

## His big break

# Lou Diamond Phillips rocks in 'Bamba'

By Frank Sanello

HOLLYWOOD (NEA) — "La Bamba," the hit film about Ritchie Valens, contains a melodramatic subplot about the '50s rock star and his girlfriend, Donna, who rejects him because he is Latino. Donna's parents won't even let Valens inside their house.

Lou Diamond Phillips, 25, who portrays Valens, didn't have any trouble interpreting those scenes. The same thing happened to him at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Of Filipino, Hawaiian, Cherokee, Latino and Scot-Irish descent, Phillips dated a fellow drama student for a year. Her folks, who hailed from Kansas, treated him like a member of the family.

"Then one day I found out she had told her parents I was just a friend," Phillips recounts. "When she finally told them I was her boyfriend, they would only invite me into the vestibule. And this wasn't the '50s — it was two years ago."

"La Bamba" is set in that earlier era, and Phillips plays an entertainer who had to struggle with the same anti-Latino prejudices.

"Others looked more like Ritchie, but they said they chose me for my warmth and sensitivity," says Phillips of the more than 500 hopefuls who competed against him for the role.

Phillips was born in the Philippines. His father died when he was 2, and when Phillips' mother got remarried to a naval officer, the youngster moved from base to base in Georgia, Washington, D.C., California and Texas until the seventh grade.

In college, Phillips' fondness for M&M candy led to a pivotal event in his development as an actor. At a costume party for the cast members of a college production of "Hamlet," Phillips dressed up as a yellow peanut M&M with a large bag of the candy in his hand. His future mentor, actor-teacher Adam Roarke ("The Stuntman"), had a sweet tooth and followed Phillips around the party, munching on his candy. "At the time he was only interested in my M&Ms," Phillips jokes.

But Roarke was also interested in



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— Lou Diamond Phillips

the young man's talent, and gave him a job at his Film Actors' Lab in Dallas. Three years later, Phillips got the career-making call from the producers of "La Bamba."

Originally, Phillips thought he was auditioning for the role of Frankie Valli. "My agent's receptionist got confused and left a message on my machine saying that I was up for the true story of Frankie Valli. I thought, 'Oh, no! I gotta get a perm, develop a falsetto and lose six inches in height.'" Phillips was acting in regional films and theater in Texas when he learned he had won the Ritchie Valens role.

"My knees were shaking. Tears came to my eyes. At that moment I felt like the prince had put the glass slipper on my foot — and it fit!" says Phillips. "Then I said something stupid like 'I'll think about it.'"

Until "La Bamba," Phillips had been subsisting on \$125 a week as a drama instructor. During the shooting of the film, Phillips "slept in somebody's utility room" in an un-chic section of Beverly Hills.

Since wrapping up the film last summer, Phillips has appeared on "Dallas" and "Miami Vice." He also stars in and was associate producer for "Dakota," a low-budget feature

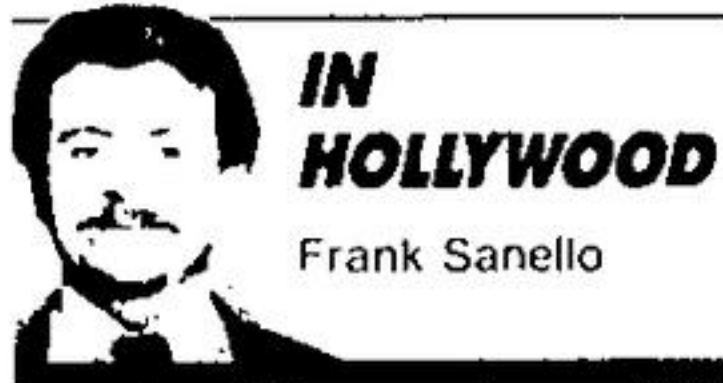
about a confused young man who works on a horse ranch, which is slated for a spring release. On the set of "Dakota," Phillips met assistant director Julie Cyphers, whom he married last July. The two plan to have an upcoming European press tour for "La Bamba" double as their honeymoon.

Phillips isn't waiting for the phone to ring for his next acting assignment. He's already written four screenplays, one of which he says has a "big director attached to it."

The young actor deprecates the fact that ethnics are too often typecast as criminals on TV and in films. In spite of this, he will play an East Los Angeles gang member in "Walking on Water," a PBS "American Playhouse" production, in December.

But Phillips is quick to defend his role: "My character drops out of the gang so he can study calculus."

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**IN HOLLYWOOD**  
Frank Sanello

enthusiastic about arrangements like this from either the buyer's or seller's point of view. Admittedly, the risk is much greater from the buyer's perspective than the seller's. Nonetheless, there are a number of things that could go wrong and cause you grief.

You didn't say whether you're staying in the area or not. If you plan to move, it would be difficult for you to handle a problem should one arise. In today's marketplace, where there are ample funds available through conventional lenders, I see no reason for someone like yourself to become a banker.

While it is true that you can earn a point and a half or two points more on your money, you will be locked in at that interest rate, unless you have an adjustable-rate land contract — which is out of the ordinary. If you need the principal, it will be very difficult for you to get it.

