

# SHUFFLE



# THE SHOWBIZ

## A day in the life of your **Average Joe** actor

WRITTEN BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON

If you watch television, you've seen Jimmy Palumbo. The Ramsey resident has done it all: *Friends*, *30 Rock*, *Rescue Me*, *Law and Order* and many more. He's shared the screen with Jennifer Aniston and Larry David, but unless you've played against him in a softball game or are some kind of human IMDB, then you would probably be hard-pressed to recognize him.

"I always tell my agent you can't say 'he's the guy from—,'" Palumbo told me over coffee at a Midtown diner on a cold and wet spring day.

Palumbo comes into the Manhattan several times a week for auditions. He had two on the day we met. Some go better than others. An avid sports fan, and a career beer league softball player—he starred alongside Artie Lange in the 2006 cult-hit *Beer League*—Palumbo compares his auditions to basketball games. On some days, he gets a good look at the basket.

"I always feel like an audition is a basketball game with four seconds left," Palumbo said.

Last year, he got a great look, and landed a

role in an upcoming feature film starring Robert De Niro, Tommy Lee Jones, Michelle Pfeiffer and Domenick Lombardozzi.

The title is tentative—at press, it was called *Malavita*—but Palumbo says it was one of the most thrilling experiences of his life. He traveled to France for six weeks during production, and ate French meals and sipped French wine alongside the more notable stars on director Luc Besson's estate.

Last year was a good one for Palumbo, and he's proud of it, but his career has been a grind.

After graduating from Rutgers in 1987, he started working at a computer store in Princeton. The commute was about an hour from his parents' house. He had no intention of getting into acting. Then one day an eight-months pregnant woman named Mary came in looking to buy a computer. Palumbo started talking to her, and she told him about an improv show that she was directing. Why not give it a shot?

He did, and after getting a favorable review for his part in "Pancakes from Hell" in a local

paper, he caught “the bug.”

With no real conception of how showbiz worked, Palumbo used his charm and gift of gab to land roles. For an audition for a play, he showed up right before the directors were about to call it quits for the day. The auditions ran from eight 'til ten.

“I didn’t realize that you were supposed to get there at like a quarter 'til eight,” he said, laughing at the recollection.

If you spend a minute with the guy, you’re going to laugh. He’s a natural comedian.

At one point, he was doing dinner theater shows.

“I was getting paid like a hundred bucks to serve food and bust balls,” said Palumbo, now 46.

Palumbo has done voiceovers for many years, for commercials and shows. His first was for a TV show starring Pamela Anderson that was only going to air in Europe.

*Continued on pg. xx*



*On the set of Malavita with Dominick Lombardozzi*



*Ralph Macchio and Jimmy Palumbo*

# THE SHOWBIZ SHUFFLE



Jimmy Palumbo with Seymour Cassell and Artie Lange

Continued from pg. xx

Palumbo was making a solid living. He was in an improv group that filmed at 30 Rock back in the '90s.

Like many a young actor, Palumbo eventually moved out west to L.A. Still, the allure of the Jersey Shore and summers in Manasquan were too much to resist. He kept flying back east, even when his friends asked him what the hell he was doing coming back.

For Palumbo, it was a no-brainer.

"I'm like, 'I'm from Jersey. I'll die in Jersey,'" he said. "That's just the way it's gonna be."

For some of his parts—like a scene in *Curb Your Enthusiasm* where he plays a doorman at a Manhattan

hotel and has a hilarious exchange with Larry David—Palumbo can get some nice-sized residual checks.

Speaking of Larry David, Palumbo says he's a riot.

"He's that guy," he said. "You don't know where he's coming from."

But as for residuals, some of the checks can literally be for three cents. One was for \$0.00. When he took it to the teller, she asked him what he wanted. He said nothing, naturally, because that was what the check was for: nothing. He likes to bust their chops.

The life of an actor can be tough. It's not all glitz and glam. Still, Palumbo says it's a heckuva lot

better than being cooped up in a cubicle, miserable, and missing out on his four-year-old daughter's firsts.

"I change her diapers, and I go outside when it's warm out and if you were working 9 to 5 making big money, getting home at 7 o'clock on the train, you miss a lot of that," he said.

There's a ton of uncertainty in showbiz. Thanks to the support of his wife, family and friends he's been fortunate enough to make a living doing what he loves. Even when he misses the shot, there's always the next audition, and the one after that. There's never a dull moment in the life of Jimmy Palumbo.