

MAN TO WATCH

Brandon Larracuente talks about *Party of Five* reboot

Words by Vanessa Pascale
Photo Credit: Sarah Mireya
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For the longest time, Brandon Larracuente thought he would end up playing in the big leagues. But as we all know, life doesn't always unfold as we expect. "Acting fell in my lap and I learned to love it the same," shares the 25-year-old actor, who still has an "intense passion for baseball." Brandon, who was born in New York, found the limelight early on. At the age of 4, he performed in two operas at the New Rochelle Opera House and starred in his first Off-Broadway show, *Desire* at 8 years old. After relocating to Central Florida, he landed roles in Orlando Repertory Theatre's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *It's A Wonderful Life*. By 2001, he was appearing on television.

The demand for this handsome young actor has only grown as Brandon has gotten older. Netflix chose Brandon for roles in two of its original hit series, first in *Bloodline* portraying Ben, then to play Jeff on *13 Reasons Why*. The entertainment industry and the people are taking notice (he has over 1 million followers on Instagram alone!). This January, Brandon steps into his first lead role as Emilio in Freeform's *Party of Five* reboot. Like the original '90s teen/family drama, the new *Party of Five* features five children who lose their parents, however, in the reboot, the five Acosta children lose their parents because they're deported to Mexico.

Tell me about your character Emilio and how you landed this role.

Brandon Larracuente: The audition process was a long one. Like anyone else, I read for the role, went back in a few times, and then my team called me on my way to Paris, [told me] that I booked the role. I remember screaming and crying with my partner on our way to our terminal. It was a great memory. From the start, when I read for Emilio, there was an immediate connection. Regardless of whether or not I booked, I knew that I could play this character. Emilio is your typical 24-year-old, living his life and chasing the American Dream. He's a musician, stubborn, a ladies' man and his entire world is flipped upside down when he has to father his siblings upon his parents being deported.

How is this new series like the original *Party of Five*? Were you familiar with the original show before you auditioned for Emilio?

BL: It has the same essence. The parents are deported but still gone and the family has to adjust to taking care of each other. I hadn't heard of the original show until I actually auditioned for it.

Both *13 Reasons Why* and *Party of Five* highlight very serious and important issues that teenagers are dealing with now— what does it mean to you to be a part of this message / conversation?

BL: There's an underlying pressure to tell the story as authentically as possible. That way, whoever is struggling with these issues feels we give justice to the topic at hand like, deportation and the separation of families.

Were these serious subject matters a deciding factor when you considered taking these roles?

BL: I always read the materials through before I decide to read for a role. If it's telling a true, authentic story, without using shock factor, that's a golden role in my book. You don't come across those too often. So, to answer your question: yes, always.

You were also on *Bloodline*, tell us your favorite part about playing Ben.

BL: My favorite part about playing Ben was the people I got to learn from on a daily basis, like, Kyle Chandler, Ben Mendelsohn, Sissy Spacek, and Sam Shepard, among many other incredible talents.

If you could work with anyone in the industry, who would it be and why?

BL: Josh Brolin because he brings something different to every role he chooses. He is extremely versatile and it's awesome to watch his work.



What's next for you?

BL: Next is enjoying anytime I have off to vacation. I'm thinking anywhere that's not Los Angeles.

