try to do the work. I haven't met him.

MTV: When you first came on the scene, people assumed that your inspirations were the action stars of the '80s and '90s. Who would you like the rest of your career to play out like?

Diesel: The inspiration for going into something like "The Pacifier" is more "Big" than anything else. My buddy Tom Hanks.

MTV: Sidney Lumet, the director of your next film, has some high praise for your acting skills. Can it be said that Vin Diesel wants to be taken more seriously?

Diesel: Of course. You know my history; you know what I've been doing. You know what the goal is, and how hard I've been working at this. I just try to make the best movies I can, that allow you to escape for two hours.

INTERVIEW: Vin Diesel on "The Pacifier"

03/04/05

ETHAN AAMES

CINEMA CONFIDENTIAL

You know him for his rough-around-the-edges characters in such films as "xXx" and "The Fast and the Furious." This weekend, Vin Diesel tackles an even more dangerous role: being a nanny. Diesel stars as a Navy Seal officer who is assigned to babysitting and protecting five children while at the same time, trying to locate the whereabouts to their father's government secrets.

Below, Vin talks about tackling the role and the different choices he's made in his career.

Q: So how was jumping into a more comedy-oriented picture than you're used to doing?

VIN: I had this dream that I was in a comedy. Then I woke up, arrived on set, and realized it was true. I was very, very nervous at first but those babies. *puckers kiss* You can be the toughest guy in the world, but when you have a nine-month old co-star waiting for you to come on to set, staring at you when you come onto set, it makes it all worthwhile.

Q: Do you do films like this to broaden your range or for the children out there?

VIN: Well, for me, it was more about doing a film for my niece and nephew and for my goddaughter. "Uncle Vin, when can I come see your movies?" I haven't done a movie that kids can see since "The Iron Giant." And I wasn't even on the screen in "The Iron Giant." This was a first film I was able to do that kids could come to see and a whole film could come see together. I remember the movies I went to go see as a family as special experiences and special events. We love our movies, we rely on our movies. It's a very intimate thing. It's what the whole film experience started being. There's not a lot of places you can take your family too but a good family movie. And that's what this is.

Q: Is it easier to sink into a role that's more lighthearted?

VIN: I gravitate towards more introspective and brooding roles. This was fun because it was such an easy experience because all I really was doing was babysitting and all I really had to do was take care of these babies. I had to make sure the kids felt comfortable, then get out of the way and let them shine. It was very easy in that respect. It was good for me too because unlike these veteran actors, thirty years my senior, if I'm in a role that's a dark role or a challenging role emotionally, I stay in that emotional pocket for the duration of the movie. It sounds very interesting as a process but the practice of that is very taxing. Because you're talking a year of your life, or even five months of your life, and you go home everyday thinking whatever melancholy situation that you're in, that you're using to fuel your character, and you want to be consistent so you lock yourself in that mode. When you do something like "The Pacifier," I didn't know someone could have so much fun on a film. I thought the script was clever because it played on people's perceptions of roles that I've played and incorporated that so it drew you in. We start there and then we present the bigger issue: the family issue.

Q: Why do you think the children falls for this guy?

VIN: He's consistent with his character but there is a change of heart. This is a character who has never been around anything that's vulnerable. He's a Navy Seal. Navy Seals don't moan. The idea that he is forced

in this situation with all of these characters that are all needing something that's more than protection: they need direction. His get-to-the-point, no bullshit attitude is what actually works on this family.

Q: You're mostly known for those dark, introspective roles as you mentioned before. Why do you think you fell into that category?

VIN: I got to be right with me. I got to be beyond the movie business. I have to live with myself. I never had a lot of money. The first two filming experiences I had were at the face of not having any money, where part of the artistry was the fact that I had no money in when you're shooting shoestring budget films. I grew up in artist housing in Manhattan where no one had money, where artists did art for the sake of doing art. My first order of business was to be artistic. It wasn't about getting a job. I could've done TV shows or commercials at that point. All I wanted to do in my late 20s was make movies, somehow, someday. What happens when you have nothing and you get some success out of a \$3,000 movie at Cannes, or you get \$47,000 and it's accepted into dramatic competition at Sundance, is you get a sense of empowerment because you know that no matter what movies you make, people will see. That's how I was introduced into the business so that the first acting job I got in Hollywood wasn't a product of me going into auditions, but a product of me working from what I had already done. So Steven Spielberg saw me in "Multi-Facial" and wrote a role in "Saving Private Ryan" for me. I came in that way. I feel very very comfortable about what I do. What ends up happening is that you become part of a corporate structure when you start doing these blockbuster movies and that's where the dance begins.

Q: Has this movie made you want to have a family someday?

VIN: I'd love to have a big family someday. I hope you don't think it's a cop out but I work a lot and I work in different countries and I work with different realities. I replace my life with the life of a character. But this experience has definitely prioritized a few things.

"The Pacifier" opens in theaters March 4th.

Vin Diesel: The Pacifier Interview

Kam Williams
March 08, 2005
DallasBlack.com

After building his career by playing a series of macho characters in such action-oriented dramas as XXX, The Fast and the Furious, A Man Apart, Pitch Black and The Chronicles of Riddick, Vin Diesel decided to try his hand at comedy in his latest film. So, for The Pacifier, a slapstick farce reminiscent of Arnold Schwarzenegger's Kindergarten Cop, Vin allowed himself to be cast against type as a Navy Seal suddenly in search of his sensitive side after he's assigned to baby-sit five uncontrollable kids.

The departure apparently worked, since the picture is already the #1 movie in America at the box office, beating out all of the competition, including a trio of other humorous adventures in the process: Hitch, Be Cool, and The Diary of a Mad Black Woman. Here's the New York-born actor reflects on his newfound fame as the king of the comedy hill.

KW: How's it going?

VD: "I'm doing the best I can with what I have."

KW: What's Vin Diesel doing in a kiddie comedy?

VD: "Can you believe it? I had this dream that I was in a comedy. And then I woke up, got to the set, and realized it was true. I was very, very nervous at first. But those babies! You know, you can be the toughest guy in the world, but when you have a nine month-old co-star staring at you, smiling when you come on the set, it makes it all worthwhile."

KW: We're you trying to take a page out of Arnold's career, ala Kindergarten Cop?

VD: "No, for me, it was more about doing a film for the kids in my life. For my goddaughter, for my niece and nephew who go, 'Oh, Uncle Vin, when can we see your movies?' I hadn't done a film that kids could see since Iron Giant. And I wasn't even on the screen in that one."

KW: So you wanted to make a children's film?

VD: "Yeah, this was the first film that I was able to do that kids could come to see, that the whole family could see together."

KW: Why take a risky shift when your career as a super-hero type was safely rolling along?

VD: "Really, I grew up around New York theater, unemployed for most of my life in this film game. We rely on our movies. We love our movies. It's a very intimate thing. And I remember going to the movies with my family as something greater, an even more special experience for some reason. I guess there aren't a lot of outings you can take your whole family on, except for a good family movie, and that's the best."

KW: What was it like on the set while working on this film?

VD: "It was the first film where all I had to do was smile at a nine month-old baby everyday. Normally, I gravitate towards much darker, more introspective and brooding roles. This was fun because it was such an easy experience, since all I really was doing was babysitting. All I really had to do was take care of these babies and make sure that the kids felt comfortable. And then get out of their way and let them shine. It was very easy in that respect."

KW: Did you enjoy the change of pace or did you yearn for something more challenging?

VD: "If I'm in an emotionally-challenging role, I stay in that emotional pocket for the duration of the shooting of the movie. And while it may sound kind of interesting as a process, the practice of that is very taxing. That's because you're talking about five months to a year of your life where you go home everyday and you're still thinking about whatever kind of melancholy situation you're in that you're using as your fuel for your character. And you want your performance to be consistent, so you lock yourself into that mode. However, when you finally do something like *The Pacifier*, I didn't know people could have so much fun on a film. I found myself thinking, my god, these people have been getting away with murder. I've been practically killing myself, and all they gotta do is laugh and have fun."

KW: What attracted you about the script?

VD: "I thought the script was clever when I got it, because at least it played on people's perceptions of previous roles that I'd played. And it incorporated that, so it drew you in and included you. The way the script was designed, we start there, and then present the bigger issue, the funny issue, the family issue."

KW: How do you think this role affect how you appear on screen in the future?

VD: "I'm going to start smiling a lot more. No, I don't know, but it was a very comfortable experience, and I loved getting to smile for a change."

KW: Is it going to revise the types of roles you take? Aren't you concerned about hurting your \$20 million man image as a blockbuster star?

VD: "I gotta be right with me. Beyond the movie business, I have to live with myself. I never had a whole lot of money. The first two filming experiences I had were in face of not having any money. Part of the artistry was the fact that I had no money while shooting shoestring budget films. I grew up in artists' housing in Manhattan where no one had money and everyone did art for the sake of art. My first order of business, in my late twenties after almost twenty years of acting, trying to hustle to get away from Off-Off-Off-Broadway plays, was to be artistic. It wasn't about getting a job, because I could have gotten a job. I could have done a TV show or commercials at that point. But all I wanted to do in my late twenties was make movies somehow, somehow. What happens, when you have nothing, and you get some success off a \$3,000 movie in Cannes, or you make a movie for \$47,000 and it's accepted into dramatic competition at Sundance, is you get a sense of empowerment. Because you know, that no matter what, you can make movies that people will see. That's how I was introduced into the business. So, the first acting job I got in Hollywood wasn't a product of my going to auditions, but a product of work I'd already done. Steven Spielberg saw my film and then wrote a role for me [in *Saving Private Ryan*]. Because I came in that way, I feel very comfortable about what I do. What ends up happening is that you become part of a corporate structure when you start doing these blockbuster movies, and that's where the dance begins."

KW: Did being around kids for this film make you think of having some of your own?

VD: "I would love to have a big family some day. I hope you don't think it's a big copout, but I work a lot. And I work in different countries, with different realities, and I replace my own life with the life of a character. But this experience has definitely prioritized a few things."

