

EXTRA: ASHLEY JUDD BENJAMIN BRATT WINSTON CHURCHILL

BIOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

# Biography

Every life has a story.



Who am I?

See page 26

**Elizabeth Hurley**

Sophisticated Bombshell

**Robert F. Kennedy**

Passion and Promise

The Adventures of a Real-Life

**Indiana Jones**

**Hollywood Fashion Legends**

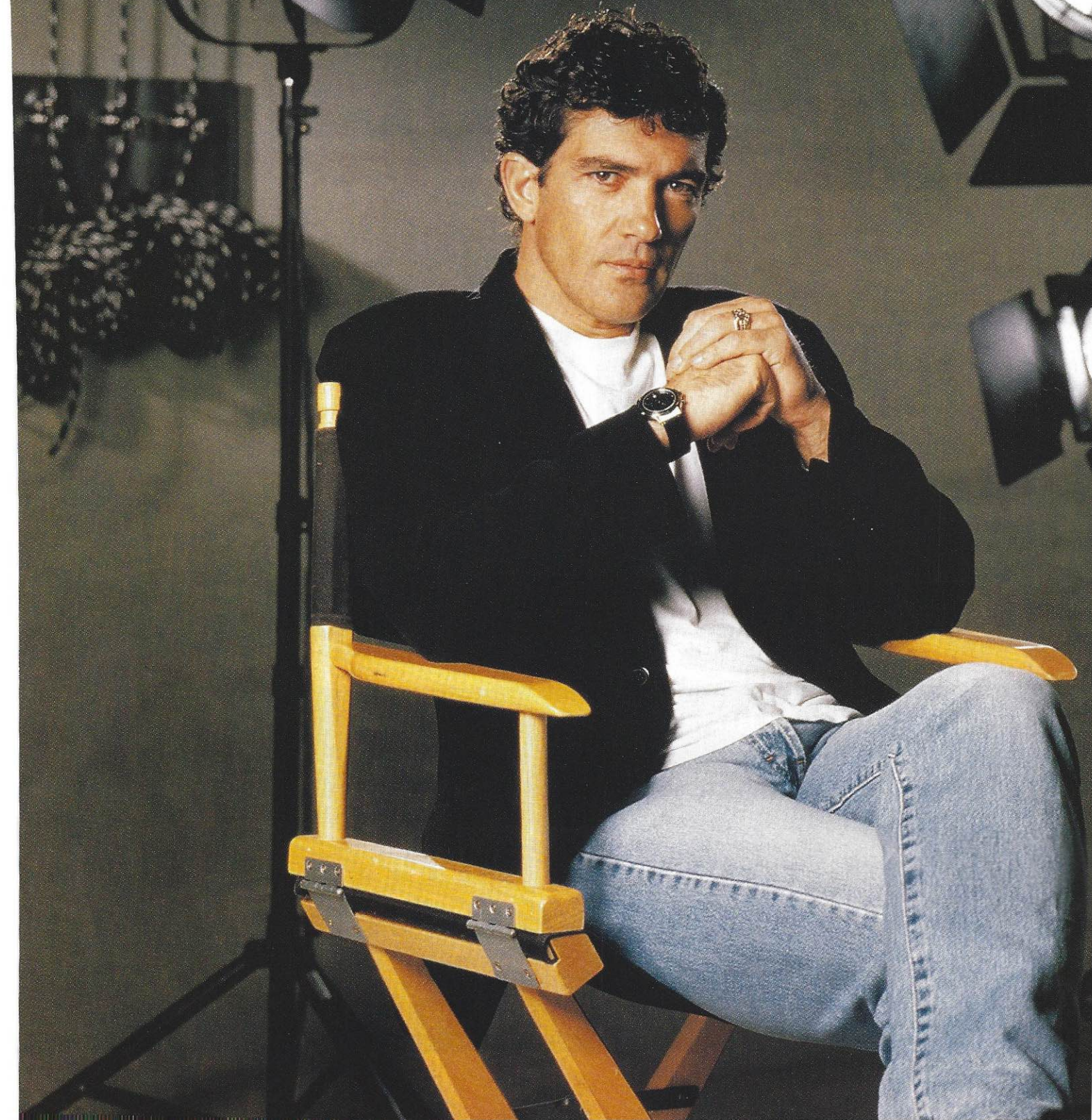
Dr. Bonnie Spring:  
A New Way to Stop Smoking

