

Will Ferrell in *Semi-Pro*



# DIRECTOR'S CUT

## WILL FERRELL AND KENT ALTERMAN GO SEMI PRO IN DETROIT

When Kent Alterman, executive producer at New Line Cinema, heard the pitch for a film based on the last year of the American Basketball Association, it was all he needed to hear to jump head first into the project. Making his directing debut in the upcoming film *Semi-Pro*, starring Will Ferrell, Alterman chose Flint as the location of the film's star team "The Tropics."

Shooting on location in Flint and at the Michigan State Fair Grounds in May, the movie began as a one-line pitch from writer Scot Armstrong almost four years ago. While producing *Elf* with Ferrell in 2004, Alterman told him about the idea for a film about the ABA. After seeing a half-written script, Ferrell came on board.

The film tells the story of Jackie Moon, whose one hit wonder, "Love Me Sexy," has made him a small legend in Motown. Moon's single leaves him with enough money to purchase the struggling ABA team, the Flint Tropics, and he soon becomes owner, player and coach.

"Flint is in the shadow of Detroit, so it fit dramatically that way," Alterman says. "The ABA was always holding it together with shoestrings and paper clips, so it seemed fitting that a team would come from some tropical place and end up in Flint, Michigan."


*Semi-Pro* will be released in 2008 and will be filled with scenes from



Alterman on the set of *Semi-Pro*

Flint as well as the State Fair Grounds. The cast and crew stayed in Rochester Hills, filmed in Flint and Detroit, and spent much of their week in the area taking in the sights and sounds of Detroit. Alterman's only regret during his stay in Michigan was that he hadn't visited years earlier. During filming, the entire cast of *Semi-Pro* took a day off to attend a Tigers game at Comerica Park. "It was bittersweet to visit Comerica Park," Alterman says. "It's such an amazing park, but I would have loved to have been to the original Tiger Stadium."

Growing up in San Antonio, Alterman has a great love of sports and some close connections to the ABA. Alterman's family pooled their money in the '70s to purchase a share of the San Antonio Spurs franchise. Showing up for every game and begging to be chosen for the three point shot at half-time, Alterman finally made it to the court during the last game of the season.

"I'm a huge sports fan. The only time I'd been in Detroit prior to this movie was in 2005 for the playoffs with the Pistons and the Spurs," Alterman says. "It's really infectious being in such a sports town doing this comedy movie about sports. ... The *Semi-Pro* team had a great time shooting here. All the people we encountered were so friendly and happy we were filming in Michigan."  -Andrea Walker