Chatting with The Pacifier Cast

Sharon Knolle
Hollywood.com

In *The Pacifier*, Vin Diesel sheds his tough guy image to play ... nursemaid to a bunch of kids? Yep. But don't call it a remake of *Kindergarten Cop*, insists director Adam Shankman. *"That movie was so violent!"* Shankman says, horrified. *"You've got a grandmother's brains being blown out and splattering on a tile, right in front of her grandchild!?"*

Shankman (*Bringing Down the House*), says he wanted to do the film because it reminded him of *"traditional Disney family movies like The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes and all the old Kurt Russell movies. That's what I grew up on. This was exactly in that tradition: a little danger, but no one ever gets hurt."*

Convincing him that Diesel was right for the part of a tough-but-nurturing father figure took a little more doing. *"I was skeptical, because I bought into the persona thing,"* says Shankman. *"Once I read the script, it made sense to me why he was the perfect person for this thing. I just needed to make sure he could do the second half of the movie."* When Shankman met Diesel, he immediately thought, *"He's absolutely the person who is the second part of the movie and the acting part is the tough guy. And I was like, 'Oh, God! You're a softie!'"*

While it may seem that Diesel is following in the footsteps of Arnold and Sly with his turn to comedy, that's not who his role models are. **"The career I've watched most is Mel Gibson's. I think we all know why,"** he says. He's even met with Gibson on a Biblical-themed project of his own.

Joining Diesel in *The Pacifier* are TV vets Brad Garrett (*Everybody Loves Raymond*) as a grudge-bearing gym teacher, Lauren Graham (*Gilmore Girls*) as the helpful school principal, and Brittany Snow (*American Dreams*) as the oldest daughter in the family Diesel is assigned to protect. They sat down with us recently to talk about the film.

Why did you want to do this film?

Vin Diesel: "I hadn't done a film that a whole family could see, that my nieces and nephews--who've been dealing with the reality that their Uncle Vin is a movie star--can see. The *Iron Giant* was the only movie I've done that they can see--and it's just my voice, so I'm not even really in it. I think that one of the things that was interesting about doing this film was that it played on people's perception of previous characters I had played."

Lauren Graham: "I haven't really done 'supportive love interest lady.' Vin usually has Hottie McHotties, doesn't he? I'm more like, straight and narrow for him."

Brad Garrett: "On *Everybody Loves Raymond*, I've been playing the same guy for nine years. I've done very few films. My film career, or lack of it, is due to the fact that I'm picky and I'm not in demand. I'm actually turning down roles I'm not even offered. I'll call DreamWorks and say, 'I'm not interested in doing *Shrek 3*,' and they'll go, 'Great!' I'm a schlub and I'm lucky to be on the bus. Also, I was a 6-foot 13-year-old who couldn't make a lay up or throw a ball so this is my homage to all the P.E. teachers who made my life miserable. I had no game. I tried. We moved a lot, and at each new school, I was the great white hope. I wasn't great and there was no hope, I was just white."

Brittany Snow: "I only had four months off from *American Dreams* but I wanted to pick something completely different. I chose a comedy, which I've never done before, and Adam Shankman is an awesome director, and I love Vin Diesel, and it was a great, funny script. I'm really proud of it. I think it's a really good movie."

Vin, was it hard making the switch to comedy?

Diesel: "It was a source of anxiety to me, initially, because it's an all-out comedy. It's one thing to say, 'Come to my movie and you'll laugh a little bit.' It's another to say, 'You're going to laugh so much.' When people say that comedies are hard to do, they don't mean the actual production of comedies is hard. What's hard is to hit the mark once the film is made. Shooting a comedy isn't physically demanding. It isn't a complicated process while you're doing it. What's hard is making sure the jokes pay off."

Brad, how on earth did you get talked into wearing that outrageously skimpy wrestling outfit?

Garrett: "They wouldn't show me the outfit until I was on board, which aggravated me. Adam said, 'I need you to wear something. I'm going to send it to you.' (It arrives and) it's in a small box and I don't know what it is. I open it up and my five-year-old daughter says 'It's never going to fit you, Daddy.' And I said, I know, and I put it on and it was very embarrassing and I didn't want to do it. But then I thought, I look like this and this is me and I know where I am on the food chain and I'm a buffoon. If it works and it's funny, it's all about the funny." "I wanted to change the outfit. I want to change it as I'm sitting here, right now, but it's not going to happen. When I saw it, I went, 'Of course, it's terrible.' It's a sight gag and I get it. My six year old boy, said, 'Why would you wear that?' when I showed up in that outfit. He was shocked."

Were you nervous to wrestle Vin?

Garrett: "The scary thing, is I'm not athletic and I was never a jock type of guy. And Vin, he looked at me and

he went (mimics Vin's deep voice, mumbles something utterly incomprehensible, meant to sound like Vin), and a guy comes out with a clipboard and translates, 'He wants to know if your hand hurts.'"

Lauren, did you do your own stunts?

Graham: "No one even asked me if I wanted to try to do my own stunts. But then the stuntwoman injured herself in that one difficult, dangerous scene, so I had to do it and it was so fun! I'm not really the most obvious pick to be an action hero, but I would love to train for that and do that."

What was your favorite scene?

Graham: "I really like that last scene where Vin and I kiss. Before that, I was always being professional and holding back and I thought this was a nice scene where they could be a little less aloof."

Snow: "The party scene. There was a bunch of extras and by the end of the day we were all just chatting. But it was also the worst scene, because it had my most embarrassing moment. I had to do a little stunt where I'm on my boyfriend's lap, and then when Vin comes in, he has to throw me off of him and onto the floor. That day I was feeling really rebellious, so I wore special red underwear. During the rehearsal, everybody was watching the stunt. So all these extras, like 100 of them, mostly guys, are watching, and so is Vin and the cameraman and the crew. So Kyle (who played my boyfriend), throws me off his lap and somehow my skirt got caught up in my shirt and my bottom was facing everybody. And one extra yells, 'Whoa! She likes red.' And I was like, 'That's funny. How do they know I'm wearing red?' And I got up and the minute I realized what happened, I started bawling. I ran out of there sobbing, 'I don't think I can do this!' I still actually had to do the scene, with all these extras watching! They gave me black biker shorts and said, 'OK. No more accidents!'"

Garrett: "We did two takes of our scene (where I try to intimidate Vin). The director just let me go. A lot of that wasn't on the page."

Diesel: "Any scene that I had with the children. When I was home on the weekends, I'd be thinking about these kids. I never had a relationship with a co-star that was so profound. It definitely pumped up that paternal urge."

What about the old adage not to ever work with animals and children? Here, you're doing both.

Diesel: "W.C. Fields said that. It was a different time. The reason people say that is kids will force another take. And you can't force a kid to do a take. As a director, it can be frustrating. But for an actor, like me, all I had to do was get out of the way and let these kids shine. If you can get an organic performance from a kid on camera, it's priceless."

Brittany, your character in the movie is a terrible driver. How good a driver are you?

Snow: "When I first started driver's training, I was one of those girls that thought I was never going to be able to drive and I'd have to take a cab everywhere. The first time I did a driver's training test, I hit a bus. I got really nervous because there was a hot guy looking at me, and I put my foot on the gas instead of the brake. So, yeah, I hit a bus, in front of a lot of people, too. So I could really relate to Zoe on that level, being a terrible driver!"

What's next for you?

Graham: "I'm working on mastering the greatest cupcake recipe ever. I really am. I made these cupcakes that are coconut, but they're just not moist enough. Somebody else told me I have to add buttermilk. I'm usually home for eight hours and eat some almonds and hit the road again, but when I have to time for entertaining people. Someday when this is all over, I'm gonna bake cupcakes. I don't look forward to Gilmore Girls ending, but I look forward to having more freedom and doing other projects. I think most actors are pretty much short attention span. This has taught me so much, and it's so exciting. But a 15 hour day is a 15 hour day and you want to have some balance. I think the max is probably two more years."

Snow: "I think I'm going to start going to college in the fall. Definitely I want to do a few movies and get my name out there and get established a little bit, and then leave and go away to school."

Garrett: "I'm getting back into stand up again. I've been working this last year on an act. I'm doing about 12 dates, six casinos, six small theaters, across the country."

Diesel: Hannibal. I'm going to direct Hannibal. And I'm going to direct it as a multilingual film. It will represent all the languages that Hannibal spoke. I decided I wanted to direct it myself after I got a budget back from a studio that said \$217 million below the line. I said, 'Huh?' I know I'm not the smartest guy in the world, but \$217 million--doesn't that mean that this film will never get made? And I've already committed to this character. I've channeled this guy. So I decided I'd go into soft pre-production and think about ways to shoot sequences with the same story value, but that will cost a lot less. And I got the budget down to \$50 million. If

you are thoughtful and creative, you can cut down a scene to have the same story impact, the same action impact, and not spend so much. The second our films start costing over \$200 million, we give our industry up to the corporate world."

The Pacifier opens in theaters Mar. 4.

Vin Diesel is "The Pacifier"

Rita Cook

Fivestarreviews.com

Vin Diesel is most commonly known for his action-hero status, but in "The Pacifier" he takes a turn and becomes not only a babysitter, but a real lifesaver. While it might be a different role for him, it is definitely one that he enjoyed. In fact, you can hear it in his voice as he says his favorite scenes were the ones with the babies.

While Diesel might be all mushy this time around, he also talks about his upcoming project "Hannibal" and how he changed the budget in order to get the film made.

RC: How did you decide to do a movie like "The Pacifier" in which you needed to do something different – did you want to show that you had a funny vulnerable side too?

Vin Diesel: Well, I feel that any movie I do as a funny side. No matter how dark it is it has a comedic element. The key to this film is that I have not done a film that a whole family could see. I haven't done a film for my nieces and nephews who are dealing with the reality that their Uncle Vin is a movie star can see since "The Iron Giant." That film was the last and only movie that I have ever done with kids. This is the first movie for a family and this is the first movie that kids are able to see.

RC: The other films you mentioned had comedic elements.

VD: It's one thing when the audiences come and laugh a little bit, but I promise you it's another thing when you say you are going to laugh so hard and come see this movie. When people say that comedy is hard to do they don't mean the actual production it's how hard it is to hit the mark once the film is made, that is what they are talking about.

RC: Can you talk about that?

VD: Shooting a comedy isn't a complicated process while you are doing it. It is not hard to pull off and put into the can. What is difficult about comedy is making sure that the jokes [work.] Having the comedy work.

RC: What do you think makes it work?

VD: I think that one of the things that was interesting about doing this film was that it already had a built in component to play on people's affections.

RC: You are an adorable action star, but not like Bruce Willis, maybe a little less than that...

