

# 'Ugly Betty' Executive Producer Silvio Horta Dies at 45

He developed the comedy-drama "Ugly Betty," which starred America Ferrera on ABC from 2006 to 2010.



By **Johnny Diaz**

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Silvio Horta in 2007. Vince Bucci/Getty Images

Silvio Horta, best known as an executive producer of the hit ABC television series "Ugly Betty," died early Tuesday in Miami. He was 45.

Mr. Horta was found in a hotel room, "suffering from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound," Christopher Thomas, a Miami-Dade Police Department detective, said on Wednesday. "Preliminary evidence suggests that this is possibly a suicide."

He added that the cause of death would be determined by the Miami-Dade medical examiner's office.

“Ugly Betty,” a comedy-drama that starred America Ferrera, followed the adventures of Betty Suarez, a cheerful and fashion-challenged young Mexican-American woman from Queens who lands a job as an assistant at a fashion magazine in Manhattan. Mr. Horta, a writer and producer, adapted it from the wildly popular Colombian telenovela “Yo Soy Betty La Fea,” which led to remakes around the world.

The series became a ratings hit and a critical darling early on. It won a Golden Globe for best comedy series in its first season, and Ms. Ferrera won for best actress in a comedy or musical television series. “Ugly Betty,” which also starred Eric Mabius, Tony Plana, Ana Ortiz, Becki Newton, Michael Urie and Vanessa Williams, ran for 85 episodes from 2006 to 2010, when it was canceled.

Mr. Horta, a first-generation Cuban-American, was born on Aug. 14, 1974, in Miami. He grew up watching Spanish-language soap operas, which were must-see TV in traditional Hispanic households.

“We had one television growing up, and my mom would be watching telenovelas every night,” Mr. Horta told The New York Times in 2006. “We had no choice. All my friends, first-generation immigrants, would make fun of them, and then become completely addicted.”

Mr. Horta graduated from Coral Gables Senior High School in 1992, the school said. He then studied film and television at New York University, where he graduated in 1995.

His breakthrough came in 1998 with his screenplay for the slasher film “Urban Legend,” which starred Jared Leto and Alicia Witt. In the early 2000s, Mr. Horta was also known for creating the science-fiction television series “The Chronicle” and “Jake 2.0.”

Mr. Horta’s most recent producing and writing credit was a 2015 NBC movie, “The Curse of the Fuentes Women.”

“Through his friendships, his love and his work in TV and films, Silvio touched the lives of millions,” Mr. Horta’s mother, Anna Horta, and his sister Hilda Horta said in a statement on Wednesday. “Silvio had an ongoing struggle with addiction and depression, but through it all, he always found a way to turn his struggle into laughter.”

“His talent and creativity brought me and so many others such joy & light,” Ms. Ferrera posted Tuesday on Instagram. “I’m thinking of his family and loved ones who must be in so much pain right now — and of the whole Ugly Betty family who feel this loss so deeply.”

Christopher Gorham, who starred in “Jake 2.0” and also appeared on “Ugly Betty,” shared a tribute on Instagram.

“Silvio Horta gave me two of the greatest opportunities in my career with Jake 2.0 and Ugly Betty,” Mr. Gorham posted. “I will be forever grateful for his creativity, his enormous heart, and his friendship.”

Sandra E. Garcia contributed reporting.