EXCLUSIVE! Sinfully Sexy

**Antonio Banderas**

ANTONIO BANDERAS...ROBERT F. KENNEDY...INDIANA JONES...HOLLYWOOD FASHION LEGENDS

NOVEMBER 2000



# Sinfully Sexy Antonio Banderas

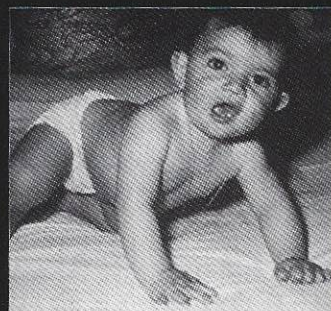
BY SHERYL BERK

**A**ntonio Banderas has the uncanny ability to make *anything* sound sexy—even changing a flat tire on the back roads of Majorca, Spain. “You see, my bike broke down,” he apologizes for calling several hours late. The voice—deep and melodic with a heavy Spanish accent—could melt butter. “I am so sorry for the delay. Oh, but you must hate me...”

Hating him, of course, is highly unlikely. Americans have been smitten with the 40-year-old actor since he first surfaced as the sad-eyed younger brother Nestor Castillo in 1992’s *The Mambo Kings*. At the time, he barely spoke a word of English; luckily, sex appeal needs no translation. Even critics swooned: “He plumbs all the nuances of charm and self-pity in Nestor’s melancholic soul,” raved *Time* magazine.

Banderas has made more than 50 films to date, everything from A (*Assassins* with Sylvester Stallone) to Z (*The Mask of Zorro* with Catherine Zeta-Jones and Anthony Hopkins). “I have done this, that, a little bit of everything,” he says. “Comedy, action, musical, horror, drama. What haven’t I tried yet?” Yet despite his versatility, the public tends to categorize him as a Latin Lover (Valentino, Ricardo Montalban, and, recently, Ricky Martin share this distinction).

“Antonio is this great presence,” explains Angelina Jolie, his co-star in *Original Sin*, a



A Don Juan-to-be in diapers

thriller due out, as of press time, in February. “He is so charming, so warm, so from this earth, people are just drawn to him. His personality is contagious.”

“When you see him, the first thing you see is a beautiful man,” says his wife, actress Melanie Griffith. “But he’s beautiful on the inside as well as the outside.”

## CELEBRITY DOSSIER

**NAME:** José Antonio Domínguez Banderas**DATE OF BIRTH:** August 10, 1960**PLACE OF BIRTH:** Málaga, Spain**PARENTS:** Mother, Ana, was a teacher; father, José, a policeman**SIBLINGS:** One younger brother, Francisco**EDUCATION:** National School of Dramatic Arts**NUGGET:** When *Evita* was released, Banderas was shocked when people suggested he might be lip-synching. "Of course I can sing," he insists. "I would have been foolish to do it if I couldn't."

Even so, Banderas seems saddled with his romantic reputation—and it baffles him. "Perhaps you can explain it to me—I don't know what is really 'Latin Lover,'" he says. "Is it a man walking on the beach, winking at the girls, and looking for going to bed? Is it someone who wears a lot of gold chains and rings and sits at the bar? Because this is not me! I am very, very Latin, but not so much lover."

These days—between movie projects—Banderas is just a family man who likes nothing more than unwinding with Griffith; Alexander, 16; Dakota, 11 (both from Griffith's earlier marriages); and their daughter Estella del Carmen, 4, at their home in the south of Spain (they have a primary residence in Los Angeles). "I take a few months holiday before I get back to hard work," he says. Today, he is barefoot, unshaven, and has promised his son a video game face-off when the interview is over.

"If everyone could see me now they'd say, 'Who is that guy?'" he laughs. "But I don't want to fight my public persona, because then my whole life becomes justifying myself. Despite what might be said or read about me, I am who I am. This is who I was born and who I will always be."

**H**e was born José Antonio Domínguez Banderas on August 10, 1960, in the seaside city of Málaga, Spain, the elder of two sons. "I am very Malagueño," he says. "I have always believed that a man without roots is nobody." He delights in discussing his home, even with total strangers. "I feel that if they know my land, they will know me better—it's a way of revealing myself," he adds. "Málaga is very relaxed, very calm, very joyful. The people have the most wonderful sense of humor—almost ironic. And Andalusia is a land of artists—Picasso and Lorca were born here."