VD: A lot less.... I was aware, it was always built into the script purposely and that is what makes it work. Then on top of that it starts on people's built in perception of my playing this role and then kids enjoy it.

RC: Will you do more comedies?

VD: Yeah, I had a lot of fun shooting. I am used to doing movies where at the end of the day it's like 'okay, see you Vin.' I go home and I kind of am thinking about the fact that my wife died or I have got to save the galaxy. This wasn't like that. I was literally feeling guilty and thinking these guys have been getting away with murder.

RC: What was your favorite scene in "The Pacifier?"

VD: My favorite scene to shoot was any scene that I had with the baby in it?

RC: Red baby?

VD: Yes, red baby.

RC: They were twins, right?

VD: The infants were twins, the toddlers were twins and when I would go home over the weekend I would be thinking about these babies. I never had a relationship with a co-star that was so profound.

RC: So do you want to have your own kids?

VD: It definitely pumped up that paternal... You can't force a kid to do anything. It can be frustrating, but for an actor like me I love it. Really all you have to do is get out of the way and let these kids shine. If you can get an organic performance from the kid on camera it is priceless.

RC: Tell me something about you that no one else knows.

VD: Everyone knows everything now. What can I tell you about me that no one else knows? Film related?

RC: Any related?

VD: With the Internet I feel like anything I say is yesteryear's news. Hannibal...

RC: Tell me about Hannibal?

VD: I am going to direct Hannibal.

RC: Direct it?

VD: No one knew that, huh? And I am going to direct it as a multilingual film.

RC: When did you decide that you wanted to direct it?

VD: I decided I wanted to direct it after I got a budget back from a studio that had \$217 million below the line. So I said huh, I know I am not the smartest guy in the world, but doesn't that mean that this film will never get made? I said \$217 million there is no way in the world that this film will ever get made. I am going into soft pre-production. I think about ways to shoot that will have the same story value, but cost a lot less. So I went into soft pre-production and I got the budget down to \$50 million.

RC: I believe that is possible.

VD: Yeah, if you take the time. The key is... normal pre-production is three to six months, right? Every month of pre-production you can take a scene that would cost \$20 million and if you are thoughtful and creative you can cut down that fee to have the same story, the same emotion, the same action and not spend so much money, which is the problem. The second a film starts costing over \$200 million we give our industry up to the corporate world.

RC: You were talking about acting in a movie with the action thing going on and then you were feeling guilty about having so much fun on the set.

VD: Rewind.

RC: What was the worst job you ever had before you got into the movie industry?

VD: I have been an actor for as long as I can remember.

RC: Your father was also in the industry?

VD: People don't think of artists as having their father in the business like they would an athlete. As an artist I don't ever think about the fact that I am the next generation. My father taught theater at Brooklyn College. My father was a theater director in New York City and he directed Laurence Fishburne when Laurence Fishburne was 10 years old.

RC: Were you looking at any actors for inspiration when you were doing your comedy?

VD: No. The careers I have watched are Mel Gibson and we all know why. He is a guy who is able to create what he feels the need to create and that is the key.

RC: What is next for you?

VD: I have no idea.

RC: If you go to Europe the [Hannibal film] will be accepted?

VD: It is multilingual whereas "The Passion of Christ" this will represent all the languages that Hannibal spoke.

Vin Diesel on The Pacifier - Babies, Bikes, Ducks and Diapers

Fred Topel,
[Action-Adventure Movies.](#)

Vin Diesel's First Comedy: The Pacifier pits Diesel in a family comedy. "I haven't done a film that says, 'We're promising laughter.' What was clever about this was that the script played on people's perception of previous roles that I've played. It was already built into the script. So that made it even easier because it was like, 'Okay, you're going to still see a guy that you're familiar with. It's just that the situation, the scenario will be drastically different than you'd expect.'"

Vin Diesel's Taste of Fatherhood: "The thing that stood out above and beyond all the experiences was this relationship with the nine month old baby. On my weekends, I'd be thinking about going back to set on Monday just to see the baby. You get a little excited walking on a set and this nine month old baby knows that you're there. Not thinking Vin Diesel, just thinks of the big guy who's always taking care of him. It's a very profound relationship and it has to have an effect on somebody and it had a dramatic effect on me."

Vin Diesel Isn't Afraid of Diapers: "That's fun for the movie. Me, I was crazy. Like you can walk on set and walk by Vin Diesel and that nine month old costar having a conversation that you couldn't understand. Lotta

goo goo ga gas.”
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Vin Diesel: The Baby Whisperer: Diesel earned the nickname Baby Whisperer because he was the only one on set who could keep them quiet on the Pacifier set. “It was this weird habit that I developed from holding the nine month old babies and I was walking around with the babies so much that when I got to the Sidney Lumet picture, I would be on set in between takes and I’d be rocking back and forth. Just standing like this rocking back and forth, and Sidney would say, ‘Why are you walking like that in between takes?’”

Vin Diesel's Child Bike Air Show and The Panda Dance: One of The Pacifier’s gags has Diesel grab a small children’s bike to chase some bad guys. “It was easy but it was also difficult because the size was like a miniature bike but it wasn’t long before I started doing jumps and 360s in the air and table tops.” Then, he has to do the Panda Dance twice. “That was probably the thing I was probably most anxious about, doing that on camera. I said, ‘You know, are we sure we want to go all the way on this?’ It worked for the plot.”

Vin Diesel: Duck’s Best Friend: “The duck was everything you could imagine. The duck was supposedly a very gentle duck. When they described how the bite would feel, they basically did this to my finger [rubs finger]. Are you sure that’s not going to draw blood and I’m going to get infected by some kind of lake disease? No, because there’s no lake. It’s never drawn blood, believe me, it’s fine. I’m in a scene with Faith Ford, we’re going through our lines, pit pat pit, I hear some splatter on the counter. QUACK.”

Vin Diesel's Theater Training Pays Off: In The Pacifier, Diesel’s Navy SEAL character ends up directing a school production of The Sound of Music. “We all go back into our place of, you know, the guys that grew up in the New York theater had a blast. I haven’t done that in so many years. It was nostalgic. And of course it really speaks to that relationship between him and Max. It has to play out. In order for that to really work, Shane’s got to go all the way with it to say it’s okay for Max.”

Vin Diesel is Still Into Dungeons and Dragons: There was a book that just came out, Thirty Years of Adventure. Interesting book. It’s a coffee table book by D&D. 30 Years of Adventure A Celebration of Dungeons and Dragons. I wrote a forward in it that is dead on about my experiences at Dungeons and Dragons and what that did for me growing up, in terms of being a training ground for imagination. The more you know about the Dungeons and Dragons, the more you’ll see the thought process that went into the Chronicles of Riddick mythology.

Hannibal is Coming: “What am I going to shoot next? Well, Hannibal is forever haunting me, on the horizon, waiting. Hannibal is at the summit of the Alps right now calling my name.”

Actionhero Vin Diesel shows his softer side

Het nieuwsblad (Belgium)
April 13
translation by Kapli

Vin as a babysitter? Lots of fans had doubts about it, but he really wanted his niece and nephew to see a movie from uncle Vin. The movie made him think about fatherhood. He says : off course I want a family. I just need to find the right woman.

Vin Diesel is very friendly when we meet him in Paris. In America the movie raised more than 100 million dollars. Despite the critics for Diesel's first comedy, the movie does it very good here in Belgium. It's number 1 in the box office.

"O, you're from Belgium?" Diesel says while he gives a very solid handshake." I would to visit your country. My stand inn is Dutch,Robert Sebastian. He was always praising Belgium."

Do you like to travel? Most stars hate it.

O, but I love Europe, from when I've been to Cannes with my first movie. European cities have something cool. I really don't mind travelling for promoting movies. That's the fun part.

Why did U make a family movie? Do you want to lose your actionhero image?

There's a simple reason for; my niece and nephew never got to see a Uncle Vin movie. The whole world did, and I wanted to change that. I'm making movies for ten years, but never one that the whole family could see, unless The iron giant, but that was just the voice.

When I read the script for The Pacifier, with the beginning scenes as actionhero, I thought this is not what Adam Shankman said it would be. But then I realised he got me fooled. It was like a fisher price version of an actionmovie, and I liked that.

For an actor comedy is one of the hardest things to do, you agree?

That's right, but for me it didn't feel like it. With my other movies I had to do stunts that were dangerous, risking my life. And now all I had to do was coming to the set, take the baby in my arms and say googo, gaaga. Piece of cake. (laughs)
Making a comedy is not so difficult. The hardest thing is to decide which jokes are going to be funny for an audience.
But doing The Pacifier was great. I often wondered on set why I never did it before.

So no more action movies for you?

I wouldn't go that far. I don't wanna end up as a clown. My nature is that I feel attracted to these dark, complex personalities.
It doesn't bother me that they say I'm a bad example for the young generation because of the stunts in The Fast and the Furious.
But the fun thing is that everybody can see The Pacifier. My mum was so thrilled. She kept saying I would make a great father.

Are you ready to start a family?

Acting with those kids definitely triggered my father instinct. I would love to but I just haven't found the right woman. Some people find the love of their life when they're 21, but that's not my case. I still have time.

How's it going with other projects, like Hannibal for example?

Did someone say Hannibal? (drops his voice even lower and starts to recite a monologue) With Hannibal I can keep talking for hours and hours. (takes a little book out of his pocket, it has little sketches for scenes and notes in it) The movie will look great. That is my pet project, I'm going to direct it myself. But I doubt it will be a family movie. (laughs)

Vin Diesel recovers from hard work

GMX.net (Germany)
2005.04.13
translation by Silsin

He is one of the toughest guys on the screen, equipped with a body of steel and well known for his merciless strength. But recently the American heir to the action throne of Arnold Schwarzenegger recovers in the comedy "Der Babynator" from his hard work.

Vin Diesel depicts in our interview the advantages of an action comedy:

Vin, with your new film "The Babynator" you pursued a new direction in your film career. What made you move in this direction?

One reason why I did this film is that my niece and nephew were never able to watch an "Uncle-Vin-movie". They were too young. I had to do a film for them. I absolutely wanted to do a film for my niece and nephews and for all the kids in my life. As an entertainer it was always fun for me to divert them. This was the first opportunity to really do something like this. For the first time I had the possibility to do a film the whole family is able to watch. For the first time I was able to do a film you don't have to employ a babysitter for, because he is already in the film! (laughs)

Did the children enjoy your film?