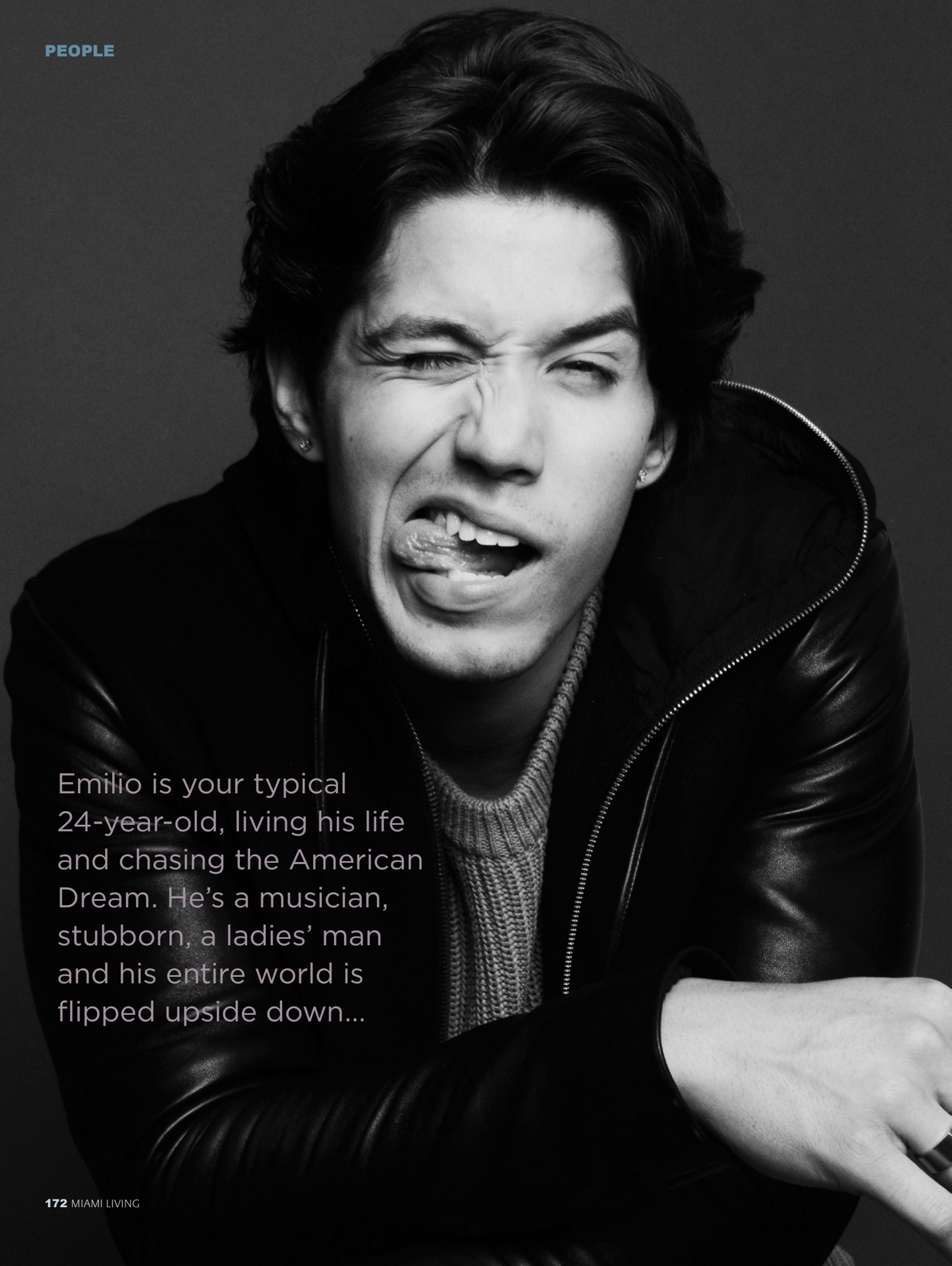
Any holiday plans/traditions? New Year's resolutions?

BL: A new holiday tradition is always spending Thanksgiving somewhere new in the world and immersing myself in that location's culture. This will be the third year in a row my partner and I have traveled for it. First, it was Costa Rica. Last year was Big Bear, and this year is a cabin in Yosemite. Then for Christmas, we head to see our families. My New Year's resolution is to spend more time with the people who mean the most to me. The people I see myself going through it all with.

What would fans be surprised to find out about you?

BL: I am probably in bed by 11 pm every night, drinking tea, and reading a self-improvement book —not kidding. ML

Check out *Party of Five*, premiering on Freeform January 8, 2020, and follow Brandon on Instagram: @brandonlarracuente.

A black and white close-up portrait of a young man with dark, wavy hair. He has a pained or frustrated expression, with his eyes squinted and his mouth open in a grimace, showing his teeth. He is wearing a dark leather jacket over a light-colored, textured knit sweater. The background is a plain, dark grey.

Emilio is your typical 24-year-old, living his life and chasing the American Dream. He's a musician, stubborn, a ladies' man and his entire world is flipped upside down...