

Interview: Legendary Mexican Comedian Eugenio Derbez talks 'Overboard'

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CHICAGO - When you remake a film, you have to make sure it is worth remaking and is relevant today. Eugenio Derbez does exactly that with "Overboard". The film is socially and culturally updated, and made surprisingly family friendly. This version will also be released in theaters with an all Spanish dubbing. We talk with legendary comedian Eugenio Derbez about the film, breaking out in Hollywood and more!



HollywoodChicago.com: "Overboard" is a remake of the 80's film, but with a twist. What drew you to this specific project?

Eugenio Derbez: Let me start at the beginning. After "Instructions Not Included" did amazing at the box office, I had a meeting with MGM one day. They said, are you interested in doing a remake. They showed me a list and I saw "Overboard". I was like, "Oh! I watched this growing up!" I was really excited and they invited me to co-produce and give them input on the script. We started developing the script 3 years ago, and when we were re-writing the script, one of the writers came up with the idea of swapping the genders. At first, MGM was like, "No, no, no. Don't go that far. It's a classic and iconic film." But then they read the first draft and they were really happy. They thought it felt fresh and different.

HollywoodChicago.com: Also very relevant and timely.

Eugenio Derbez: Yeah. I think it was a great idea because that way you avoid direct comparisons between Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell. I also love that we're breaking stereotypes. I got to play the billionaire and she was stuck cleaning the floors. It feels incredibly fresh.

HollywoodChicago.com: Tell me how important it was to have Mexican culture openly on display in the film.

Eugenio Derbez: I think it is very important for my core audience. I was working in my country for my people and then all of a sudden I decided to give it a try and came to Hollywood. I don't want them to feel like I forgot my roots, my beginnings, my people, and my audience so I love to put a lot of Latino flavor in my movies and have Spanish throughout the film. In this film, I was able to bring an amazing Mexican cast to the movie. We have Omar Chaparro, Adrian Uribe, Mariana Treviño, Jesús Ochoa. All these guys are amazing. It's like having Will Ferrell, Adam Sandler, and Ben Stiller in the same movie. I think it's important for my people to see their own stories, their own people, and actors that they've known since they were kids on screen. I think they're going to feel embraced and that's why love it.

HollywoodChicago.com: The film works on so many levels, but I especially loved the female focus in it and how it shows the breaking down of gender roles. In traditional Mexican culture, machismo is still a big part of it. How did it feel going against the idea of machismo?

Eugenio Derbez: In real life, especially with Mexicans, we are known for being machos and a man's man, but we all know in Mexico that it's not true. Women run the house and they rule. That's the way it is, and we know that and accept that. The women run the household and they wear the pants in the relationship. That honestly the way it is in all of Latin America.

HollywoodChicago.com: It was nice to see your character be more enlightened. Your character did the dishes and all of the housework and all of the cooking, which goes against some of the traditional Mexican gender roles that even my grandma still holds on to even though she's lived here for several decades.

Eugenio Derbez: Right? In my house it's the same. We don't want anyone to know that we do the cooking and do the dishes at home, but that's a real thing.

HollywoodChicago.com: How does it feel presenting a film like this here in America, where Trump has said that we're criminals and basically worse than the Russians?

Eugenio Derbez: It's important, especially during this administration, to show who we really are. That's why I wanted to switch the genders because we want people to know that not only in Mexico, but in Latin America in general, we are more than just construction workers or immigrants or gardeners. We are also reporters, politicians, architects, engineers, etc. The third richest man in the world is Mexican, Carlos Slim. We are fed up with having the same type of Mexican characters in the Hollywood movies. We want Latinos to feel proud of our culture when they go watch this movie. That was my goal.

HollywoodChicago.com: I grew up watching your shows with my family, like "XHDRbZ" and "La familia P. Luche". Then I saw you in "Instructions Not Included" and "How to Be a Latin Lover" and I was like, "I know that guy!" Now I see you everywhere. You were in "Geostorm" last year and now in "Overboard" this year. How hard has it been to break into the American market?