They loved it! I went to the premiere together with my 6 year old nephew and my 8 year old niece. They flew from Brooklyn to Hollywood to see this amazing premiere. They have never been to a premiere before. When I left the car people began to yell across the street: "Hey, Vin, Vin, Vin!". My little nephew asked my sister: "Why does everybody know Uncle Vin? Why do they shout his name? They don't know him!". This was so unbelievably cute and it was so much fun to experience this with the whole family.

How did you experience the work with the children?

Incredible! For me this was just amazing! Everybody tells you never to work with children or animals, but those are people who are not able to work under pressure. You can't control kids. Grown up actors tend to finish everything. Kids have a will of their own. No matter what you do. You could promise them a Mercedes and they still wouldn't do what you want them to do. Still you have to work with them. Somehow a great challenge.

What did you enjoy most working with the children?

It was great because the kids are so enjoyable. As co-stars the children gave me the opportunity to do things I'm usually not able to do. I was able to be much crazier and wilder than usual because they didn't care. There was no crew. I worked with a three year old.. danced the Peter-Panda-Dance with a three year old.. it

was just fun.

Did you benefit from your knowledge of break dance for the Peter-Panda-Dance?

Yes that's true. The fact that I performed break dance on the streets to earn money helped me a lot. Because of this I was easier to play the Mickey Mouse for the kid.

Were your young film partners intimidated?

Well. They just judged me from my looks. They have never seen films like TCoR, because they are too young. If someone is influenced by my films I always try to get them used to my dark voice by changing it (speaks with high voice) ?Oh, hi Peter?, then I slowly turn deeper with my voice till it reaches the original sound.

Did you change diapers before the "Babynator"?

Urgh (makes a wry face). I have a niece and a nephew and I have godchildren. Of course I have! I changed diapers! But I never used tools for it. I swear it was the first time!

The film shows the significance of family. How important is the family for you?

Mucho, mucho importante. What are you without a family?

Is there the secret wish for an own family hiding behind this new orientation?

I mean, I would love to have a family, but I work so much and I'm never in one country for longer than four month?

This development from action to comedy is similar to Arnold Schwarzenegger's change from "Terminator" to "Kindergarden Cop" and "Twins". Arnold Schwarzenegger finally ended up being a politician. Are you interested in politics?

This is easy to be answered: (long silence followed by a scornful side-glance, a sniff and rolling the eyes)

What kind of film is more difficult to do, action or comedy?

I have to admit that it was so much fun to do the Babynator. It was just fun ? like vacation. Normally I do drama or action. Action movies can be very dangerous. Especially when your attitude is to do every take on your own. Drama can be very depressing if you're precisely playing the character and trying to put yourself into the position of everything. This is not very funny. Who wants to go to work and be depressed the whole day long? Therefore the ?Babynator? was really like vacation. Everything I had to do was come to the set and do some ?gogo gaga?. It goes without saying that the vacation was immediately over with my next film, the gangster thriller ?Find me guilty?.

Which one of the characters you did so far represents your personality?

Well, I hope the funny guy. Hmm, maybe that's what I like to believe (laughs). Ähm, I think I always try to slip in something of my personality into each character. I found it with my own personality and just build the rest of some character around it by acting. But I always connect myself with the character. Doing the ? Babynator? for my niece and nephew I approached it with the thought of doing a film for them. Therefore I had a very close connection to the kids from start on because I knew from the beginning on: I'm doing it for the kids I love ? I'm doing this film because I want the children of my family to enjoy it.

Thank you for the conversation and furthermore good luck!

QuickChat feat. Vin Diesel

BRAVO (Germany)

04/27/05

Translation by JsVineyard

What's the first thing to come to your mind...

Changing diapers?

As a teenager I used to babysit my siblings. Plus I have a niece and a nephew. That's why I'm trained in doing this. While shooting TP I could even enhance my skills and now i'm able to change diapers using tools.

Baby Whisperer?

I got that nickname on the set because I was constantly hanging out with the kids. We even developed our own language with lots of Gugu and Gaga. (laughs) In the end, people would come and fetch me to soothe the babies when they were crying.

Astrology?

My Mom is an Astrologer. But she never advised me concerning girls. I had to find my own way there...

Pick one...

Action movie or comedy?

That pretty much depends on the role! But TP was like a holiday for me after doing xXx and Riddick: I used to hang out with kids and had to babysit. A whole new experience - and a really cool one as well...

Guard dog or cuddly kitten?

Well, actually I'm more the guard dog kind of guy. I fear I would hurt a kitten if I played with it like I do with Roman. He's an Italian mastiff - a fighting dog (?) so to say - and we use to tussle a lot.

Hair or no hair?

I prefer no hair. I shave my head once a week. Here, touch it (he allows me to touch his head which feels a little stubbly) isn't that perfect? Whenever I'm stressed out, I strike my bald head - that's really calming.

Complete the sentences...

In my next movie...

I'm going to ride an elephant. I will shoot the story of Hannibal, one of the greatest warriors of the ancient world. The story is set about 200 yrs. B.C., it was then that Hannibal crossed the Alps with the elephants.

My first money...

I earned with dancing, with breakdancing on the streets. I was 15 then. That was pretty and a lot of fun - and I also could take home some dollars.

My most dangerous scene...

Was the scene with the duck in TP. It was only supposed to nibble my ear. At first it cooperated, but when we did the 6th shot of the scene, it must have been fed up - and bit me hard. It hurt like hell and even bled! The director included that scene in the movie, so the painful expression you see on my face is actually real!

YOU CAN VIN IF YOU WANT

German Cinema Flyer
translation by JsVineyard

A tough guy in baby trouble

That he's no weak guy we know for sure. But in TP, Vin Diesel proves that he can even handle Hollywood's toughest opponents: small children!

He jumped out of helicopters, raced blazing earth on a motor bike, fled from death on a salver, saved the world from dark villains - and not only once: Vin Diesel is exactly the hero you would imagine. That's by the way also what he thinks: Vin's perfectly trained and well muscled body leaves no room for inferiority complexes. But you are very easily inclined to forgive any hint of megalomania -everything that Vin vocalizes with his deep, sexy voice is wrapped up in an extra portion of charm.

SKIP: Vin, what was it like to play the hero in a comedy instead of playing the tough action guy?

VD: Wonderful, wonderful (grins broad). I really enjoyed doing something completely different for once. I always wanted to step away a bit from the mere action genre. But my trademark - my body often proved to be a hindrance: for example, I was dying to play the part of a transvestite in Joel Schumacher's 1999 comedy Flawless. But Joel dismissed that and said a transvestite would never have so many macho muscles. It was Philip Seymour Hoffman who got the part. My part in TP was a real good opportunity: as Navy S.E.A.L. I can have my muscles play and joke around.

How did you get along with the kids on the set? Did you have similar problems with them like your character?

Absolutely not! I love kids! On the set they even used to call me Baby Whisperer because sometimes, I was the only one able to calm them. There were much more kids on the set than in the movie, because due to the working time restrictions mostly twins are casted for kid parts.

You too have a twin brother?

Yes, but we're not identical twins. He's also in the movie biz - as a very successful trailer editor. He did the trailers for Pulp Fiction and Seven.

You skipped the part of xXx for TP, now Ice Cube is doing the work. What do you think of him as your successor?

Ice Cube is a great guy and he's doing an excellent job. But I personally think it's not cool to rehash a character just boost the b.o. The b.o. is doing fine, you don't need to frantically work on a sequel to draw

profit.

Did you admire any action heroes as a child?

When I was a kid, there haven't been action heroes. That came up later with Sylvester Stallone or Arnold Schwarzenegger: My idols were Marlon Brando, Kirk Douglas and James Dean who did Rebel Without A Cause? virtually a parent of TFATF. And then there's Clint Eastwood, the ultimate movie hero.

Like Clint you're working on changing to the opposite side of the camera. How's your Hannibal project?

It goes and goes and goes. I'm not only directing but I also play the lead of this legendary commander. This is going to be an expensive project, we're renegotiating the budget at the moment and reschedule some of the effects. But I am pretty sure I'll be sitting on an elephant's back soon and follow Hannibal's trace across the Alps.

This is also Diesel, just a little bit different, than the others

La Donna magazine (Hungary)
2005. may
translation by Kriszta

We looked after Bruce Willis, and found Vin Diesel. Vin speaks with ease: not his ex-wife is pregnant from guy younger with fourteen years. He does not even has a wife, not to mention an ex-wife.

How have you changed from Mark Vincent to Vin Diesel?

A long time ago, when I was a bouncer in a New York club, we were not allowed to use our real names, not to get caught when a trouble happened at the doorway or in the club. That's how I have became Vin. And after that Diesel was just a small step.

Just like a train. Strong and unstoppable. Show me your arm!

Its from bascetball. And fasting.

Are you kidding me?

I swear! That's the minimum to have a "sixpack". When I played a boxer, I have trained with tough guys in the ring. I speak about that kind of box, when there are no rules at all. You hit wherever you can. But I am not a fanatic body builder. But when a role needs it, I train like crazy. Between two movies I do not look to the gyms.

Whatever you do, it will look good when you ride an elephant in your Hannibal movie.

If ever it happens. I would love it! In my last movie I did ride an elephant .. damn, I left the video at home, and I would so love to show you when I climbed on it the very first time, no stirrup, no harness, I just sat there. By the way Timbo is the kindest creature of the world, he lives in the Los Angeles Zoo. He is a very sweet animal.

Lets go back to when you were a bouncer in New York. When did you turn to be an actor?

I haven't started acting after the disco years, because I have been playing in shows ever since I was seven. I did climb on the promotion ladder, till I got the lead role of The fast and the furious. Ever since...

Well, yes. It was just yesterday, that my dentist said, when he was working in my mouth, that I must have had earned at least 2 million dollars for a movie, and I laughed so hard that he had to stop the burr. Two? - I said him. - Twenty!

Well, its not exactly that easy. I turned down a role, not only once but twice, even though they offered me so much money I was plain amazed. Unfortunately, it was not my fault that I had to say no, but a movie contract I made with a studio and could not break it. By the way, the first part of TFATF was exciting and original, but in the second part they only wanted on capitalize the first movie's success - that's why I said no. But I was in the third movie, although for a lot less money, that the first part's salary.

See, if you'd be still an english teacher, you had no such problems these days.