His mother was a teacher and his father worked for the police, yet neither imposed strict rules on their sons. "They were not obsessive with family or religion or politics," he recalls. "They were middle-class, centered people, and they managed to raise my brother Francisco and me with the spirit of freedom around us, which was very important because of the times we grew up in."

Banderas' childhood was shadowed by the Francisco Franco dictatorship. "There were many things that were forbidden," he says. "Certain plays couldn't be performed; some records of The Rolling Stones were not allowed. Many Spanish artists had to move to Italy, France, Argentina, or Mexico to practice their art." His father worked, he insists, not for the Franco regime, but for Customs for 11 years, and spent a great deal of time on business in Morocco. "The Moroccan influence was all around my house," Banderas says. "I remember always sitting on the floor—that was a very Moroccan thing to do. Even now when I read newspapers, I go to the ground."

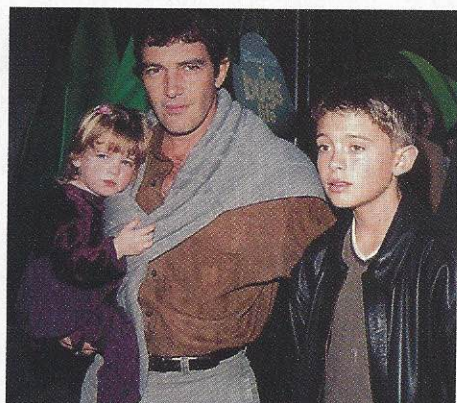
Young Antonio was athletic. "I was always playing soccer," he says. "I did every day until I broke my left foot in so many pieces that it was impossible to continue. But I wasn't devastated, because it was just a game to me." He approached acting much the same way. As a teen, he took on small roles in local independent theater productions and attended the National School of Dramatic Arts. "I thought of it—and I still think of it today—as an enjoyable hobby," he says. "That one can make money from this...I am always in shock. To me it's all play: Actors in general are just kids who did not want to grow up."

Yet Banderas was serious enough about his career to leave his family at age 19 and move to Spain's capital. "Madrid seemed to me the center of everything," he says. At first, he struggled, working as a waiter to pay for food and to keep a roof over his head. "I earned about \$5 a week," he says. "I would walk on the streets of Madrid looking between the cars for a few pesos someone might have dropped. I slept on a sofa that had a broken spring right in the middle. So much I remember that spring! For a year, even when I was in a normal bed, I could still feel it in my back!"

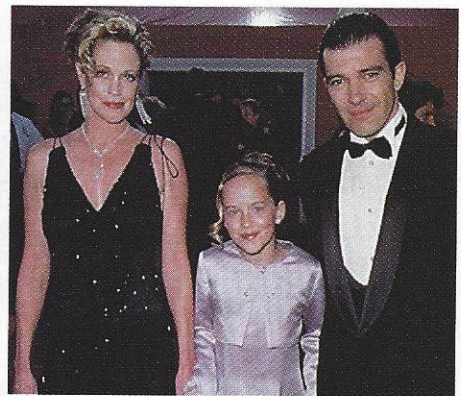
He was acting in the ensemble of the National Theater of Spain, when director Pedro Almodóvar discovered him. "Pedro himself was an unknown at the time," Banderas recalls. "Somebody said to me, 'That weird director is here tonight and he wants to meet you.'" When Almodóvar asked him to play a small role in one of his arthouse



Banderas' mother never dreamed her son would grow up to be an actor. "She wasn't thrilled at first," he says



He prides himself on being a doting dad. Here, with Stella and Alexander



Griffith and her daughter Dakota are two of the most important ladies in his life

films, Banderas at first hesitated. "I had no experience in movies, only theater, but he reassured me that many of his actors were unseasoned—one was even a soccer player. And this should make me feel better?"

