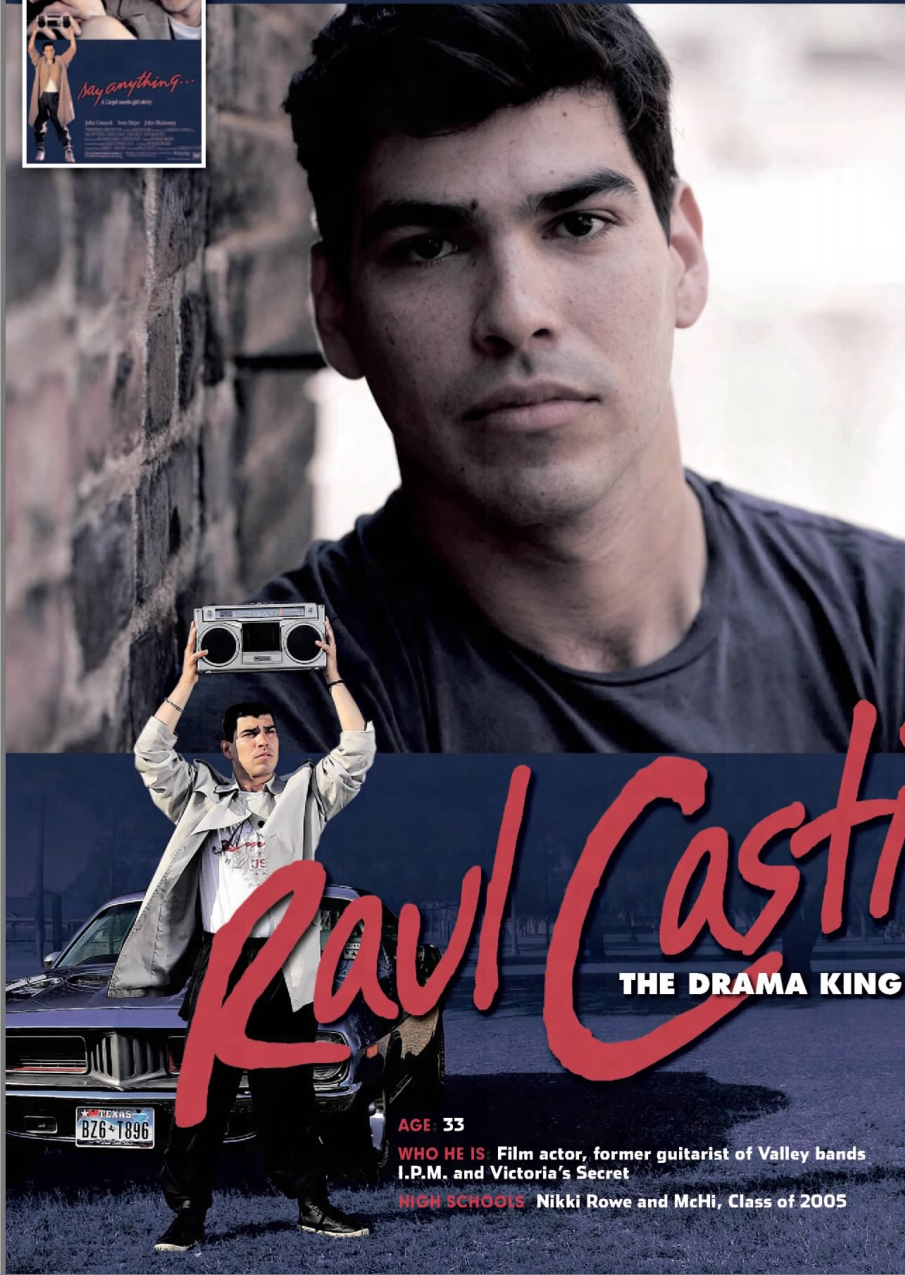


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'Say Anything'
(1989)



Raul Castillo

THE DRAMA KING

AGE 33

WHO HE IS Film actor, former guitarist of Valley bands I.P.M. and Victoria's Secret

HIGH SCHOOLS Nikki Rowe and McHi, Class of 2005

Raul Castillo was a rebel in high school. Punk rock was a way of life for Castillo, who performed in local bands I.P.M. and Victoria's Secret and adopted the punk rocker creed. Castillo also gravitated toward theater his freshman year.

"I saw a lot of conformity in my peers, and I think theater was a natural extension of punk rock and the music I was playing because it was just another way to get up in front of people and act like an idiot," Castillo said.

Castillo is now a successful actor in New York. But back then, acting couldn't hold his attention.

"I didn't take it that seriously," Castillo said. "I was more into music at the time. I was in a couple of bands."

The bands kept Castillo busy on bass and, at the time, he was sure music was the path he'd follow.

"That was my big passion from junior high into high school," he said. "That's what I really wanted to do and then I really got into the theater thing."

Whether it was music or theater that would carry him, Castillo made up his mind to get out of the Valley, he said.

"I just wanted to go somewhere different," he said. "I wanted to go to the East Coast."

Now that he has made a life for himself in the Big Apple, Castillo finds himself visiting home for more than just family. He makes it back to South Texas to support local and fellow actors with their projects, and he draws on his experiences in El Valle as a playwright and a performer, he said.

Last year, Castillo earned rave reviews in the role of Carlos in the independent film "Cold Weather," a minimalistic and modern noir-like tale. Critics from "The New York Times," "GQ Magazine" and Roger Ebert praised the film.

Castillo got a shout-out from both Ebert and Tom Carson.

Carson, from "GQ Magazine," called Castillo "the breakout actor" of "Cold Weather," and that, "his absence from the movie's second half is 'Cold Weather's' only major letdown."

"All four actors, unknown to me, are natural and convincing ..." Ebert said. "Cris Lankenau and Raul Castillo as Doug and Carlos do a very difficult thing here, which is to play young male friends without the slightest shadow of Buddy Movie Syndrome." Earlier this year, Castillo, who was cast as a brother in the novel-to-film story

"Bless Me Ultima," wrapped filming in New Mexico. Castillo's latest project, "Narcocorrido," an American Film Institute thesis film, stars the actor as a singer of the popular drug ballads — though he is lip-synching in the movie.

"I offered to sing but they were like, 'No, we already recorded it, we'll just use his voice,'" Castillo said.

WHICH CLASS DID YOU NEARLY FAIL?

"English, a couple times; which, you know, I'm a writer now and it's kind of embarrassing ... but I wasn't a very good reader and I wasn't interested in literature ... It took plays as literature to get me into it. Now I'm an avid reader."

DID YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE WITH THE PRINCIPAL?

"I wasn't a very good P.E. student ... so we snuck into the teacher's office and changed our grades on the little sheet. And it was really obvious, so we got sent to the office and I just said, 'It wasn't me.'"

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST KISS?

"Yeah, it was on New Year's (Eve). It was great; it was very romantic. It was like, kind of a midnight kiss thing, I was very nervous, but it happened very organically and naturally. And then she had to go because her parents were coming to pick her up, so there wasn't any pressure to go beyond that."

[ANS]