I have not graduated as a teacher, I haven't even completed my major. And I attended creative writing only because I did not dare to go to the acting class. Not a single New York actor is a fool enough to risk everything for such a questionable career like ours. It does not hurt when you have a real job.

But your sister went to Harvard.

Well, you see, she is real teacher, she teaches english literature, grammar and history. She is a lot smarter than me. I can be proud only that back that time I was the clown of my class. But back to my sister, she hasn't started working as a teacher, but came with me to Hollywood, and learned it well in a year and half.

BTW she is a big movie fan and the leader of my production company.

Why does an actor need a production company?

You really don't know who are you talking to? Look at me as one whose short movie was screened in Cannes, and my feature movie was officially selected for Sundance movie fest. And that's right! And after Sundance I was asked to write a 10 million dollar movie's script. It had happened all before Spielberg casted me in Saving Private Ryan. So while I was shooting with Spielberg, I wrote at night in my hotel room.

But you could at least give one of the tasks to your brother?

We are twins, that's true, but we are not identical: we are so different that they don't even think we are buddies, not to mention brothers! He is the perfect father and husband. No matter how hard I try, I will never be like him. But as all twins, we try hard to decide who is the better one of us.

Let's talk about the girls as well! Asia Argento was the last girlfriend of yours, we heard about.

It was very good to work with her. It's because of her I studied some Italian, and I am still persuaded, that if ever I direct, I will shoot in Italy. I have even learnt some parts of an opera aria!

Women really count when you are in love. What is your type?

For me the ideal woman is the one hard to get along.

Details?

I don't mind if she has a difficult nature, but be loyal. That's the key word. By me she can be as independent as she wants to, if she has the instinctive, mafia-like loyalty, that we have around New York.

Even though you are not married, you practice child raising? How many god-kids you have?

Well, that's a tough question. I don't know. All of my old friends have family by now and I am the honorary uncle or godfather everywhere. Meanwhile, I do movies after movies and have no time for the girls.

Not even for a hairdresser. Take a clipper and you are ready in a few minutes.

Exactly. As long as I know, I am bald. This is the simplest. Its like when you are shaving and see how long it grows.

There are two more things you are famous about. One of them is that you gain weight with eating ice cream.

One kilo cold vanilla icecream and a hot chocolate cake. I started it in Paris, in the Plaza Athenée, when I had a vacation there last year. But the brand of the icreamcream does really matter!

And they also say that you always ask your friends to find the true love for you.

You just won't give up! Well, okay. The true one is the true one. A good person, nice creature, and someone whom it shows from the beginning that she'd be a great mother.

Vin Diesel Getting Into Character To Play Real-Life Badass Actor also developing several video-game projects.

6.15.2005 4:49 PM EDT

MTV.com

Vin Diesel has made a good living playing tough guys — sometimes in a fur coat — but now he's preparing to play a real-life badass.

Diesel is starring in and directing the movie "Hannibal," a biopic about Hannibal Barca, the third-century Carthaginian general who marched an army of elephants into Italy to attack Rome.

And if the past two months of prep work are any indication, he's taking the part pretty seriously.

"I just got back yesterday from the French Alps, where I was trekking to pay homage to the journey that Hannibal took into Italy," Diesel said. "For the past two months, I've been going around Europe and connecting to the locations that he was in. So it's been a very spiritual and important journey."

Diesel said the trip was important not only to get into character, but also to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of world history.

"If you're going to play a character that's as important as Hannibal Barca, it's important that you try to understand who he is and what he meant to the people of that time," Diesel explained. "If you go to the Iberian Peninsula, you'll find that they remember Hannibal more than any other person in history."

But it's not all historical figures and elephant battalions for Vin. He's also working on new video-game projects, including a sequel to "The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay," a game called "Secret Service" with director Bryan Singer ("X-Men" "Superman Returns"), and an untitled project with Quentin Tarantino, all through his production company Tigon Studios.

"I started Tigon Studios because I wanted to have another outlet for creativity to add story to video games," Diesel said. "What I think we're gonna see in the next few years is the film industry merging with the video-game industry to make the video games that much more interesting and satisfying, like a movie."

Ciao, Mr. Cool!

From German TV magazine "tvworld", issue 17/2005
translation thanks to Janine

Bald, meaty and cool as ice – Hollywood's top fighter loves to appear fierce in public. But the truth is, that he's secretly working on a change of his image.

It wasn't before long, when a warrior was the measure of all things for action super hero Vin Diesel (38). "Riddick is the coolest fucking hero I've ever seen! He's a real tough guy! One that doesn't give a shit what others think of him!" A speech like a whiplash. And far more than a mere declaration of love for his PB and TCoR alter ego Riddick. Does that guy mean himself or his role? He says "Sometimes there are no limits." Is he for real?

"I'm a real fighter after all." Toughness. Justice. Fight. These three words seem to be the engine of the turbo Diesel who raced Hollywood in 2001 with the spectacular TFATF. A likewise hurdle-race. Says he. Diesel, who is actually called Mark Vincent, loves to talk about his gauntlet to fame. His first stage appearance was sometime in the 70s in Brooklyn – playing a donkey in the school theatre's Sleeping Beauty. His twin, blond and blue-eyed, played the prince. "From then on I knew it'd be hard for me." And he was proven right. He attends auditions but no one ever recognizes his talent. At that time he works at NY clubs for \$100 an evening. As handyman or bouncer – depending on who he faces. Soon, XXL-Vin becomes a well-known idol in the scene, but no one wants to hire Diesel. Completely frustrated he shoots the 20 min. movie Multi-Facial and triumphs. The mini drama about an unsuccessful actor is aired at Cannes in 1997 and draws Spielberg's attention who offers Vin a role in SPR. The breakthrough. Now Diesel is an action star, plays the Hooligan with a heart, the nut case with a sense of responsibility. And he has the big puss "I'm impersonating the new generation!" he self-confidently says in an interview.

In the meantime, he's working on the future – the time after the action. In The Pacifier he tried his potential for family friendly comedies, in FMG he'll be playing a mobster facing a marathon trial. 2006 his epic Hannibal is announced, with Diesel directing the movie and playing the lead of the Cathaginian general himself, who once crossed the Alps with an army to battle the Romans over and over again but hesitated to occupy Rome. Hesitation – a completely new facet in the wide range of the Vinnars character range. Is the hunk gonna grow up? But he still makes a secret of his origin and private life. Is he Afro-American? Hispanic? Italian? Diesel remains silent. And what about his women? Silence all the way. At least we know that he and his colleagues Michelle Rodriguez and Asia Argento moved closer together. How about friends? And now bid baldie starts talking about his dog, an Italian mastiff with whom he shares a home in the Hollywood Hills. "That is my home" he says. There he finds the power to realize new projects. And maybe later a "real big dream": "In ten years I want to have a huge family with kids and all." Well look at that, someone is longing for a peaceful home. Diesel will be turning 40 in two years.

Diesel Holds 'Hannibal' Hopes

Vin Diesel's been talking about doing 'Hannibal' for a while now. He's still talking.

By Daniel Fienberg
March 10 2006

Vin Diesel, promoting his new film "Find Me Guilty," says that he's finally just about ready to make "Hannibal."

For the record, Vin Diesel said he was nearly set to make "Hannibal" last year at this time, when he was promoting "The Pacifier."

Back in 2002, shortly before the release of "XXX," Vin Diesel also said that production on "Hannibal" was right around the corner.

So, um, Vin... When do you think "Hannibal" will be shooting?

"It's been four years," Diesel laughs. "You tell me. I was about to ask you guys."

Whether or not Diesel is any closer to making his epic about the Carthaginian general is a bit ambiguous (issues of money, distribution and scheduling may still be up in the air), but he has used the passion project as an incentive to drop the extra weight he put on to play a middle-aged mobster in "Guilty." He also seems to be rolling up the frequent traveler points.

"One of the things that I attribute losing the weight to is this year's preparation for 'Hannibal,'" says Diesel, who has, indeed, lost his "Guilty" pot belly. "I went to Europe and traveled all over Europe starting in Cartagena, where Hannibal marries Imilce, this Spanish princess 200 years before the birth of Christ, and I traveled up to the summit of the Alps where Hannibal crossed from Gaul country, France, into Italy."

Diesel adds, "We've been scouting elephants for the last year, going all over Europe finding elephants that African elephants that are of worth. They can't be these anemic, anorexic elephants for Hannibal."

Initially set up at Revolution Studios, Diesel's "Hannibal" was supposed to be fast-tracked to avoid a rival Hannibal flick at Fox. Somehow, that urgency has vanished, but the extra time has fueled Diesel's interest.

"About a year ago I decided to direct the picture," he notes. "I met with Mel Gibson and I met with Bruce Davies, who helped him make 'Braveheart.' It's not often that somebody takes a stab at being an epic auteur. To be an epic auteur, to do a 'Braveheart,' is probably the hardest thing you can do, really."

In addition to prodding Gibson for directing advice, Diesel also hit the Oscar winner up for an ancient language scholar. Bill Fulco, who worked on "The Passion of the Christ," will translate Diesel's "Hannibal" script from English to Greek, Latin and Punic.

"This is going to be a tricky one," he admits. "This is gonna be one where I really put my head out on the chopping block, because it's been so close to me for so long."

While Diesel has all variety of doubts, he isn't concerned about the lingering stench from Oliver Stone's "Alexander."

"Not. In. The. Least."

"Find Me Guilty" opens on Friday, March 17. "Hannibal" will open when "Hannibal" opens.

Sidney Lumet keeps up the pace

The filmmaker, 80, takes no time to deliberate on the set of his latest courtroom drama, 'Find Me Guilty.' He'll pause for an honorary Oscar.

[Calendarlive.com](http://calendarlive.com)

2005.01.04

By John Horn, Times Staff Writer

BAYONNE, N.J. — As an action star, Vin Diesel has raced cars, jumped motorcycles, and outrun space aliens. But even with such testosterone-fueled credentials, Diesel on a recent morning can barely keep up with 80-year-old director Sidney Lumet.

Technically, Diesel isn't due on the set of Lumet's courtroom story "Find Me Guilty" until 9:30 a.m. But by 9 a.m., Lumet already has filmed multiple takes of the day's first scene, and is looking for his leading man, eager to move on.