Further, at only 5 percent down, all of the down payment will go straight to the real estate broker, for his commission — plus you may have to dip into your savings to make up the difference. You will have to use other funds to pay for the closing costs. In other words, after the sale, you will have less cash on hand — not more. Good deal? Not for you.

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Bruce Williams, America's top radio talk host, is heard each week night on NBC stations.

for oil to reach a turbo's internal parts, so the engine should never be raced immediately after starting. Before you shut the engine off, it's good to let it idle for several seconds while the turbine spins down.

All this fuss can be tiresome, and it's a safe bet that many owners of turbocharged cars don't bother with it. That's an important point for used-car shoppers to remember as older turbocharged cars come on the market in greater numbers. If you buy a turbocharged car with 50,000 miles or so on the speedometer, you'd better figure a new turbo into your budget.

Compared to a V8, a small turbocharged engine has another drawback. When you put the pedal to the metal in a car with a big engine, you get instant response. But with a turbocharged engine, there's a moment of hesitation before the turbo kicks in. Automakers have yet to effectively eliminate this turbo "lag."

Turbochargers are a clever way to put more punch into a small engine. But with all the problems, the automakers' ardor for turbos is beginning to cool. Other technologies that increase power — including engines with four valves per cylinder — will probably displace turbochargers in the future.

For now, if you really want more ponies under the hood without complication (and are willing to bear higher fuel costs), skip the turbo and buy a bigger engine.

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## SMART MONEY

Bruce Williams

### Son can pay own insurance

By Bruce Williams

DEAR BRUCE — We have what I guess is a common problem. Our son turned 18, recently graduated from high school and has a job. He wants an automobile. If we put the car in our name, he will pay less insurance.

What I want to know is, if the car is in our name, and he is in an accident, are we responsible? Our insurance agent says no, but our friends say yes. I suppose the insurance agent knows best, but I'd sure hate to lose the house that my husband and I have struggled so hard to pay for over the last 25 years. — N.C., Topeka, Kan.

DEAR N.C. — I don't know what your insurance agent is thinking about. Of course you are responsible if there is an accident with the car that you own. The agent might be referring to the fact that, with sufficient insurance, there is little cause for concern.

You have a fully emancipated 18 year old. He's finished with school, earning his own money and paying for

his own car. In my view, the car should be in his name. Let him be responsible for the insurance, and that will take you off the hook completely.

If the insurance costs the boy a little more money, so be it. And I am, perhaps, misusing the word "boy" here. He's 18, on his own and a man.

DEAR BRUCE — My husband passed away two and a half years ago. I have decided to sell my home and have an offer at the price that I have asked for. The broker has suggested that I hold the mortgage, so that I will have income from my money. The interest rate is almost 2 percent more than I can get on a CD at the bank.

The only reservation that I have is that the seller has only 5 percent to put down. The money that I'm getting from the house represents most of my security. Under these circumstances, should I sell the house and hold the mortgage, or should I insist that the buyer get the money from the bank and pay me cash? — T.A., Englewood, Colo.

Dear T.A. — I have never been en-



## KEEPING YOUR CAR ALIVE

Peter Bohr

### The truth about turbos

By Peter Bohr  
Contributing Editor, Road & Track

Turbochargers are hot — in more ways than one.

With gasoline in ample supply and gas prices quite stable, new-car buyers have been looking less at high fuel economy and more at high performance. Automakers have nothing against V8s, but if they sell too many big engines the federal government slaps them with "gas guzzler" taxes.

Automakers turned to turbos in an attempt to both satisfy car buyers' demands for performance and build fuel-efficient cars. The boost of a turbo added to a 4- or 6-cylinder engine provides some of the V8's pep without its thirst.

An engine's power comes from burning a mixture of fuel and air. The more of this mixture that can be packed into the engine's combustion chambers, the more power the engine will produce.

The turbocharged engine has a small turbine that sits in the exhaust system. Exhaust gases whoosh out from the engine and spin the turbine. The spinning turbine is attached to a compressor that squeezes the air-fuel

mixture and forces it into the combustion chambers.

Because it is bathed in hot exhaust gases, a turbo operates at very high temperatures (1,500 degrees Fahrenheit). It also spins at astronomically high rotational speeds (100,000 revolutions per minute). Turbochargers rarely seem to last more than 50,000 or 60,000 miles before they expire from working under such difficult conditions. One European manufacturer admits that turbos should be considered consumable components, like brake pads or spark plugs — albeit expensive ones. A \$700 to \$800 bill to replace a tired turbo isn't unusual.

Proper maintenance is critical in eeking out the maximum life of a turbo. Engine oil and filters should be changed twice as often as they would be on a car without a turbocharger. The fuel system and ignition must be kept correctly adjusted; if not, exhaust temperatures can become too high and harm the turbo. Turbos can't stand dusty air, so frequent cleaning or replacement of air filters is necessary.

Driving technique can also prolong a turbo's life. It takes a few moments



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