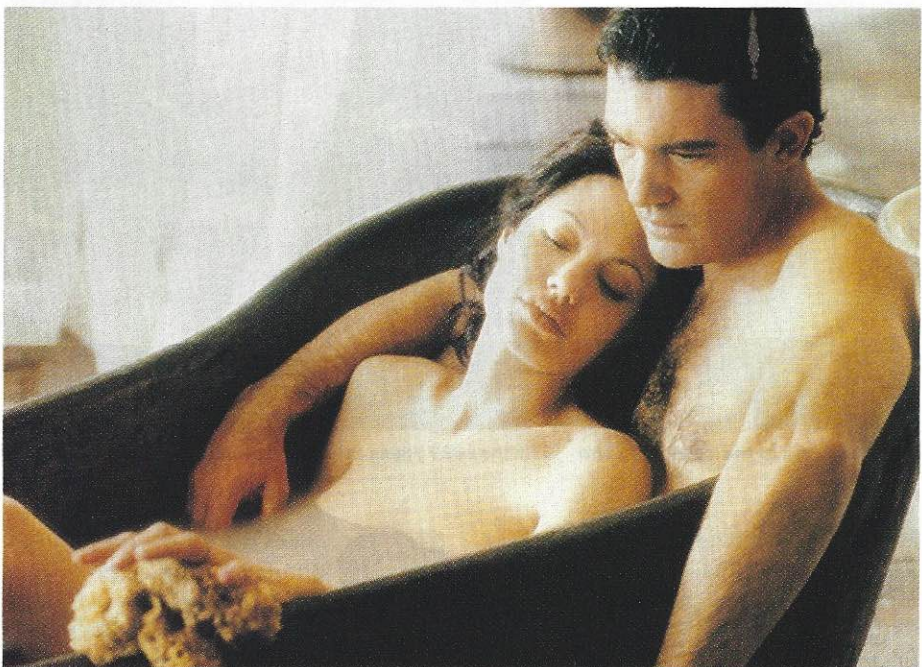
For his role as a gay terrorist in Almodóvar's *Laberinto de Pasiones*, Banderas was paid "something like \$500," yet it began a long-



As a tunic-clad teen in a local theater production in his homeland



Banderas starred in *The Mambo Kings* without being able to speak English



*Original Sin*'s steamy scenes fueled rumors of a romance between Banderas and Angelina Jolie. "It's only acting," he laughs

**"I have done so many types of characters. The only thing I probably cannot play is a guy from Oklahoma. My accent, after all, might get in the way..."**

term collaboration between them. "We made five films together," he recalls. "And I never made more than about \$20,000 all together." But it paid off in other ways: Banderas became a fixture on the Spanish screen and made more than 20 movies by 1990. When Almodóvar's *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (featuring Banderas in a supporting role) was nominated for a Best Foreign Film Oscar in 1988, large American audiences got their first taste of the young Spanish heartthrob.

"Pedro opened doors for me," he says. "He is really responsible for me being in America. His movies started getting bigger releases, and Americans began to see me."

And once they saw him, they wanted more—especially a certain Material Girl who spied Banderas in a Madrid nightclub. "Madonna called me up when I was in Los Angeles shooting *The Mambo Kings*," he recalls. "She said, 'So, Antonio, you are in my documentary.' First of all, I was in shock that Madonna was calling me. Second, I had no idea what documentary she was talking about. I met her at a party in Madrid, and I saw the cameras, but I thought they were news or something."

When *Truth or Dare* came out in 1991, Madonna told the press that Banderas had rejected her marriage proposal. "It's very flattering," he now laughs. "But I was married already [to Spanish actress Ana Leza since 1988]. And I think that she was just kidding..." The singer and the Spaniard would later reteam for a lengthier project: the movie musical *Evita* in 1996.

Aside from the cameo in *Truth or Dare*, *Mambo Kings* marked Banderas' first American movie role (he got the part when the producer mistakenly assumed he spoke English). He co-starred (as Armand Asante's brother) in the 1992 film based on Oscar Hijuelos' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel without being able to read a word of the script. "I learned it phonetically—almost like a song," he explains. "It was a blind work on one hand, but on the other hand, it was freeing. I discovered it was very easy for me to say 'I love you' when 'Te quiero' was very difficult. The meaning is the same, but when it is not in your language, it has no emotional ties for you. There is no weight on your shoulders."

The movie was not a box-office success so Banderas returned to Spain. "I thought that when I did *Mambo Kings* that was it—that it was my one American movie, and I would just go back to doing what I had been doing." But Hollywood kept calling: director Jonathan Demme tapped him for Tom Hank's lover in *Philadelphia*. Shortly after,

he joined Meryl Streep, Jeremy Irons, and Winona Ryder in *The House of the Spirits* and nearly stole the spotlight from Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise in 1994's eerie *Interview with the Vampire*. "At that point, it all started to come together," he says.