The director of such cinematic landmarks as "Serpico," "Dog Day Afternoon," "Network," "12 Angry Men" and "The Verdict" starts sizing up the set that will be used as a judge's chambers in the next scene on the day's already busy schedule. "It may not look like I am working, but I'm working," Lumet tells his crew, mulling over some options before he promptly makes up his mind. "Put one camera right here."

Dressed casually in jeans, a sweater, sneakers and a baseball cap, Lumet then speedily tells them what lenses he wants, and precisely how many feet of dolly track should be laid under each of the two cameras.

Where other directors would repair to their cantilevered trailers and a soy latte while the scenery is moved and lights rearranged, Lumet paces around his set like a real estate agent about to hold an open house, making sure every prop and piece of furniture is in just the right place.

"OK. Where's Vin?" the director asks when he is satisfied.

Fact is, Diesel hasn't yet completed the two hours of daily makeup required to transform his 37-year-old self into the 48-year-old mobster Giacomo "Fat Jack" DiNorscio, upon whose epic criminal trial the movie is

based. Diesel soon arrives on the set to rehearse the scene, although he hasn't had time to put on his DiNorscio-styled hairpiece.

Spotting the actor in his familiar baldness, Lumet says of Diesel, "Ahh, there's the Vin we know."

The run-through begins immediately.

At a point when most filmmakers his age are content to hang out with the grandkids and collect residuals, Lumet, whose career is so long he worked with (and helped protect the identity of) blacklisted TV screenwriters in the 1950s, wasn't just working. Rather, he was filming at a pace many directors a third his age couldn't match.

Scheduled for a breakneck 30 days of filming, "Find Me Guilty" was completed two days ahead of schedule.

Lumet can now use the extra time to polish his acceptance speech for the honorary Academy Award he will receive in next month's ceremonies. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences selected Lumet for the award, the director's first Oscar, to recognize his "brilliant services to screenwriters, performers and the art of the motion picture."

With more than 40 movies on his curriculum vitae, what Lumet lacks in youth he more than compensates for with experience, especially when it involves his preferred genre, the legal drama.

To observe Lumet on a movie set is to be reminded of how movies used to be made, before special effects and post-production tricks rendered the principal photography of actors a minor component of a film's final construction. With "Find Me Guilty," the movie is nothing more — or less — than what Lumet can capture from his performers on a New Jersey soundstage.

Working with versatile digital video cameras, Lumet made much of "Find Me Guilty" as if it were one of his 1950s live television dramas, which included "Playhouse 90" and "The Alcoa Hour." With no need to change film magazines, scenes could run for several screenplay pages at a time. In taking yet another tip from the "get-it-fast" book of TV production, Lumet employed two cameras at the same time, so that he could simultaneously record both participants in a dialogue.

Instead of donning headphones and sitting behind a bank of video monitors while his actors performed their scenes, as almost all directors do, Lumet stood between his cameras, walking up as close to the cast as he could without being caught in the frame.

"He is able to act as a constant reminder that we as actors are protected, because he is in the trenches with us. So it allows us to do things we might not normally do as actors," Diesel said after completing the film.

Although it's not a written condition of employment, Lumet's actors know their dialogue cold, and spent two weeks rehearsing the movie before production commenced. Filming can (and does) move a lot faster when actors are not calling for lines every 15 seconds.

"I've always worked at great speed," Lumet said a few days after "Find Me Guilty's" principal photography had been completed. "'12 Angry Men' took me 19 days. I think the longest I've ever shot — 'Prince of the City' — was 51 days, but that had 135 locations."

Gangland trial

DiNorscio's life story reads like typical Lumet fare: an intriguing mix of crime, character and courtroom theatrics. In some ways, "Find Me Guilty" is reminiscent of some of Lumet's earlier legal dramas, particularly "The Verdict," "Q & A," "Guilty as Sin" and his feature debut, "12 Angry Men."

Unlike those films, though, "Find Me Guilty" is being made outside of the studio system. Financed by producer Bob Yari, the \$13-million production does not yet have a domestic distributor or a release date.

"I've never done it before," Lumet says of working without a distributor. "But I don't worry about it at all. The one thing I know about money is they always get it back somehow."

"Find Me Guilty's" script, by Lumet and screenwriters T.J. Mancini and Robert McCrea, focuses on the real-life 1987-88 racketeering trial of DiNorscio and 19 other reputed members of the Lucchese crime family.

The court case lasted 21 mind-boggling months. At the time, it was the longest criminal case in U.S. District Court history.

DiNorscio said during his trial that he was a "comedian, not a gangster," was allowed to represent himself, and his legal tactics and profane rebuttals helped turn the trial into a circus.

An ailing DiNorscio visited the set of "Find Me Guilty" at Lumet's invitation, and died a few days later, in November 2004.

When Lumet began work on the script, Joe Pesci was being courted to play the lead role. When negotiations

with the "GoodFellas" star came to an impasse, Lumet lobbied for Diesel, having seen him in "Boiler Room" and "Multi-Facial."

"Find Me Guilty" isn't exactly the first time Lumet and Diesel have collaborated. Diesel says that when he wrote, directed and starred in his 1997 breakout Sundance Film Festival movie, "Strays," he used Lumet's 1996 filmmaking book, "Making Movies," as his guide.

"His book gave me a sense of empowerment, a place to start, a blueprint on how to follow the process that these masters used," Diesel said.

The education continued on the set of "Find Me Guilty," with its bustling courtroom scenes and extended monologues.

"Every day on this movie was like opening night in the theater," Diesel said. "That's the challenging aspect, but also the rewarding aspect. You are going to be called on, in a roomful of 200 New York actors, to do a 10-minute speech."

Lumet said that while he doesn't know what his next project might be, he wants to continue spending his days on a movie set.

No matter how deep his résumé, however, he could use a hit.

His last project was 2004's HBO movie "Strip Search," a post-9/11 national security drama which the cable channel pulled after only a few showings. His last film to earn a wide theatrical release was 1999's poorly reviewed "Gloria," a remake of a movie about a gangster's mistress, starring Sharon Stone.

"For whatever reason, I have just kept working and working and things turn up that I want to do," Lumet said. "I don't know if it's a compulsion. It's certainly a lovely way of life. If you're in movies, there is no job better than mine. So why stop until nature makes you or the studios make you?"

Producer Yari said he's happy to keep Lumet busy, and hopes others do the same.

"In Hollywood, there is so much reluctance to hire older directors," Yari said. "But working with somebody like Sidney, well, it's a shame he's not doing more."

Diesel Power

by: Paul Solotaroff

Photograph by: Norman Jean Roy

(March 2005)

[Men's Journal](#)

A true action hero, Vin Diesel was pulling stunts and kicking ass long before he conquered Hollywood. He had countless fights then, scores upon scores, full-strength melees that boiled out of clubs, a dozen or more guys whaling away. The glamour of brawls had long since worn off, that lightning feeling from his wrist to shoulder when he knocked a kid cold with one shot. Still, as he stands in his splendid yard near the top of Beverly Hills now -- a soft moon hovering like a diving bell, the breeze carrying the scent of hibiscus and that other indigenous crop here, newfound wealth -- he finds that, looking back, one battle stands out. He was working the door at Tunnel, a ravenous New York club that drew thousands of kids from the 'hood, where he often took on entire crews from the Bronx or Brooklyn. On this night, though, his lone opponent was a kid crazed on PCP. Time and again, he took the kid down with a mammoth hook or cross -- and time and again, the kid got up, his eyes like the scope on an Uzi. "He was pure, total rage," he says, "and as strong as a chimp; there were three of us and we couldn't cool him out. Finally, after this goes on for-fucking-ever, we picked his ass up, opened the door, and threw him as far as we could into the street."

If it's odd to be having this conversation in the poshest zip code in America, it seems all the more so given the speaker's occupation: a \$10-million-plus-per-picture movie star. But Vin Diesel was an action star even before he started making movies. His life has been one long pitched battle, starting three days after he left the womb in 1967 and his father walked off for good. Every step has been an uphill slog, and even now, on the lawn of his opulent home -- a glass-enclosed mansion at his back, a lot full of tank-size trucks, Harleys in the garage, and a high wall of privet to ward off the curious -- Diesel talks like a man under siege, trying to hold his ground. Out there, downhill, the enemy still waits.

"I was a bouncer for nine years -- it was all I knew how to do -- and my training was to not talk loosely, reveal my shit to strangers. That's still my thought process all these years later: Shut your mouth, watch your back, and keep working till your ass falls off."

I had come expecting a war of my own. Diesel, by reputation, can be hell on journalists: peevish, thin-

skinned, and grudging with his time. But instead I found him relaxed and personable and eager to chat, particularly when he learned that we'd gone to the same school and grown up a few blocks from each other. Casually dressed in a tight-fitting T-shirt and muddy hiking boots, he at one point showed off the gut he'd gained for a new film, *Find Me Guilty*, a movie about mobsters on trial.

"I sat in a room for weeks doing nothing," he says, "just eating and becoming my character. For me to go that long without working out, and not having the body that I built my identity around, drove me pretty close to crazy for a while. But it was fun walking around like Ralph fucking Kramden, parading my gut for the cast."

He showed me into his dining room, where the table was piled with work. What registered, besides the panoply of rich-guy gizmos -- the huge plasma screen floating on a wall, the concert-quality sound system that hulked in an alcove -- was a series of prototype posters and sketches depicting Diesel in ancient armor. In several he is riding an elephant, glowering from his perch, bare-chested. "Excuse all this; I've got like five projects going now, including *Hannibal*," he says. "That's the big one, and I'm trying to do it right, without it costing out at \$200 million."

Hannibal has been something of a white whale. It was first scheduled to begin shooting in the spring of '03; now Diesel hopes to launch it later this year. He has long been taken with the general from Carthage who, despite stunning victories over mighty Rome to avenge his murdered father, remains a shadowy figure in popular history. "To the extent people remember him, it's as this savage guy, the barbarian who came over the hills," says Diesel. "But he's more interesting than that. He's a warrior who proved the power of a son's love."

And proved it in a certain X Games, out-there way, armoring and riding two-ton elephants and trampling tens of thousands before him. Another hook -- both for Diesel and Denzel Washington, who has a competing *Hannibal* project in start-up -- is the matter of the general's race. Thundering into Rome from what is now Tunisia, *Hannibal* was one of the first great warlords of color -- a black, or in any case brown, Alexander. Ethnologists dispute whether he was African or a Semitic tribesman. Either way, it's perfect for Diesel, who is the world's first bona fide multiculti film star.