Eugenio Derbez: It's extremely hard because Hollywood is the most competitive market in the world, movie-wise. If you're trying to be an actor, this is the most important place to be but also the most competitive. That's why I produce my own films. I discovered that no one is going to give me what I wanted unless I did it by myself. I've done that since I was in Mexico. Before, I was always asking for a job, knocking on the doors. Then, one day I discovered that I should just do my own stuff. I started writing and then I started doing my own TV shows. It's the same thing when I started doing movies. No one wanted to give me a shot, so I started writing and ended up with "Instructions Not Included". When I came to this country, I did the same thing and started producing my things. That's why I'm succeeding here. That's the key guys. If you want to succeed in Hollywood, you need to write your own scripts. If you don't know how to write, hire a writer, but produce your own stuff and your own materials. That's the only way to succeed.

HollywoodChicago.com: You're also going to be in a major film at the end of this year: Disney's "The Nutcracker and the Four Realms". Can you tell me a little bit about your role?

Eugenio Derbez: I'm playing Hawthorn, the king of the Land of Flowers. You're barely going to recognize me because of all the make-up. I'm going to be playing side by side with Helen Mirren, Kiera Knightley, and Morgan Freeman. It's a beautiful film about the Nutcracker. It's so magical and full of classical ballet.

HollywoodChicago.com: So we get to see you dance, right?

Eugenio Derbez: (*laughs*) Not exactly, but the film is still beautiful. It's coming out in December 2018. As far as future projects, I also plan on going back to directing another movie. It's going to take a lot of time, but that's what I really love to do.

HollywoodChicago.com: Is it a pure comedy like your early stuff, or more like a dramedy, a blend of comedy and drama, like your recent work?

Eugenio Derbez: Yeah, it's going to be a dramedy. I love doing that in a film. When I was doing television, it was just comedy, but then I discovered that now that I'm doing movies, I need to give more than just laughs to the audience. I want to put them on a roller coaster of emotions.

HollywoodChicago.com: "Overboard" has a lot of lessons that could be applied to family, relationships, etc. Was there anything in the film that helped you with your relationships?

Eugenio Derbez: I actually have an anecdote related to that. I didn't want to be a dad again. I had 3 kids many years ago. My wife told me she wanted to have a baby. I told her I couldn't do that anymore, I was done. After shooting "Instructions Not Included", that changed my mind. I wanted to be a dad again. I decided to have my baby girl, who is now three, because of that movie. I think everytime I shoot a film, I learn something new about myself. With "Overboard", I learned greater family values and how important it is to have family near. When I was younger, I remember my priority was to succeed and have fame and get money to support my family. Now I realize that my priorities have changed. Right now the most important thing is my family and making sure i have time to spend with them.

HollywoodChicago.com: You recently became a grandfather. How has that new relationship changed you?

Eugenio Derbez: It's amazing! It also feels weird, especially since I also just had a baby. I see my daughter and my granddaughter, and they are around the same age.

HollywoodChicago.com: At least they'll be able to grow up and play together, even if technically your daughter will be their aunt.

Eugenio Derbez: (*laughs*) That's a good thing. Another good thing is that I'm well trained. I know how to change diapers, how to give them the bottle, and how to bathe her. I'm going to be a great grandpa.

HollywoodChicago.com: How was it working with another famous comedian, Anna Faris?

Eugenio Derbez: Sometimes you see someone on screen and then they are completely different in real life. Anna Faris is exactly like you imagine she would be. She's amazing, funny, humble, down to earth, and you can tell we had great chemistry together. She surprised me because when we were shooting the first day, the first thing she asked me was, "Was I funny?" I was like, "Of course! What are you talking about?" Then she said, "I'm not a comedian. I think I'm not funny. I'm a comedian by accident. I wanted to be a dramatic actress, but for some reason they thought I was funny and started doing comedies, but I don't think I'm a comedian." She's so down to earth and grounded. I really love her and think she's really funny.

HollywoodChicago.com: Well this was the perfect role for her because it showcased both her comedy and drama skills.

Eugenio Derbez: Absolutely, and you can tell just from watching the film. She is hilarious and our chemistry was amazing.

"Overboard" opens everywhere on May 4th. Featuring Eugenio Derbez, Anna Faris, Eva Longoria, Josh Hannah, Mel Rodriguez and Josh Segarra. Directed by Rob Greenberg. Written by Rob Greenberg and Bob Fisher. Rated "PG-13"



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