**H**e launched an all-out assault on American cinema. In 1995 alone, he made two action movies, *Desperado* and *Assassins*, and a comedy, *Miami Rhapsody*, with Sarah Jessica Parker and Mia Farrow. But it was 1996's humorous *Two Much* that had the greatest impact on his life. He was cast opposite Melanie Griffith, as a con man courting her and her sister (Daryl Hannah). Sparks flew between Banderas and Griffith, and amid a flurry of torrid tabloid stories, Banderas divorced his wife and Griffith broke off (for the second time) with actor Don Johnson. They married in May 1996. The Spanish press in particular was unkind, but has since grown to embrace the second Mrs. Banderas. "People love Melanie here—they throw her kisses on the street," Banderas cheerfully reports. "They consider her the Andalusian from California."

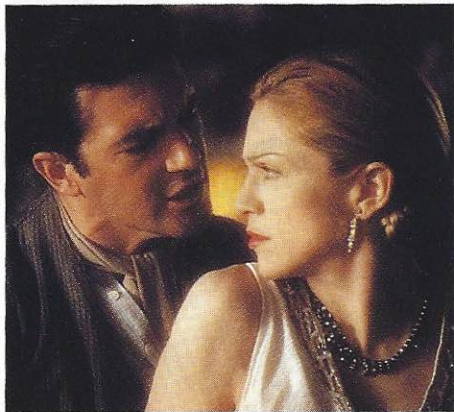
Banderas teamed with his wife once again in 1999's *Crazy in Alabama*—but this time, as her director, not co-star. "It was a wonderful experience and we'd like to work together again," he says. "But only as director/actress. I don't think we should try to act together—it's kind of obvious and predictable, don't you think? We become like a gossip show on the big screen, and it distracts from the story. We've talked about it, and we've decided to avoid it as much as we can."

"Five or six years down the road" Banderas sees himself turning more to a career behind the scenes. "The best time for a male actor is from 40 to 50, so I have a few years left," he says. Yet age isn't the only factor coloring his decisions. "I love to jump to the other side of the mirror. I learned more about acting by being a director than an actor. Why is this? Because, I think, by coming at it from the outside, I could see the solutions easier."

He admires Ron Howard ("He's done beautiful things and he's brilliant") and Michael Cristofer, the writer/director on *Original Sin*. "Some movies, you walk away and say, 'Well, we'll see what happens when it opens.' But this film—I have all my hopes in it. It is so powerful and passionate, and very raw." Banderas plays a wealthy Cuban aristocrat, "the victim of his own arrogance," who takes an American mail-order bride (Jolie). The scenes between them are so

steamy, they led to rumors that the pair was having an affair during filming. "Nothing could be farther from the truth," Banderas maintains—and laughs off the suggestion. "Angelina is so in love with Billy Bob Thornton, and I am so in love with my wife, that it is impossible—there is no room for that."

The movie is loosely based on a suspense



He reportedly rejected Madonna's marriage proposal in 1991, but later starred with her in *Evita*

have three children now; two of them have not my blood, but I don't care. I love them all equally." The couple has publicly announced that they are trying to have another child—Griffith is undergoing fertility treatments. "Of course I want more," he insists. "Melanie, she has such beautiful babies..."



When Banderas and Griffith met on the set of *Two Much* in 1996, sparks flew



Cutting a swath as the legendary Zorro



In the 1999 Viking action-adventure, *The 13th Warrior*

novel by Cornell Woolrich (*Waltz into Darkness*); François Truffaut made it into a 1969 movie (*Mississippi Mermaid*) starring Catherine Deneuve. "I remember seeing this movie when I was 15, and it has haunted me ever since," Banderas says. "It got in my heart, so that this story should find me now...it was meant to be."

Banderas is a big believer in letting things take their natural course, both personally and professionally. "If I want to do a small independent movie where they can't afford to pay me a penny...then fine," he says. "I don't want to base my decisions on box-office receipts."

There are many more important things in life, he insists. "My family comes first. We

**B**esides singing his wife's praises, Banderas does quite a bit of singing of his own: anything from the Beatles to the blues to the Backstreet Boys (daughter Estella's favorites). "I am an amateur musician—I play piano and guitar," he says. "In Los Angeles I have my own studio with 48 tracks and I love to compose. I have a lot of songs, but I don't want to make them public. It is something I do for myself, and if I put it into the hands of producers or record companies, they're going to kill it. I know I could probably make a lot of money—Spanish singing is very hot right now—but I think it would be a mistake."

However, he will croon, again onscreen,