For the rest of "Diesel Power" pick up the March 2005 issue.

FMG: Vin Diesel Discusses His First Role Playing

Best known as an action star, Vin Diesel has fought alien races (*Pitch Black*, *The Chronicles of Riddick*), raced fast cars (*The Fast and the Furious*) and even tamed five children and a duck (*The Pacifier*). Now, in the recently released *Find Me Guilty*, the 38-year-old New York native is taking on the real-life story of Jackie DiNorscio, a member of New Jersey's notorious Lucchese crime family, who refused to testify against his friends, representing himself in one of the longest trials in United States criminal history.

At times, Diesel is nearly unrecognizable as DiNorscio, having donned a hairpiece, adopted a new voice and posture, and packed on the pounds for the role. "This is going to sound perverse, but I enjoyed putting on the weight. I ate a quart a day of ice cream. I enjoyed departing from the normal characters that incorporate that physicality."

Diesel was also drawn to the project for the opportunity to work with Sidney Lumet, a legendary actor's director with a resume ranging from *12 Angry Men* to *Serpico* to *Dog Day Afternoon*. "I started acting in the New York theatre over 30 years ago and, as a New York actor, you dream of being in a Sidney Lumet movie. He's one of our few New York directors. He was such a role model."

"When I went off to direct my short film *Multi-Facial*, I had spent years learning how to write at Hunter College, and I'd spent years working as an actor and studying to be a student of the craft, but I had no idea how to direct a movie. I went and bought a book called *Making Movies* by Sidney Lumet, and that's where I got the confidence to direct my first short movie. It came full circle, 10 years later, when he saw that short movie and became adamant that I should play Jackie DiNorscio. Having an opportunity to work with Sidney Lumet was kind of like going into the Masters Program of Filmmaking."

After he was signed on and rehearsals had begun, Diesel admits that his biggest worry was the fact that he didn't look anything like DiNorscio. "Sidney said, 'Jackie wants you to play him.' I asked what movie he saw me in that led him to wanting me to play him, and Sidney told me it was *The Fast and the Furious*. I didn't understand what Dominic Toretto had to do with Jackie DiNorscio, but Sidney said, 'Vin, we have ways of making you look like Jackie DiNorscio.' Little did I know that it would take two hours of make-up every morning. And, had been working with the details of his movement so much that I felt that if I put on a weight suit, I would lose some of the physicality I had been developing for this character. While we were doing table readings before we were shooting, Sidney would ask me to come in three hours early to get into make-up, so that the other actors could see only Jackie DiNorscio. Sidney was very adamant about everybody getting to know Jackie DiNorscio through that process."

Because of all the courtroom scenes in the film, Diesel had to call on all of his New York theatre experience to effectively be in control as an actor, while in a courtroom full of extras. "As a director, Sidney was committed to the emotional truth of everybody in that room, to the point that he auditioned and hand selected all of the actors in the courtroom, and on the jury. It was very much like returning to the stage, in part because you would have to know 15 pages off book, and be ready to do it in one take, in front of a sea of New York actors."

For an uneducated mobster, it's both amazing and surprising that DiNorscio was able to defend himself at trial so effectively. "At the end of the day, it's real simple. He was there on trial, where the objective of the prosecutor was to expose how inhumane they all were. All he really did was expose how human they all were. He revealed the humanity of everyone, through humor, through his own experiences and through anecdotes that the jury could relate to, in one way or another."

Taking on a real life character is daunting for any actor, and Diesel feels fortunate that he was able to meet and spend time with the real DiNorscio during filming. "I spent all this time, prior to meeting him, working on the attributes, mannerisms, characteristics and physicalities that Jackie possessed, in an attempt just to match the footage that I saw. It wasn't until I met him, when he actually came to the set and had a heart-to-heart with me, that I began to understand what the whole trial meant for him, and what he was fighting for. After meeting him, all of the attention that I paid to his characteristics, and the work that I'd put into imitating him, took a backseat to me representing the truth that he was trying to fight for. This was the first time I'd ever played a real person, and I had to represent a man whose characteristics represented the trial, and whose truth represented the outcome."

Although the real Jackie DiNorscio died during the production on Find Me Guilty, Diesel still seems devoted to his memory. "After watching the picture, I realized that I haven't seen a character in film for a long time that has Jackie's ability to love. I haven't seen a character that could love to the degree that he could love a cousin that shot him and tried to kill him. He was someone who was willing to sacrifice his own life to make a statement about loyalty."

Since DiNorscio used humor as a means to get the jury to relate to him, Diesel says that Find Me Guilty would have to be classified as a dramedy, even though it is still a very serious subject at its core. "While shooting the movie, I was very in tune with the drama of the character, to the point where, when I saw the movie with Sidney in Berlin, I told him, 'I wasn't trying to be funny.' And, he said, 'By committing to the character the way that you did, you took on the attributes that Jackie had, and one of them was being an entertainer in that courtroom.'"

On top of his huge box-office success, Diesel is also a prominent producer and filmmaker. In the future, the former telemarketer and bouncer wants to step behind the camera to bring his much talked about production of Hannibal, which tells the story of the Carthaginian general who rode an elephant across the Alps in order to attack Rome in the 3rd century B.C., to the big screen. He also hopes to revisit the role of Richard B. Riddick that he brought to life in the cult favorite Pitch Black, as well as The Chronicles of Riddick, which his company, One Race Films, produced.

"It took me five years to make The Chronicles of Riddick. Hopefully, it won't take five years for the next one. When I was in the process of creating the mythology for Riddick, the idea was to create a trilogy that would start at the end of Pitch Black, in the same way that The Lord of the Rings is a trilogy that starts at the end of The Hobbit. So, I wrote a storyline that covers three pictures. Where Riddick goes in the next films is already mapped out, just not in script form. It is being developed, and it's going to surface when you least expect it."

Making Movies with Lumet

A decade after Vin Diesel took inspiration from Sidney Lumet's how-to book to make a short film, that same short gets him a gig with Lumet.

Thursday, March 16, 2006 at 11:30 AM

Filmstew.com

By Brett Buckalew

When The Fast and the Furious became a surprise summer smash five years ago, journalists and popcorn movie fans wasted no time in anointing its star, Vin Diesel, the heir to the action-hero throne that would soon be vacated by Arnold Schwarzenegger. While Diesel is arguably a less distinctive screen presence than the current California governor - his guttural, sandpaper-rough growl of a voice is certainly less fun to impersonate than Schwarzenegger's Austrian accent - his post-Fast career decisions have served to strengthen his status as official replacement of the Terminator star. He made a big-budget sequel (The Chronicles of Riddick) to a low-budget sci-fi flick (Pitch Black), wherein he donned shades and spoke very little, and he even went the Kindergarten Cop route with last year's action-comedy hit The Pacifier.

But it's difficult, impossible even, to imagine Schwarzenegger following in the footsteps of master thespians like Henry Fonda, Al Pacino, William Holden, and Paul Newman by taking the lead role in a film from legendary director Sidney Lumet. And yet that's exactly what Diesel has done, collaborating with the master behind *12 Angry Men*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Network* and *The Verdict* for the new courtroom drama *Find Me Guilty*.

In discussing this seemingly bold career step with *Film Stew*, Diesel explains how it's actually the inevitable culmination of a journey that began in his struggling-actor days, when he decided to write and direct a semi-autobiographical short film called *Multi-Facial*.

"I had no idea how to direct a movie," Diesel recalls. "I went and I bought a book called *Making Movies* by Sidney Lumet, and that's where I got the confidence to direct my first short movie. It comes full circle ten years later when he [Sidney] sees that short movie and becomes adamant that I should play Jackie DiNorscio."

DiNorscio is the focus of *Find Me Guilty*, which dramatizes the true story of the longest criminal trial in U.S. history. A brash New Jersey gangster, DiNorscio chose to act as his own defense when he and the rest of his crime family were faced with 76 different charges. Though DiNorscio's unorthodox courtroom style, accentuated as it is by dirty jokes and a tendency to bully witnesses, made him stand out as far from a legal expert, the sincerity and showmanship behind it won him many admirers. (Though it would be unfair to come right out and spoil the trial's - and by extension, the movie's - outcome, let's just say Jackie's fan base included at least some of the jurors.)

To DiNorscio, the courtroom became a stage for his extravagant performances, a metaphor that is certainly not lost on Diesel. And since Lumet filled the shoot's courtroom set with professional New York actors as extras, Diesel remained aware that his theatrics as DiNorscio had to pass muster with an audience of his peers.

"It was very much like returning to New York stage, to New York theatre," the NY-born actor relates, "in part because you would have to know 15 pages off-book, ready to do, in one take, and to do it in front of a sea of New York actors. And they were all wondering, 'All right, now Vin's comin' back home. Let's see where he can go. Mr. Big Bucks comes back to New York. Let's see what he's got.'"

Just as daunting for Diesel was playing a real-life figure who he has no physical resemblance to, a stumbling block that he talked to Lumet about well before production. "Sidney and I met in his office, and he started reading the script, and he felt very good about it," Diesel elaborates. "And I said that I don't look anything like Jackie DiNorscio. And he said, 'well, Jackie wants you to play him.'"

"I said, 'What movie did he see that he wanted me?' [He said], 'The Fast and the Furious.' I said, 'What?! What does Domenic Toretto have to do with Jackie DiNorscio?' And he said, 'Vin, we have ways of making you look like Jackie DiNorscio.'"

Lumet wasn't kidding. Diesel's transformation included two hours daily in the make-up chair to approximate Jackie's wise guy look, and Lumet insisted that the actor don the make-up even at rehearsals. "He didn't want any other actor in the room to be familiar with Vin in the way they were familiar with him," Diesel explains of Lumet's unconventional preproduction decision. "He was very adamant about everybody getting to know Jackie DiNorscio through this process, so much so that when they came to the table reading, I had already been Jackie through the two hours of make-up."

Diesel also had to gain enough weight to match DiNorscio's hefty gut, a challenge he could've avoided if he accepted Lumet's offer to just wear an artificial fat suit. Defending his choice to put on the weight naturally, the actor explains, "I had been working with the details of [Jackie's] movements so much that I felt if I ever put on this weight suit, I would lose some of the physicality that I had been developing for this character. And I also felt like after *Raging Bull*, it would be wimping out if I didn't try to gain all the weight."

While Diesel had the privilege of meeting with DiNorscio to perfect his performance, there was consequently a feeling of deep sadness that hit the actor when DiNorscio died while the film was in production. "When he passed away, it was a very, very heavy experience, because it was the first time I had ever played a real character, a real person," Diesel shares. "All the other characters I've played were fictitious, and I had the liberty of creating in any way that I wanted to. This was different."

The star views *Find Me Guilty* as a reverent tribute to DiNorscio's irrepressibly generous spirit, which is presumably a rarity in his shady line of work. "After watching the picture," Diesel remembers, "I realized, 'This is strange. I haven't seen a character in a film for a long time that has Jackie's ability to love. I haven't seen a character that had the ability to love to this degree that he could love a cousin that shot him and tried to kill him, a character that would be willing...to sacrifice his own life to make a statement about loyalty.'"

Clearly, playing a historical figure has affected Diesel, who has chosen to take on another based-on-a-true-story drama for his next project. In *Hannibal*, he will play the Carthaginian general of the title, who led an

attack on Rome in the 3rd century B.C.

While Schwarzenegger has done his share of period war films, there is a vast difference between playing Conan the Barbarian and playing a real person. And it is in that difference that Diesel has finally been able to establish himself as a valid Hollywood original.

'Guilty' Stretch Fuels Diesel

From extra weight to a funny toupe, Vin Diesel went to extremes for his new role

By Daniel Fienberg
March 15 2006

As an actor best known for battling alien races, driving fast cars and hobnobbing with a duck, "Find Me Guilty" presented myriad challenges for Vin Diesel.

"I don't know if it was the collective Team Vin, but yes, there were those concerned voices that were saying, 'Are you sure you want to do this? You just turned down all this money for this one picture and you're doing this movie and you're not getting paid and you're creating a character and a look that won't comply with all the other action films,'" Diesel says of his latest film.

In "Find Me Guilty," Diesel plays Jackie DiNorscio, a real-life New Jersey mobster who refused to testify against his friends, representing himself in one of the longest trials in United States criminal history. The film, directed by Sidney Lumet, is a difficult-to-describe blend of legal drama and gangster comedy, miles from high concept vehicles like "The Fast and the Furious" or "XXX."

"I'm so used to being a superhero every day," Diesel laughs. "I loved the fact that I was able to gain weight. I loved the fact that I was able to perform within the confines of the character. I loved that there were no special effects and there was no sex scene, there was nothing obvious."

Diesel was drawn to the project by the opportunity to work with Lumet, a legendary actor's director with a resume ranging from "The Pawnbroker" to "Serpico" to "Network."

"Most of the directors that you'll come across nowadays will divide their attention amongst the CGI, the special effects, the set, all of the other elements and find that actor-director relationship amongst all of that," Diesel notes. "Sidney Lumet starts with the actor-director relationship. ... He wants you to deliver your best performance and goes to great lengths to create an environment for you to realize that dream of becoming a character."

At times, Diesel is nearly unrecognizable as DiNorscio. In addition to donning a goofy hairpiece, he adopted a new voice and posture, eschewing his buff exterior for a hard-earned layer of flab.

"It made me very anxious in the beginning, because now there was this person that I was being compared to and my character would eventually have to match up in some way to the real Jackie DiNorscio," explains Diesel, who shed all traces of the character's extra weight after shooting. "I spent a long time building the character, amassing the attributes and characteristics and mannerisms and physicalities of the character and then I had the great fortune of meeting Jackie DiNorscio."

The real Jackie D. died during the production on "Guilty" and Diesel still seems devoted to his memory.

"He was a comedian, even when he needed five guys to lift his wheelchair to get him into the trailer," he recalls. "He was joking till the last minute... That was what was special about Jackie, that he could find the humor in any situation."

Interview: Vin Diesel

The actor takes an intriguing departure in Sidney Lumet's Find Me Guilty.

by Jeff Otto

March 15, 2006 - As Vin Diesel's popularity has grown over the past decade, he's also gotten the rep as a bit of a one-trick pony. The gruff-voiced, pumped-up, bald tough-guy action star. To his credit, the rep has served him quite well, launching the Fast and the Furious, Pitch Black and XXX franchises. Over the past two years, Diesel has seemingly set out to prove he's more than just an action star.

Last year, Diesel took a stab at the family comedy genre with The Pacifier, a film in which Diesel's character was part-action hero, part-nanny. The film was ridiculed by critics, but faired extremely well financially. In the meantime, Diesel was hard at work on the most demanding part of his career: portraying a real person for the first time and working for one of the most acclaimed directors of all time.

Find Me Guilty is the true story of Jackie Giacomo "Jackie Dee" Denorscio, a member of New Jersey's Lucchese crime family. During 1987-88, Denorscio represented himself in one of the biggest crime trials in American history. Featuring 20 defendants with 20 attorneys, the trial raged on for a staggering 21 months, entering the Guinness books as the longest criminal trial in U.S. history.

Throughout it all, the highly animated Denorscio defended himself, learning the legal jargon as he went and spending more time trying to be funny more than trying to prove his innocence. Much to the chagrin of the opposing counsel and judge, Denorscio was a hit. The jury loved him. Slowly but sure, his antics were winning them over.

To play the part, Diesel had to change up his look dramatically. He stopped lifting weights and began eating more fatty foods. He met the real Denorscio in order to get a better feel for the character. Diesel also donned a wig for the first time, radically changing his look from his trademark chrome dome. Finally, Diesel had the benefit of guidance from the great director, Sidney Lumet.

IGN FilmForce recently sat down with Diesel to talk about playing Denorscio and truly testing the bounds of his abilities, both as an actor and physically.

"An unbelievable and incredible experience," Diesel says of working with the great Sidney Lumet. "The draw for me was to work with a director that's been around for so long and has directed so many of my idols in the past and had relationships with actors I've admired and watched."

"Especially nowadays, most of the directors...will divide their attention amongst the CGI, the special effects, all the other elements and find that actor/director relationship amongst all of that. Sidney Lumet starts with the actor/director relationship. Sidney Lumet is a director who doesn't have contempt for the actor in any shape or form. He wants you to deliver your best performance and goes to great lengths to create an environment for you to realize that dream of becoming a character."

Jackie Denorscio marks the first time Diesel has portrayed a real person in a film. "For me, it made me very anxious in the beginning. Because now there was this person I was being compared to. My character would have to match up in some way to the real Jackie Denorscio. I spent a long time building and masking the attributes and characteristics and mannerisms and physicalities of the character. And then I had the great fortune of meeting Jackie. What happened [then] is all the work that had gone into becoming him or acting like him...became secondary to what was important to Jackie and important in terms of the actual trial to Jackie and why he was willing to go to great lengths to make a point. What he was doing ultimately was protecting what he felt was a virtue which was loyalty in his own moral universal. That's what was so brilliant. Meeting him, I guess sometimes it might be a distraction to meet the real person... But, for me I would rather meet the real person... I was very lucky he came to the set the day that we started shooting and kind of blessed us and blessed me for this picture..."

"Consequently, three weeks later, when he passed away, equally impactfully, even more so obviously, because I was in midstream portraying him and all of a sudden he leaves the earth and all the stuff that goes through your mind in dedicating yourself to voicing what his philosophy was. He leaves us Sunday, the afternoon that we were going to see him our first day off... He passes away Sunday morning. The next day we had the ending summation scene scheduled, which is probably where he is the most honest and pure. It felt in many ways like he was in the scene with us."

"He was a comedian even at this age. Even when he needed five guys to lift his wheelchair... He would joke until the last minute. Of course he didn't have the physical youth that he had during the trial, but that was what was special about Jackie is that he could find the humor in any situation..."

Physically, Diesel's look in Find Me Guilty is radically different to the Vin audiences are used to. "Weight. Just eating a quart of ice cream and just trying to get that weight on. I met with Sydney months earlier. He said, 'If you don't gain any weight, we're going to have to get some sort of body prosthetic.' I was desperate to gain the weight so I wouldn't be encumbered with that extra weight... If I had prosthetics or a whole suit the physicality wouldn't have been [there], so it was very important to gain as fast as possible. Once I did it, it was as beneficial to me as it was to the whole set in many ways, because I was dispelling that Vin was on the set..."

The muscle-bound actor even stopped going to the gym to lift. "[I] Completely stopped [weight lifting]... [I] didn't go to the] gym at all. I barely got out of the seat."

Diesel has worked long and hard to get to his stature as a superstar. We asked him whether those around him were concerned with letting his body go to this extent. "I guess there were their voices somewhere, not sure they were the collective Team Vin, but there were those concerned voices saying, 'Are you sure you really want to do this?' You're turning down all this money for this movie and your doing [Find Me Guilty] and not getting paid anything. You're creating a character and a look that won't comply with all the other action films, but I think collectively, everybody was more focused on the fact that it was an opportunity to work with

such a great director..."

Actors often say that it is liberating to change your look to this degree, to undergo the make-up and physical attributes and change expectations entirely. "Yeah, I imagine that it is liberating. I am so used to being a superhero everyday, that I don't know what it's like... No! (Laughs) I loved the fact I was able to gain weight and I was able to conform within the confines of the character... I loved the fact that there were no special effects... It was just this courtroom story. It was a lot of fun..."

Diesel's next project will likely be his long-rumored pet project, Hannibal, which Diesel has been struggling to bring to screen for years now. "One of the things that I attribute losing the weight to is this year's preparation for Hannibal. I went to Europe and traveled all over Europe, starting where Hannibal marries the Spanish princess 200 years before the birth of Christ and I traveled to the summit of the Alps where Hannibal crosses from France into Italy..."

Diesel says he is not dejected by the time it has taken to get Hannibal off the ground. "Not in the least. It's been four years, you tell me... We've been scouting elephants going all over Europe finding elephants that are African elephants of worth... This is going to be a tricky one where I really put my head out of the chopping block. It's been so close to me for so long and after touring around the Mediterranean and kind of uncovering the legend and lore... Playing the scenes in my head, about a year ago I decided to direct the picture. So, I met with Mel Gibson and met with Bruce Davies, who helped him make Braveheart. It's not often that someone becomes an epic auteur... It's probably the hardest thing you could do, really... It's not multi-facial or Strays, where you are directing yourself.... So, what I did was because Mel used him on Passion, I hired a guy to translate the script into Greek, Latin and Punic."